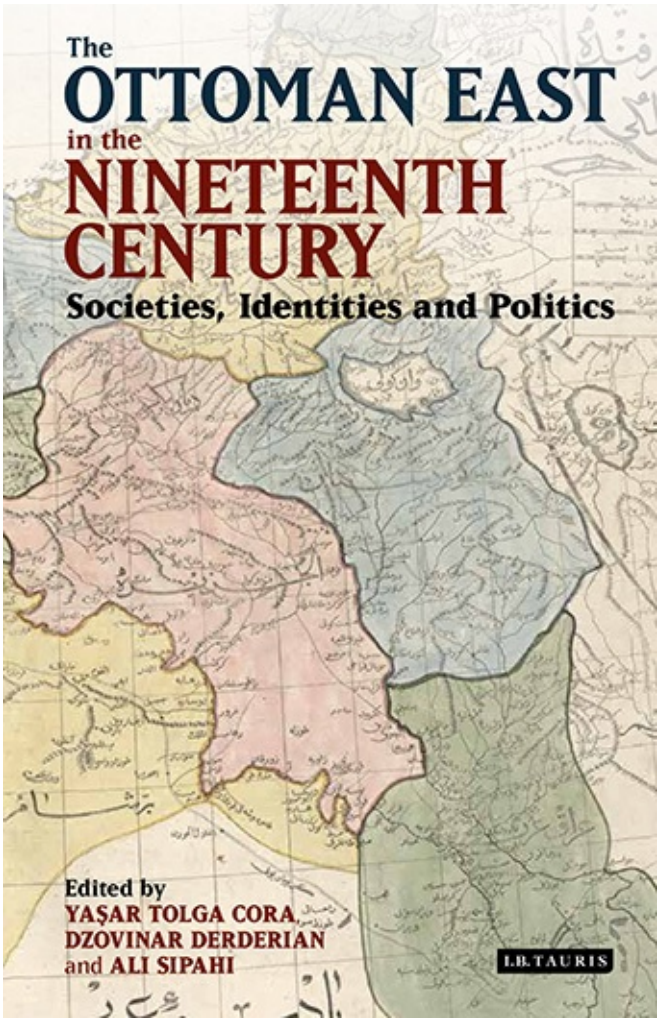
The
OTTOMAN EAST
in the
NINETEENTH
CENTURY
Societies, Identities and Politics
Edited by
YAŞAR TOLGA CORA
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‘This is a very unique and valuable study on the nineteenth-century Ottoman East […] we learn about the local physical spaces, the local actors as they negotiate their identities and relations with the imperial state and, in doing so, shape their social and physical environment […] An excellent volume’.

Fatma Müge Göçek, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies, University of Michigan

‘An extraordinarily important project […] This volume is the first serious investigation into the region and makes a significant contribution to our knowledge.’

Ronald Grigor Suny, Charles Tilly Collegiate Professor of Social and Political History, University of Michigan

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The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented surge of students and scholars who have increasingly concentrated on the eastern Ottoman provinces. In conversation with such colleagues we felt the need to create a medium through which members of this growing field could exchange ideas and work together. The first step towards generating such an environment was the graduate workshop entitled ‘Shared Histories, Shared Geographies: The Ottoman East’ that took place in April 2013 at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This book has been a means of continuing that conversation and collaboration, which would not have been possible without the generous support of the Armenian Studies Program (ASP) in Ann Arbor, as well as the critical role of ASP Director Kathryn Babayan who gave us the opportunity to lead the workshop, and guided us in its framing and organization. Richard Antaramian, who was among the organizers of the workshop, also had a crucial role in directing the workshop's themes. In addition, we would like to thank the participants and discussants who were present at the workshop, particularly Gottfried Hagen, Melanie Tanielian and Fatma Müge Göçek whose comments and questions helped us develop innovative approaches for our field and for this book.

For the actual production of this volume we are first and foremost indebted to the contributors of this book, for their work and patience as we went through numerous drafts. We would like to extend our special thanks to Fatma Müge Göçek who encouraged us to realize this project and guided us with her expertise in publishing edited volumes. Mehmet Polatel also contributed in the initial steps of bringing this volume together. We are also thankful to Hamit Bozarslan for reviewing our introduction, as well as the bibliographers Christopher Winters of the University of Chicago Library and Hope O'Keeffe of the Library of Congress for helping us with acquiring the maps that we used. For the editing of the book we would like to thank the Gulbenkian Foundation, particularly Razmik Panossian, for their financial support and advice, and to Rachel Harrell-Bilici for patiently editing the volume. We are grateful to our significant others for their support throughout this project. We would also like to thank Ronald Grigor Suny, Bülent Bilmez, Oktay Özel and Vahé Tachjian. Last but not least, the late Vangelis Kechriotis, who was very dear to us, knew of our book project and looked forward to helping us reach a wider audience in Turkey. We regret that he did not see the final outcome of our book, but having been an inspiration to many of us, we hope that this book will be a token in fulfilling the vision he had for the field of Ottoman Studies.

Yaşar Tolga Cora
Dzovinar Derderian
Ali Sipahi

Map 1 The eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire

Source: Detail from *Nouvelle carte générale des provinces asiatiques de l'Empire ottoman (sans l'Arabie)*, dressée par Henri Kiepert, Berlin 1883; autographié par W. Droysen (Berlin: Imprimerie H.S. Hermann, 1884). Courtesy of Map Collection, the University of Chicago Library.

INTRODUCTION

OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY'S BLACK HOLE

Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian and Ali Sipahi

Hardly any region of the Ottoman world has been so conspicuously ignored in Ottoman historiography as the eastern provinces of the empire. The pasts of places spatially marginal to the imperial centre, as the southern Arabian peninsula or northeastern Africa, have received richer documentation than the entire east of the empire. The western provinces and the region that is today denoted as the Middle East, on the other hand, have already served as the foundational pillars of what we know about the empire. In contrast, the Ottoman East has until recently remained outside of, and an anomaly to, any comprehensive investigation of the imperial past. It has stayed as a black hole in the middle of the historiographical map of the Ottoman Empire. The present volume is inspired by the scholarly effort of the last five to ten years to change the status quo, to write the history of this region, and to write it as *an* Ottoman history rather than a chapter of it. The contributors to the volume belong to a recent generation of scholars who aim to turn the black hole into another pillar of Ottoman historiography.

We call ‘the Ottoman East’ the geography roughly south of the Black Sea Coast, north of the Levant and east of the centre of the Antolian plateau, extending to the Ottoman borderline with Russia and Iran. Some have characterized this region as (Western) Armenia, others as (Northern) Kurdistan or as Eastern Anatolia. By taking the Ottoman East as a unit of analysis, we aim, first, to call for analytical perspectives which appreciate the coeval presence of Armenia, Kurdistan and Turkey in the lives of *every* people in the region. No matter what ethno-confessional identity individuals assumed, or were forced to assume, they all lived in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional geography. Second, without forgetting the dangers of essentialism, we still think that this region can be scrutinized in itself in order to demonstrate alternative economic, political and cultural systems – alternative to mainstream definitions of these social realms based on the characteristics of the empire's other regions. As a geography which stayed outside of the modern state's effective control for a long time, the Ottoman East provides an opportunity to see the social world in ways different from the state's vantage point and to enrich our understanding of how the imperial pasts were experienced. Third, we look forward to transforming the historiography of the overall empire by negating the epistemological privilege of the other regions and by putting forward the Ottoman East as a foundational element of the Ottoman world.

Eschewing the Ottoman East through Ottoman History

The Ottoman East has not only been understudied in the field of Ottoman studies, but it has often simply been avoided. No matter to what extent the eastern provinces have been studied, *the* Ottoman past has been the past of the empire's west. For example, *Ottoman Civilization*, a two-volume encyclopedic work, has no room for the Ottoman East.[1] Its structure follows the great oeuvre of editor Halil İnalcık and devotes the first volume to the classical age, of which the sole protagonist appears to be the imperial centre. Other regions can only step onto the stage of history in the nineteenth century, with the reform period (*Tanzimat*), but even then the periphery of the *Ottoman Civilization* consists only of Arab provinces and the Balkans.[2] In the *Cambridge History of Turkey*, for instance, the chapters in the section entitled 'The Center and the Provinces' consist of two articles on Arab lands and one on the Balkans. Moreover, the chapters on *the* Ottoman 'Culture and the Arts' (music, architecture, arts, and literature) never even consider the existence of other *cultures* in the Ottoman world, other than the elite culture of Istanbul.[3] For Ottoman historiography in general scholars still mainly refer to the music and poetry of the court in the classical age when they discuss 'Ottoman culture'.

Historians of the nineteenth century could not dismiss the Ottoman East since the Ottoman state was interested in the region. However, the characteristics of the region continued to be an exception to the rule. In the analyses of the relations of production on land, for example, the tribal system and large landholdings in southeastern Anatolia were seen as an anomaly with respect to the agricultural system of Turkey.[4] It is true that it was a different system, but no less a part of – and connected to – the Ottoman land system. In this volume, we aim to analyse (not minimize) the differences, the distinctive characters, the peculiarities of the Ottoman East, but we also resist turning the different patterns into a hierarchy of statuses. The chapters in this volume aim to demonstrate the Ottoman East's peculiarities and, at the same time, to complicate what Ottoman or Turkey might mean. When Doğan Avcıoğlu published his classical work *The Structure of Turkey* in 1968, İsmail Beşikçi attacked the title simply by publishing his own seminal work, *The Structure of Eastern Anatolia*, in 1969.[5] If Beşikçi showed us that Avcıoğlu's 'Turkey' was in fact only a fraction of Turkey, we wish to point out that anything 'Ottoman' in the literature almost never includes the lives in the Ottoman East even when the peripheries of the empire present the core of the historical analysis. Ironically enough, we do not have much information at hand about the eighteenth century of the Ottoman East even though the period supposedly witnessed the 'age of Ayans', namely the decentralization and the ascendency of provincial notables.

Why Has the Ottoman East Been Understudied?

People who escape state control leave fewer documents for historians. Suraiya Faroqhi reminds us:

As we are mainly concerned with the Ottoman perspective, to a very considerable extent the choice has been governed by the availability or otherwise of Ottoman sources, written by both

Muslims and Christians. Experience has shown that dependent principalities in the Ottoman orbit are by no means equally covered by the available documentation. Where archival materials are concerned, it remains an open question to what extent this variability can be explained by a greater or lesser concern on the part of the central government. According to the documents preserved in the Istanbul archives, it would appear that the central administration of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, at least in normal years, was more concerned with the Hijaz than with Trablusgarb (Tripolis in Africa) or the remote border principalities of eastern Anatolia.[6]

Thus the Ottoman East has stood conceptually isolated from other areas of the empire, both because tribal confederacies dominated it for centuries and because of the relative scarcity of written sources. Moreover, as a result of its violent past, many potential sources have been lost. For example, as a result of the 1915 genocide, written material, such as Armenian manuscripts, local prelacy archives, material objects and architectural buildings important for social and cultural history were either destroyed or dispersed to various parts of the world, in different archives as well as the homes of survivors. This situation renders a comprehensive study of the region harder.[7]

The difficulty in reaching the sources is only one part of the story. The nationalist policies of Republican Turkey for a long time impeded the study of the Ottoman East. As Oktay Özel has reminded us, until recently the Ottoman archive in particular was not as open as it is nowadays. Access to even the seventeenth-century documents could be restricted due to 'national security interests'.[8] The restrictions were applied almost exclusively to this region because working on the Ottoman East was and is, of course, working on the pasts of Kurds and Armenians: two ethnic groups that Turkey has chastized due to the war in the country's south-east and the denial of the Armenian genocide. Nevertheless, limited access to sources was only the milder part of the organized violence. The state has actively prosecuted and imprisoned scholars, most notably İsmail Beşikçi, simply because of the political implications of his historical theses on the socio-economic structure of the region based on ethnographic research. In Turkey, writing on Kurdistan's history or the Armenian genocide still stands as a reason to prevent the promotion of a scholar and as pretext for intimidating academic institutions. Along the same lines, an academic conference on Ottoman Armenians in 2005 could be held only under extreme anxiety as a result of a vast nationalist media campaign that attacked and threatened various contributors. The mainstream media continued to openly target intellectuals, which culminated in the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink's assassination on 19 January 2007.

Until recently in Turkey, studying the history of Armenia and Armenians, as well as Kurdistan and Kurds – the former having once constituted and the latter representing today a vast portion of the population of the eastern provinces of Turkey – has been extremely difficult, if not impossible. The denial of Kurdish identity and the denial of the Armenian genocide inadvertently meant the denial of a Kurdish presence and a vibrant Armenian past in the region. Consequently, serious academic work has generally been conducted by scholars residing outside of Turkey, particularly in the USA and in Europe. The current body of work would be inconceivable without the pioneering studies from earlier decades that will be touched upon

shortly.

The Existing Scholarship

The existing scholarship on the Ottoman East has been strictly compartmentalized into three area studies: Armenian Studies, Kurdish Studies, and the conventional Turkish/Ottoman studies. Armenian Studies has been the most institutionalized area of scholarship on the eastern provinces of Anatolia. With long-standing academic periodicals – most notably *The Armenian Review* (1948) and *Journal of Armenian Studies* (1975/85), and with the Armenian Studies programmes first at UCLA (1960s) and then in other prestigious American universities such as the University of Michigan (1981), as well as in the French academy – the study of Armenian history has long been practised in academic environments. Unfortunately, the nineteenth-century Ottoman East has received relatively less attention than expected; it will not be a great exaggeration to assert that most publications have been preoccupied either with pre-nineteenth-century (including ancient times) or early twentieth-century history (genocide studies). Moreover, political, intellectual and literary histories have always had an upper hand on social, economic and cultural histories. In the 2000s, new interest in local histories left us the invaluable UCLA Armenian History series on 'Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces' edited by Hovannisian, but even these works dedicate little room to shared history and to the nineteenth century.[9] Hence, although Armenian Studies produced some classic works on the region and period of this volume, most notably by Richard Hovannisian, Raymond Kévorkian, and many others, we still lack comprehensive works that examine the history of Ottoman Armenians in the Ottoman context.

Many historians in Armenian Studies have focused on the 'Armenian liberation movement' and on diplomatic history.[10] In contrast to what scholars in the West produced, relatively more authors in Soviet Armenia wrote on the socio-economic history of Western Armenia.[11] While Soviet Armenian historians continued to concentrate on the category of nation, they also considered class as another central unit of analysis. In addition Soviet Armenian scholarship problematized the role of the church. Most of these works largely rely on nineteenth-century newspapers and to a lesser extent on archival material found in Russia and Armenia.

When it comes to post-Soviet scholarship in Armenia the nation, the nation-state and national identity are uncritically used as categories that make up the backbone of Ottoman Armenian historiography. The paradigms that dominate the field are geopolitical concerns, genocide recognition and narratives produced to justify demands for reparations.[12] The persistent relations of enmity between the republics of Turkey and Armenia have impeded scholars and students alike from pursuing research that deviates from Armenia's state policy and from narratives of national victimhood in the Ottoman Empire.

Kurdish Studies is a relatively new area in the academy. *Kurdish Studies*, *Journal of Kurdish Studies* and *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* all started to be published in the 1990s, whereas Kurdish Studies programmes and centres have mostly been founded in the 2000s. Nonetheless, unlike Armenian Studies, the works on Kurds have less stringently

observed the conventional boundaries of area studies and have been published outside of institutional structures. Yet again, until recently the research-based academic works on the nineteenth-century social life of Ottoman Kurdistan remained limited to a handful of pioneering studies like those of Martin van Bruinessen (1992) and David McDowall (1996).[13] After the 2000s, Sinan Hakan and Janet Klein contributed with their original research in the field.[14] However, many other works on the Ottoman Kurds lack systematic historical research and/or pursue ungrounded myths. For example, national Kurdish historiography, mirroring national Turkish historiography, has tended to write a history of the region from the perspective of Kurdish notables of the nineteenth century and aimed to prove the 'Kurdishness' of the region.[15]

The privileged position of the Turkish identity in the late Ottoman governments and in Turkey paved the way for equating Turkish Studies to Ottoman Studies. The journals in this field have long been treated as representative of studies on the Ottoman Empire or on Turkey.[16] With the exception of the newer critical perspectives, Turkish Studies scholars have been interested in the Ottoman East mainly from a national vantage point. Targeting primarily the historiography on Ottoman Armenians, these works focused on so-called 'disloyal' or 'rebellious' activities of Kurds and Armenians in history. Scholars in Turkey projected the terrorism discourse of the 1980s on a homogenized concept of Armenian revolutionaries in the late empire, by picking some events and isolating them from their socio-economic context, not to mention silencing many other events. Therefore, overall Turkish historiography of the Ottoman East long served to prove the 'Turkishness' of the region, on the one hand, and to justify collective and state violence against Armenians and Kurds, on the other. To this day, Turkey officially regards academia as yet another arena for refuting and denying the Armenian genocide.

Ottoman Studies in general, of course, produced many studies that have shed light on certain dimensions of society, economy and culture in the Ottoman East. Jongerden and Verheij's edited volume on Diyarbekir was one of the first works in English to highlight the multi-ethnic composition of the region with an emphasis on the local socio-economic fabric. Özbek on security forces and on taxation, Deringil on conversion and self-orientalism, Kaiser, Polatel and Üngör on the confiscation of property, Dündar on the politics of demographic statistics, Reynolds on the Ottoman–Russian borderlands, Ateş on Ottoman–Iranian borderlands, and many other works have enriched our understanding of the region.[17] Moreover, we have seen the publication of a succession of monographs based on one city or one type of source.[18] Nevertheless, Hans-Lukas Kieser's seminal work on social transformation and trans-regional encounters in the eastern provinces remains the most in-depth analysis of the region as a whole.[19] Hence, we still need comprehensive works on the Ottoman East that would cross-cut the boundaries of area studies and monographs.

Problems Faced

The most important shortcoming of most (of course, not all) histories of the Ottoman East has

been the isolation of one ethno-religious identity (i.e., Armenians) or one type of event (i.e., massacres) or phenomenon (i.e., economy) from others and from the general imperial context. Especially the works produced under one of the fields of study mentioned above tend to isolate their topics from broader themes of Ottoman Studies as well as the regional, imperial and trans-imperial contexts. Still the trends and ideological currents of these works differ considerably depending on whether the works were conducted within Turkish, Armenian *or* Kurdish frameworks. Unfortunately, what Gerard Libaridian decades ago called the 'two historiographies', dominated by nationalist and nation-state perspectives, still holds true for the historiographies of the region. Speaking particularly of the history of Armeno–Turkish relations, Libaridian defined the problem as follows: 'the two histories are written as if two peoples that coexisted for centuries did not interact except when they crossed each others' paths during massacres, each performing the predetermined and inescapable role their characters mandated: one, that of the victim; the other, that of the victimizer'.[20]

As a result, many scholarly works present either a mono-ethnic history of a multi-ethnic region or mono-dimensional accounts of controversies. What we need, instead, is a shared history. By shared history, by no means do we mean a peaceful past, nor do we want to simply re-assert the co-existence of different ethno-religious communities in the Ottoman East. Shared history rather seeks to reconstruct all kinds of sociality among different groups, classes, and communities. Moreover, it endeavours to see the locality in connection to the broader world and write the history of the Ottoman East as part of world history. On the history of Armenians, Sebouh Aslanian pointed out the isolation imposed on regions and on the people by the existing literature:

The kind of scholarship suggested by world historians, one that is cognizant of cross-cultural interactions and sensitive to the 'connected histories' of cultures and regions and the circulation of elites, capital, and cultural forms across vast areas that nonetheless leave their socio-cultural traces or 'deposits' in cultures that are otherwise studied in isolation and insulation, has been largely absent in the way scholars have studied the Armenian past. An unwillingness or inability to contextualize the study of the Armenian past(s) in an interactive framework has resulted in the development of a field characterized by perspectives on Armenian history as largely 'autonomous' and standing apart from other histories and peoples instead of creatively interacting with them.[21]

The second shortcoming of the existing scholarship can be called capitalism-bias. The ideological–political reasons for the marginalization of the Ottoman East, such as the Armenian genocide or the war between the Turkish state and Kurdish guerillas, as opposed to a decade ago are being more openly discussed in certain academic circles and popular media. However, the epistemological predominance of capitalism's history over other histories has been so strong that even the sympathizers of the Ottoman East framed the region as the victim of abandonment by capitalism in the first place. As a result, if part of historiography looked through the glasses of the state only, the other part saw the region through the eyes of capitalism only. All history, thus, has been destined to be the history of capitalism.[22] Regions central to the development of capitalism became central to general historiography, too. Cities such as

Smyrna, Salonika, Adana, Beirut and Cairo became not only the nodes of commerce, but also the nodes of historiography. The rest has been perceived as hinterland. Alternative economic systems, such as the tribal economy, the economy of nomadic people, or the complex system of home-manufacture networks, are yet to be researched.[23]

Last but not least, the old paradigm of modernization theory dies hard. 'Despite all the many improvements', the late Donald Quataert wrote, 'Ottoman history writing still is powerfully-influenced by normative notions', such as the dominance of the state's and elites' perspectives and the prevalence of the modernization paradigm.[24] This is especially true for the nineteenth century – the age of reforms – and for the eastern provinces – the place of the failures of reform. In the narratives of progress, the Ottoman West is always the locomotive, and the rest is always a failure, or at best a late-comer. Historians have shown that the Ottoman state elite and the intellectuals treated the empire's east as a primitive black hole at the very edge of a civilization.[25] However, albeit in different tones, intellectuals outside of or in opposition to the centre's elite cadres also adopted the discourse of progress and the backwardness of the Ottoman East. Especially in the Republican period, local Kurdish intellectuals of the Ottoman East also participated in the construction of the region as a cultural other, but this time as a bastion of resistance.[26] In sum, the Ottoman East always tended to be seen in exceptional terms, which explains the capitalization of the term 'East' in our use of the term throughout the book.

Reaching Critical Mass

In recent years, however, scholarly activity regarding the nineteenth-century Ottoman East has experienced a tremendous rise. A new generation of doctoral candidates and recent PhD holders has begun to show unprecedented interest in the history of the region. In order to bring together scholars working on the Ottoman East on different continents and in different languages, an international workshop, *Shared History, Shared Geography: The Ottoman East*, was organized as part of the Armenian Studies Programme's International Graduate Student Workshop series at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, on 18–19 April 2013. In the following years, we reached out to a larger group of scholars and set out to prepare the current volume, which is designed as a compilation of the newest original contributions to the field.

Our aim was to grasp the moment even before having reached a critical mass of studies on the Ottoman East from unconventional perspectives. The last decade witnessed the expansion of the field. First, translation of rare primary sources into different languages added much to the project of shared historiography. To mention just a few, Antranik's *Dersim: Travelogue* (1900), three Armenian bishops' invaluable 1878 reports and Vahan Totovents' memoirs (1930) were translated from Armenian into Turkish.[27] Second, compilations of documents were published primarily on the early Republican period. Different collections on the Dersim Massacres (1938–39) and the compilations of Necmeddin Sılan's private archives (1939–53) on 'the Eastern Question' by Tarih Vakfı (History Foundation) in Turkey are the best examples.[28]

Second, a recent generation of scholars turned their face to hitherto neglected histories of the Ottoman East and produced an inspiring body of dissertation works which are, we hope, soon to be published. Besides the contributors to this volume, Zeynep Türkyılmaz's work on the heterodox communities and conversion, Ertem's on the politics of famine, Akarca's on the Ottoman–Russian borderland, Antaramian's on Armenian ecclesiastical networks as a site of Ottoman politics, Yektan Türkyılmaz's on violence and victimhood among Van's Armenians, Ghalib's on the Kurdish emirates in the first half of the nineteenth century, Özok-Gündoğan's on the politics of land and taxation regarding the Kurdish emirates, to cite a few, have in a distinguished way contributed to the field in the last five years.[29] As in all cases of emerging scholarships, new dissertations based on original research have constituted the backbone of the new field.

The current volume gives the reader access to the findings of recent research on the Ottoman East while the iron is hot: the field is now being shaped and its future direction is yet to be formed, collectively. We anticipate that in ten years the academic and non-academic works on the Ottoman East will proliferate at such a pace that even reviewing the existing literature will become quite an intricate job. Hence, we offer this book as an invitation to further discussions, debates, and collaborative projects about the various methodologies of writing the shared history of the Ottoman East. A black hole cannot be illuminated simply by turning the lights on; a stage has to be set, questions have to be asked, concepts have to be re-formulated. We believe that the following pages will help prepare the ground and set the criteria for future studies.

Notes

1. Halil İnalcık and Günsel Renda, eds, *Ottoman Civilization*, 2 vols (Ankara: Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture, 2003).
2. İnalcık's entire oeuvre is based on the imperial centre, on Western Anatolia and the Balkans, and to some extent on the Arab lands. Similarly, Ömer Lütfi Barkan's data mostly come from the Balkans. We criticize not the limitations of these pioneering early works but their being referred to as the representative of a single ‘Ottoman’ land tenure, or culture, or political system.
3. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
4. See for example, Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (Verso, 1987), 131–2.
5. Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Düzeni (Dün–Bugün–Yarın)* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1968); İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni – Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller* (Ankara: E Yayınları, 1969).
6. Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London: I.B.Tauris,

2004), 81.

7. Many Armenian manuscripts produced in Van or Mush, for instance, were eventually transferred to the Armenian Manuscript Museum in Yerevan. Other documents were transferred to the Republic of Armenia National Archives, the Charents Art and Literature Museum in Yerevan, the Armenian Patriarchate's archives in Jerusalem, and some material to the Nubar Library in Paris, among other places. For information on these transfers, see Levon Khachikyan and Asatur Mnatsakanyan, *Tsutsak Dzeragrats Mashtotsi Anvan Matenadarani. Vol. 1.* Haykakan SSR Gitutyunneri Akademiayi hratarakchutyun: Yerevan, 1965; Bedross Der Matossian, 'The Genocide Archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem'. *Armenian Review* 52, no. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2011): 15–37.
8. Oktay Özel, *Türkiye 1643 – Goşa'nın Gözleri* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013).
9. In this 11-volume series, except three volumes on Constantinople, Smyrna and Cilicia, all are on the cities and towns of the Ottoman East. Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2000); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Baghesh/Bitlis and Taron/Mush* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2001); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Karin/Erzerum* (Costa Mesa, CA.: Mazda Publishers, 2003); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2004); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Tigranakert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006); Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenian Pontus: The Trebizond–Black Sea Communities* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2009); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Kars and Ani* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2011).
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PART I

TRANS-REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY: BORDERS, IMMIGRANTS AND COSMOPOLITANISM

CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE OF THE TRABZON–ERZURUM–BAYEZID ROAD IN REGIONAL POLITICS AND OTTOMAN DIPLOMACY, 1850s–1910s

Fulya Özkan

In 1912, Mehmet Emin Bey, the governor of Erzurum, a major trade hub in eastern Anatolia, wrote a long report in which he complained about the lack of roads in his province. The report dramatically described how slowly public works progressed in Erzurum. Socio-economic conditions in his region were especially poor compared to other provinces, which had already benefited from railroad connection and electrification. Therefore, the residents of Erzurum lived in poverty. To overcome this destitution, the governor emphasized that the Ottoman state urgently needed to follow the path of 'advanced' nations (*nesl-i mütemeddin-i beşer*), which required a full-scale road reform. According to the governor, to be able to benefit from its natural resources, a country should have a good road network. Thanks to their own improved transportation facilities, the European powers were able to impose on nations that had failed to develop their public works. The governor thought, however, that the Ottomans were one of those nations which insisted on ignoring 'progressive' ideas such as road reform. The result was unfair economic treaties and many lost wars. Thus, remembering the recent Italian attack on Tripoli in 1911, the governor saw roads as a significant means to defend the empire against its enemies. In other words, roads were of both political and military significance, as no nation could stay politically independent or militarily strong without economic independence. In this context, the governor thought that roads in Erzurum would protect the empire from the expansion of Imperial Russia.[1]

Similarly, about ten years prior to the above-mentioned report, the authors of the Trabzon provincial yearbook also stressed that roads had both military and economic functions.[2] Moreover, the military function of roads was related not only to the defence of the empire against its foreign enemies but also to protection from its own subjects, because roads served to prevent vagabondage and theft, which were the outcome of unemployment.[3] Thus, by the early twentieth century, Ottoman statesmen were aware that they needed to reform the imperial road network in order to 'save' the empire. As a matter of fact, this idea had become a concern for them as early as the mid-nineteenth century. For example, provincial elites thought that the construction of roads was at least as important as the elimination of the unjust taxation system;[4]

the founding father of the *Tanzimat*, Mustafa Reşid Pasha, believed that the construction of roads was an indispensable part of civilization;[5] and the 1856 Reform Act (*Islahat Fermanı*) prescribed the formation of roads in order to increase the facilities of communication and the sources of wealth.[6]

In this context, Ottoman ruling elites, both at the central and local levels, started renovating the Trabzon–Erzurum–Bayezid road in 1850. Only a few months later, however, the construction stopped because of harsh weather conditions. Construction started again in 1857 and continued for the next 14 years. During this long period, only the section between Trabzon and Erzurum was completed. Moreover, when construction ended in 1871, certain parts of this section had already started deteriorating and needed repair because the renovation had taken such a long time. Furthermore, the other half of the road between Bayezid and Erzurum was never completely renovated during the Ottoman Empire. Last but not least, the section between Trabzon and Erzurum also needed frequent repairs after 1871. The construction and repair processes took such a long time because of several difficulties, ranging from financial constraints to technical problems, from official disagreements to corruption, and from organizational defects to natural conditions. In other words, the construction was a never-ending process. A 'simple' engineering project thus turned into a long-term process, which continued from the late 1840s – when the initial plans were made – to the late 1910s, the end of the Ottoman Empire

Figure 1.1 The Trabzon–Erzurum–Bayezid Road

Source: B.O.A., HRT.h. 406.

Part of the reason for this prolongation was the ambivalence inherent in the reform agenda: the state attempted to govern society through the construction of roads, which in reality contributed to the further acceleration of mobility and thus to dynamism and instability. In its essence, the Ottoman road reform had two major goals: one, administrative, and the other, economic. While providing greater security, roads also created a domestic market. To achieve both of these goals, roads were essential because they would connect the provinces both to the centre and to one another. In short, roads would unify the empire. This is how the Ottoman statesmen envisioned the enhanced road network in theory. In reality, however, different state actors were in disagreement about how exactly roads would serve that function. There was a difference both between central and local authorities, and among provincial officials themselves. Thus, there was not a specific 'state' goal.

One of the best ways to observe this fragmented nature of the modern Ottoman state may be to divide the imperial geography into the different spatial levels within which the Trabzon–Bayezid road functioned. While Ottoman statesmen renovated their road system in order to create both political and economic unity within the empire and to separate it from others (mostly Russia and Iran in this context), roads also, as I will show below, turned into subversive spaces, functioning against the very logic of creating borderlines between different political entities. The implicit dilemmas and contradictory aspects of the reform agenda brought into question the very idea of strict borders. Pointing out this aspect of the reform serves to reveal the invalidity of the assumption that the local was absorbed within the 'national' along with the emergence of modern states. According to this view, 'scholars understand the state to be the culmination of a process transcending the old localized organizations in societies, which had previously made the rules'.[7] In contrast, I argue that the geographical ambivalence inherent in the road reform can further contribute to the argument that the very nature of modernization was actually contradictory and inconsistent and that its logic counteracted the creation of a structural order of neatly separated provincial and imperial borders.

Analysing the variety of the spatial frameworks within which the Trabzon–Bayezid road functioned can also contribute to the depiction of modernity as an unstable and incoherent process. In the last instance, modernization, which initially seemed to be a progressive idea, also involved, in its essence, a conservative aspect. As Lefebvre suggests, 'the contradiction between the demands of mobility and the general preoccupation with stability, security, structure, 'structuring', and equilibrium' is one of the 'several genuine traits of modernity'.[8] In more general terms, as David Harvey states,

[m]odernism's travails were internal. How to contain flowing and expanding processes in a fixed spatial frame of power relations, infrastructures and the like could not easily be resolved. The result was a social system that was all too prone to creative destruction.[9]

These lines manifest the inherently contradictory nature of modernity: the optimistic belief in a better future promises change and progress which, in turn, need to be balanced and controlled by order and discipline. As Lefebvre suggests, this contradiction has been intrinsic to the meaning of the word 'modern' from the very beginning. The term 'involved the double idea of renewal and of regularity in renewal' or the 'idea of cyclical regularity of change, and of change as norm'.[10] Thus, Lefebvre defines modernity as 'a fruitless attempt to achieve structure and coherence. Everything leads us to the conclusion that structures are being 'destructured' even before they have gained a coherent internal stability.'[11]

Along these lines, this chapter will analyse the renovation process of the Trabzon–Bayezid road across three spatial categories. The first section will outline the importance of the road from the perspective of the regional economy, which transcended the borders of the Ottoman Empire and established ties with the Russian Caucasus. The next two sections will discuss the local rivalries and tensions both between Erzurum and Trabzon provincial governments and within the general public of each province. Last but not least, the final section will focus on the

trans-imperial importance of the road as it became a hotly debated topic among the diplomatic circles of the Ottoman, Qajar, Russian, British and French states.

Regional Economy

In 1909, Erzurum's governor Mehmet Celal Bey wrote a report in which he argued that the province urgently needed a road to connect to the Black Sea. In the absence of roads, people could export only their livestock; but they faced difficulty in transporting agricultural produce. The lack of sufficient transportation facilities also turned minor crop failures into widespread famine. On the other hand, when eastern Anatolia benefited from a good harvest, the result was a decline in local grain prices because the province lacked a road network that would allow it to transport its surplus grain to other markets.[12]

These observations point out the regional and trans-imperial framework within which the road functioned. Fresh produce decomposed in Erzurum's storehouses, while the neighbouring province had to import food supplies from Europe and the Americas in order to feed its population of 1,500,000. This was the case because Trabzon lacked fertile soil. In turn, Trabzon financed the imbalance in its trade income with the remittances of its residents – predominantly from Lazistan sub-province – who worked in the Russian mines. At the same time, however, there were rich iron, copper, and coal mines on Hınıs Mountain just to the south of Erzurum. Thus, instead of immigrating to Russia as seasonal workers, residents of Trabzon could actually work in Ottoman mines. This irony could be resolved only if the two provinces were able to communicate with one another in an efficient manner.[13]

In other words, with better transportation facilities, Lazistan sub-province could be integrated into the local economy of Erzurum and overcome its isolation from the rest of the empire which was caused by its closeness to the Russian border. Above all, if transportation were cheaper, Erzurum's agricultural produce could compete with the foreign goods that Trabzon imported. Due to high transportation costs and variances in local prices, however, Erzurum's merchants preferred to keep their products in warehouses until a more appropriate time – like famine or war – arrived and they could sell their goods at a higher profit.[14]

Whereas Trabzon needed Erzurum's grain, Erzurum needed to import timber and fresh produce such as fruit and vegetables from Trabzon. Due to the lack of dense forests, Soğanlı Mountain near Sarıkamış had been the closest and primary source of timber for Erzurum – as Alexander Pushkin, who travelled to the city in 1829, confirmed[15] – until the Treaty of Berlin, which concluded the 1877–78 Russo–Ottoman War, assigned Soğanlı Mountain to Imperial Russia.[16] Thereafter Erzurum faced a serious shortage of timber and Derindere Forest (located between Trabzon and Bayburt) became the province's closest source of timber.[17] In this context, the maintenance of the Trabzon–Erzurum road became even more urgent and the central government decided also to repair the Derindere road, which linked the forest to the main Trabzon–Erzurum road.[18]

In exchange for timber, fruit, and vegetables, Erzurum also exported yearly 1,600 tons of

leather, wool, eggs, cheese, dried beef, catgut, suet, linseed, asphodel, beeswax, and straw mats in the early twentieth century. In return, the province imported 16,000 tons of goods from outside. For example, the province was importing iron, copper, sugar, and kerosene from Russia. Russians sent these items to Trabzon by sea and then Trabzon transported them to Erzurum. Russian ships also sold flour and corn to the residents of Lazistan sub-province. Finally, the region also imported ironware and copperware from Europe.[19]

To summarize, there was a triangular trade between Trabzon, Erzurum, and Russia and in this picture, Lazistan sub-province of Trabzon seemed to be economically more integrated to Russia than to the Ottoman Empire. Trabzon imported grain from foreign markets (including Russia, Europe and the Americas) in exchange for sending mine-workers to Russia. As for Erzurum, the province was importing fresh produce and timber from Trabzon, but the volume of this trade was not matched by the export of grain to Trabzon because of high transportation costs. Therefore, more efficient transportation facilities between the two provinces promised to establish a new triangular relationship with the Lazistan sub-province which would replace Russia. In this ideal world, Erzurum would be able to export grain to the local markets of neighbouring Trabzon province in exchange for importing both fresh produce and miners from Trabzon. Thus, Lazistan could begin to send its miners to Erzurum, instead of Russia, who in turn would start working in mines on Hınıs Mountain just to the south of Erzurum.

Although this alternative map of the regional economy would appear to benefit all parties, the Trabzon–Erzurum road continued to be a major source of debate for both provincial governments throughout most of the nineteenth century. At the root of the debate lay the question of the primary function of the road. For Trabzon, the road had commercial significance because, as the biggest port city of the eastern Black Sea coast, the province wanted to extract as many resources as possible from interior regions and thus increase the volume of trade that passed through its harbour. On the contrary, for Erzurum, the main function of the road was to serve the military, since the province was, for the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the centre of the Ottoman Fourth Army. These two divergent perspectives created differences in terms of how the local population would make use of the road and which alternative routes should be renovated. These matters will be the subject of the following sections.

Provincial Governments in Disagreement

Northeastern Anatolia, through which the Trabzon–Bayezid road passed, was not confined to Ottoman territories but, as the previous section has shown, had close ties with northern Iran and the Caucasus. Paradoxically, while the road linked Ottomans with their neighbours, disconnections among the parts of the region that belonged to the Ottoman northeast persisted. Various actors debated how the different parts of this region should come together, or whether they should come together at all. For example, in the early twentieth century, the quest to find a shorter road from Erzurum to the Black Sea was on many officials' agendas. In 1903, Erzurum's provincial government complained that its surplus agricultural produce decayed in storehouses since the Trabzon road was too long, thus making transportation too expensive.[20]

This complaint on the part of the Erzurum provincial government was not unique to the early twentieth century. On the contrary, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the debate about alternative roads had continued unabated. Most of the time, the alternative route proposed by the bureaucrats of Erzurum connected the city not to Trabzon, but to Rize. As we shall see, they suggested several possible reasons for this. One of the early examples of this attempt on the part of Erzurum officials to create an alternative route to Rize comes from 1858, when the construction of the Trabzon road had only recently started.

In 1858, after the Erzurum–Bayburt section was finished, the Trabzon provincial assembly suggested that the state should extend the road using the same procedure, meaning the use of forced labour. This part of the road, however, was much more difficult to build. The construction therefore required more capital and the application of the forced labour system demanded a complex organization. On these grounds, Arif Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, suggested that the state not construct the road with new techniques, but only widen it and move it away from cliffs so that two coaches or two loaded animals could pass at the same time.[21] Even though the governor provided some justification for his proposal, it remains unclear why he did not want the state to use new techniques for the construction of a road that would connect his province to the sea.

Yet another incident suggests that Arif Pasha clearly did not want the road to be modernized.[22] In 1859, two engineers sent by the central government arrived in Trabzon to inspect the construction. Bad weather conditions interrupted their inspection and Trabzon's governor İzzet Pasha demanded that Istanbul send the engineers back so that they could carry out a second inspection. Arif Pasha, however, claimed that he had recently observed the road on his way to Istanbul and that it was in good order. The governor found no need for further inspection.[23]

Simultaneously, a debate was occurring between the government and the general staff about where the centre of the imperial army in Anatolia should be. If Erzurum were to become the new military centre, as opposed to Erzincan, then another road could be built to connect Erzurum not to Trabzon, but directly to Rize in Lazistan sub-province.[24] In this scenario, the construction of the Trabzon road would be redundant, since the Rize road would provide a shorter route linking the city to the Black Sea. If the army remained in Erzincan, however, the Trabzon road would first be diverted from Gümüşhane to Erzincan – an extra 24 hours – and then connect from Erzincan to Erzurum.[25] Moreover, in this scenario, the road would bypass Bayburt, whose economy depended upon commerce along the Trabzon–Erzurum road.

The governor of Erzurum, Arif Pasha, advocated that the centre of the army should shift from Erzincan to Erzurum because that would not only give his city greater political significance but also provide it with a shorter road to Rize. Moreover, if Erzurum became the new centre, Bayburt would not lose its importance. Still, due to the Erzurum–Rize road's proximity to the Russian border, authorities decided to refrain from building this alternative route. In the end, construction continued on the Trabzon road.[26] As the following section will clarify, this clash of interest between Erzurum and Trabzon provincial governments was not a unique event. On the contrary, the disagreement about alternative roads continued for many

more decades.

Ohannes' Ottoman Company: Economic Benefits versus Military Hazards

In 1873, the initiative of Ohannes, an Armenian resident of Trabzon, to establish a coach company between Trabzon and Erzurum caused another round of tension between the two provinces. By 1873, two years had passed since the completion of the Trabzon–Erzurum road. Yet the road had not yielded the expected results, such as an increase in commerce or agricultural production. According to Ohannes, the absence of a coach company was the reason for this disappointment. Peasants and merchants still used animal power to carry their goods. This prevented a decline in transportation costs.[27] Under these circumstances, Ohannes saw the foundation of a coach company as the only means of accelerating transportation and turning the road into a profitable investment.

It is meaningful that Ohannes' offer coincided with the annulment of the transit tariff in 1873.[28] Most probably, Ohannes expected an increase in the number of merchants who would prefer the Trabzon–Erzurum road instead of alternative routes to the Caucasus. Therefore, he wanted to benefit from the growth in traffic. While negotiations between the government and Ohannes continued, the Porte accidentally (*sehven*) sent the correspondence to Erzurum instead of Trabzon. The governor of Erzurum was offended because he believed that he should have been involved in the negotiations right from the beginning. Ohannes might be a resident of Trabzon, but the company that he offered to establish was going to operate between Trabzon and Erzurum. Thus, dwellers of both provinces would use it. Moreover, the headquarters of the Fourth Army was located in Erzurum and the company claimed that it would carry military equipment during both peace and wartime. Under these circumstances, the company could pave the way for foreigners to spy on the Ottoman Empire. This would have been very dangerous, especially considering the proposed conveyance of weapons during wartime. In the end, Istanbul did not allow Ohannes to establish the company – most likely because of fears of espionage.[29] Although the governor emphasized 'spying' as a possible cause for the cancellation of the project when he addressed the imperial centre, there may, of course, have been other reasons for his opposition to the construction of this road – like a collaboration with the local merchants who hoarded grain.

Six years later, in 1879, some bureaucrats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still remembered Ohannes' offer. In their estimation, it represented a lost opportunity. First, the journey between the two cities could have been reduced by five or six days and transportation costs could have been reduced by 15 per cent. Second, the company would have assumed the repair of the road and prevented smuggling, thus increasing the export income of the Ottoman Empire.[30] This case provides a good example of how disputes between different provincial offices were not driven by personal disagreements. Just as in the 1858 case when the Erzurum governor emphasized the military aspects of the road, in 1873, too, the provincial government of Erzurum seemed to be more concerned about spying and espionage than local economic

needs. Hence, the Trabzon–Erzurum road created a context in which provinces became actors with certain strategic needs, and the real actors, meaning the bureaucrats who occupied official positions, basically complied with their cities' structural needs. Moreover, there were not only disagreements between provincial centres, but there were many different agendas and conflicting interests even within a single province as rival towns competed with one another for commercial dominance.

Alternative Routes

In 1874, Mr Riva, the chief engineer of Trabzon, wrote a report supporting the construction of the Rize–Erzurum road instead of the Trabzon–Erzurum route. By 1874, the Russians had already constructed the Poti–Tbilisi railroad. Therefore, Riva expected Iranian transit trade to shift to the Caucasus and proposed the construction of the Rize road as an alternative route to compete with Russia. In order not to undermine the importance of Trabzon harbor, Riva also advocated constructing another road between Gümüşhane and Diyarbekir. This road would pass through Erzincan and Harput.[31] Thus, Trabzon would cease to be the harbour of eastern Anatolia – especially of Erzurum and Van – and would gain a new function as the harbour of the southeast via the Trabzon–Diyarbekir road.

In a sense, Riva proposed a complete remapping of regional economies. Diyarbekir was geographically tied to Samsun on the Black Sea coast with a road that passed through Harput, Sivas, Tokat, Zile, and Amasya. The direction of this track was determined, as were many other 'natural veins' in Anatolia, by the course of the mountain ranges and valleys.[32] In this context, the Diyarbekir–Samsun road was one of the three main arteries that linked Istanbul to the different parts of Asia Minor and thus crossed Anatolia from east to west (of the other two routes, one started at Aleppo in the south, and the other at Kars in the north).[33]

Instead of keeping the natural ties between Samsun and Diyarbekir, Riva offered a shortcut between Trabzon and Diyarbekir. The suggestion seems logical, since Trabzon is located directly to the north of Diyarbekir, whereas Samsun is far away to the northwest of the city. In other words, as the crow flies, Diyarbekir is much closer to Trabzon than to Samsun. The area between Harput and Erzincan, however, is too mountainous compared to the longer but safer route that linked Harput to Samsun. Therefore, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed in the early twentieth century, long-established ties between Diyarbekir and Samsun would still survive in the presence of a shorter but impassable route that led from Diyarbekir to Trabzon.

Three years later, in 1877, Riva wrote a second report and refrained from constructing the Rize–Erzurum road because the ongoing Russo–Ottoman War had clearly revealed Russian intentions regarding Lazistan sub-province, of which Rize was a part. A road this close to the Russian border could prove to be a military burden rather than an economic facilitator.[34] Moreover, Riva was not the only actor advocating the construction of alternative routes. The need to constantly repair the Trabzon–Erzurum road also concerned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A document addressed to the minister, Saffet Pasha, suggested building a new road between Bayburt and Sürmene (to the east of Trabzon), thus completely abandoning the current

route through Gümüşhane.[35] In 1880, Riva wrote a third report, in which he continued to stress the drawbacks of the Rize route.[36]

Meanwhile, some ‘prominent men’ (*erbab-ı malumattan bazı zevat*) rejected Riva's assertion that the Rize road was at least as difficult to build as the Trabzon road. According to them, Rize Bay could easily be turned into a port with very little expenditure.[37] We do not know who exactly these people were, but most likely they were the local notables of Lazistan who hoped to profit from turning their small town into a large port city. For example, back in 1865, people in Rize had protested against the construction of the Trabzon–Erzurum road because it jeopardized the development of their town for the sake of another, namely Trabzon. The protest was supported both by laypeople and notables.[38] The reaction to Riva's 1880 report suggests that this protest of 1865 was not an isolated incident. In 1880, the inhabitants of Rize still preferred the construction of a road between their town and Erzurum.

At last, the Public Works Commission concluded that the only problem with the Trabzon road was its steepness. In the 1860s, engineers had made the mistake of building the road on the steepest parts between Trabzon and Bayburt (in other words, the infamous Gümüşhane region). Now, in 1880, if authorities wanted to reduce transportation costs, they had only to slightly change the route and repair the decayed sections, which totalled just 60km. Even though two members of the commission objected that the cost of repairing the Gümüşhane section was not worth the effort because of its frequent deterioration, the central government concluded that the other two alternatives (the Erzurum–Rize and Erzurum–Sürmene roads) were militarily too dangerous because of their proximity to the Russian border. Therefore, the Sublime Porte ordered the repair of the Trabzon–Erzurum road.[39]

In the early twentieth century, the idea of building the alternative Erzurum–Rize road came onto the scene once more. By this time, it was no longer only the residents of Rize who campaigned for the construction of this alternative route; the governor of Erzurum also joined their ranks in promoting the road for commercial reasons. According to the governor, Ottomans living in Lazistan sub-province were regularly immigrating to Russia. At the same time, grain moldered in the storehouses of Erzurum Plain, just a few kilometres away to the south of the Ispir Mountains that separated Lazistan from Erzurum province. In this context, a road which connected Rize with Erzurum would not only feed the residents of Lazistan, but Erzurum would also gain access to the timber supplies of this neighbouring sub-province of Trabzon. Therefore, the governor of Erzurum thought that the Sublime Porte would be better off if it stopped insisting on repairing the dangerous Trabzon–Erzurum road and instead constructed the Erzurum–Rize route.[40]

The governor of Erzurum sent a separate letter to the Ministry of Interior in which he justified his preference for the Rize road from a military point of view. To the opponents of the road who thought that it was too close to the Russian border, the governor replied that it was no more dangerous than any other route that connected Erzurum to the Black Sea coast. Unless the Ottoman Empire had a strong navy in the Black Sea, it could not prevent Russia from using the Rize, Trabzon, Giresun or Samsun roads to advance from the shoreline into Anatolia. In other words, according to the governor, the Ottoman state should either cut all ties between the

Black Sea and the interior regions or agree to build the Rize road.[41]

Two years later, the Ottoman state entered World War I and the disintegration of the empire started. Until the very end, discussion about the rival Trabzon and Rize roads continued unabated. The proximity of Rize to the Russian border and the emigration of its residents to this neighbouring country were two hotly debated issues. Moreover, as the 1865 protest and the reaction to the engineer Riva's report in 1880 show, Rize dwellers, who were actually official residents of Trabzon province, sided with the bureaucrats of Erzurum in order to promote their commercial interests. Here, we see once more that the structural needs of a certain locality prevailed over personal debates and indeed, they even created alliances between officials and dwellers of neighbouring provinces, which lasted for several decades. In other words, the provincial borders which were neatly drawn on official maps failed to create imagined communities within a unified province. Moreover, Russia was attracting to its domains not only Ottoman migrants but also Iranian transit trade merchants, the subject of the next section.

The Trabzon–Bayezid Road in Transimperial Context

The Trabzon–Bayezid road was significant not only for the Ottomans, but had a world historical importance, as well. It was of interest to the Ottoman Empire's neighbours and to various European powers that had a stake in the road's commercial value. Russia had started improving transportation facilities in the Caucasus back in the 1850s, almost simultaneously with the Ottoman road reform policy. This attempt to compete with the Ottoman Empire was not only a concern for the Ottomans, but for their allies as well, especially Britain and France, who feared the increase of Russian influence in Iran. In this context, the Trabzon–Erzurum road was regarded as a means of restricting the Russian advance into the south, which would cut the connection between Europe and British India. We now turn to this transimperial significance of the road for world trade and politics and examine how different imperial actors, ranging from European consuls to Iranian merchants, had a stake in the road's history.

The Ottoman state did not generally interpret European concerns as an outrageous intervention into its internal affairs, but took their demands seriously as long as they did not clash with its own interests. For example, the Ottoman initiative to construct the road coincided with European demands for a well-maintained route in eastern Anatolia which would constitute an alternative to Caucasian roads maintained by Russia. In other words, with regards to the maintenance of the road, Ottoman and European interests reinforced each other. At the same time, however, as I will demonstrate below, Ottomans were hesitant to abolish customs duties on the Iranian transit trade, another demand frequently mentioned by the Europeans.

From early on, the Ottoman state acknowledged the transnational importance of the Trabzon–Bayezid road. In 1847, the Porte expected the customs revenue of the road to be 91,000 liras, a sum that they were at risk of losing because the Russians were contemplating building a road between Sukhumi (on the Black Sea coast, in the north of present-day Georgia) and Yerevan. Russian competition would also endanger Ottoman transporters’ and innkeepers’

income, which was around 18,000 liras annually. Moreover, northeastern towns such as Trabzon, Sürmene, and Of could start importing wheat and barley from Russia rather than Erzurum, Erzincan, and Bayburt. This would mean another loss of income worth roughly 45,000 liras. In order to retain these revenues, the Ottoman government deemed it urgent to construct the Trabzon–Bayezid road.[42]

The French also raised concerns about Russian roads that connected Iran to the Black Sea. They were not only shorter but also in much better condition, which allowed coaches to operate. In contrast, caravans frequently had to deal with deep pits on the decayed Trabzon–Erzurum road, which injured many animals. Thus, it was not surprising that Iranian merchants preferred Russian roads. The shift of the Iranian transit trade to Russia, however, would be devastating for the Ottoman economy. First, Trabzon harbour would lose most of its income. Erzurum's economy would also suffer if it were no longer a trading hub. Last but not least, the 7,000 people who, along with their 35,000 draft animals, lived along the road and earned their living from transportation, would lose their livelihoods.[43]

The British were also concerned about the potential Russian competition and recommended that the Ottomans reduce the transit tax to 1 per cent in 1850. The British consul in Erzurum thought that the increase in the city's export of wheat after the completion of the Trabzon–Erzurum road would compensate for this loss.[44] Meanwhile, the British were also involved in planning the construction of a road that would connect Erzurum to the Iranian border at Bayezid.[45] When the Ottoman state halted the construction of the Trabzon–Erzurum road in 1850, it therefore disappointed many Europeans. The French consul accused Trabzon's governor of wasting a lot of money and thought that only a European company could finish the project. Otherwise, the Ottoman Empire would lose the Iranian trade to the Russians.[46] Thus when Russia declared three years later that it was about to finish paving the road that connected Tbilisi to the Black Sea, France's fears were realized. Moreover, Russia had recently stopped collecting customs tax from the Iranian merchants along the Tbilisi road. These conditions would no doubt mean a loss of income for Erzurum residents, who would no longer enjoy the advantage of living near a trade route.[47]

At the end of 1860, all parties were relieved when Russia faced many difficulties in constructing the Poti road.[48] Two years later, however, the governor of Trabzon was once more concerned about possible Russian competition. This time, Russia was extending its road network to Batumi. Therefore, the governor demanded an experienced engineer from Istanbul who would speed up the construction of the Erzurum road.[49] In 1864, the Porte once more attributed Russian competition to the risks and dangers of the Trabzon–Erzurum road.[50] Therefore, as an incentive to travellers, the Trabzon provincial government wanted to cancel the 2 per cent transit tax.[51] Meanwhile, Russia completed construction on the road that connected Poti and Iran through Tbilisi and Nakhchivan. Travel on this road was 24 hours shorter than the old route. The Russian government also promised financial compensation for the losses that merchants faced while travelling in Russia. On 1 July 1864, the Russian consul in Erzurum announced this news to the merchants. The Ottoman customs office consulted with Iranian merchants and confirmed that they were reluctant to use the Caucasian road. The officer

was unsure, however, how Russian and French merchants would respond to these changes.[52]

In 1865, Iranian cotton products were transported mostly via Poti and Tbilisi rather than through Erzurum and Trabzon. At the same time, Russia employed 100,000 soldiers in order to finish the railroad between the Black and Caspian seas.[53] By 1866, Ottoman authorities had still not taken any substantial measures. The Russian railroad that would connect the Black and Caspian seas, however, was expected to be ready in two years and Russia now employed 200,000 soldiers. They also considered building a harbour at Poti. At this stage, the British consulate in Erzurum declared that construction of a road connecting Trabzon not just to Erzurum, but all the way to Bayezid, was the only means of competing with Russia.[54]

These accounts portray the Trabzon–Bayezid road as an issue on which the Ottoman, French, and British empires allied against Russia. There were also clashes within this alliance, as the discussion about the annulment of the transit tax below will make clear. Moreover, the British had spies in Trabzon who gathered intelligence on French citizens who seemed to be interested in the Trabzon–Erzurum road project.[55] Without consulting the British, the Ottomans also took the liberty of negotiating with the French concerning the road. For example, in 1868, the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered the consulate in Paris to announce in French newspapers that they would contract the construction to a foreign company. The consulate replied that they had already contacted a certain Marc Dmitri, who was very interested in the project.[56]

In early 1868, Iranian transit traffic on the Trabzon–Bayezid route continued to increase in spite of the Russian rivalry.[57] Only a couple of months later, however, the British consul to Trabzon once more stated the dangers posed by the Poti road.[58] Thus in 1869, Russian competition was again an issue of concern.[59] According to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the construction of the Trabzon–Erzurum road was no longer enough to prevent merchants from relocating to the Caucasus. In addition, the Ottoman state needed to annul the collection of duties at the Trabzon customs house.[60] Only under these circumstances would Ottomans stand a chance of attracting Iranians back to their territories, because they had some advantages that the Russians lacked. For example, Iranian merchants could communicate in Turkish, but not in Russian.[61] Another reason why Iranians preferred the Tbilisi–Poti road, however, was banditry on the Trabzon–Bayezid road and the difficulty faced in claiming reparations for stolen goods. In 1869 trade along the Trabzon–Erzurum road experienced considerable losses. Moreover, because of heavy winds, conditions at Trabzon harbour were not very helpful, either. Frequently ships had to take shelter at Polathane Bay, 11km west of Trabzon.[62]

Finally, in 1869, the Ottoman state decided to reduce the transit tax from 2 to 1 per cent.[63] If the Iranian merchants returned to the Trabzon–Erzurum road, it reasoned, muleteers who had recently lost their jobs could be reemployed. Besides, the high number of muleteers would lead to competition and decrease transportation costs. Furthermore, less expensive transportation was expected to facilitate agricultural production. Peasants would begin farming empty lands and the prices of agricultural products would decrease by 30 to 40 per cent.[64]

Therefore in 1870, despite Russian competition, Trabzon was still the main harbour through which the Iranian transit trade passed.[65]

In 1873, however, the Ottoman state annulled the transit tax altogether.[66] This was the year when the Ottoman transit trade revenue from the Trabzon–Erzurum road, which had been increasing ever since 1866 (even though the level of growth was decreasing at the same time), finally ceased to rise.[67] However, the annulment of the transit duty failed to attract Iranians back to Ottoman territories. The main reason was the poor condition of the Erzurum road, which prevented the passage of carts. Meanwhile, the Russians were planning to build the Tbilisi–Sukhumi railroad.[68] In 1875, direct steam navigation between Poti and Marseilles also caused caravans to prefer Caucasian roads, because steamers which left Trabzon had to transfer their cargo to other ships in Istanbul before continuing to the Mediterranean.[69]

Russian competition, however, did not result in an overall abandonment of the Trabzon–Erzurum road. The British consul in Trabzon observed that some Iranians were returning to Erzurum because they were not pleased with certain measures that the Russians had implemented. The consul is not clear about the specifics of these measures, but he was also concerned that the insecurity of the Ottoman road might lead Iranians back to the Caucasian route.[70] Henry Fanshawe Tozer, an English writer who travelled between Diyadin and Trabzon in 1879, also confirms the frequency of Iranian caravans on the Trabzon–Bayezid road even though he had recently heard that the Poti–Tblisi railway had diverted a great part of the Persian traffic. On the contrary, instead of declining, Tozer observed that the transit trade was actually increasing.[71]

In 1883, Russia banned the transit of European commodities to Iran and other Asian markets because Moscow traders were unable to compete with foreign merchants.[72] This decision left transit traders with only one option: the Trabzon–Bayezid road. In 1904, therefore, Trabzon was still the only Black Sea port open for goods to Persia.[73] After Russia started practising mercantilist policies, the immediate response of Tabriz merchants was to contact the Ottoman commercial representative. French and Austrian consuls also visited him. They all wanted the Porte to immediately repair the Erzurum–Bayezid road.[74]

Russian competition reappeared in the early twentieth century when Russia implemented a new policy. In order to subsidize its merchants, the Russian government continued imposing heavy duties on European goods which reached the Iranian market through the Caucasus. Nonetheless, in order to attract Iranian transit trade back to its territories, Russians eased taxes on Iranian transit trade goods. This policy must have succeeded, as Erzurum's transit trade income decreased from 42,486 liras in 1907 to 2,484 liras in 1912. In addition to this loss, innkeepers also lost their jobs.[75]

In conclusion, from 1883 to 1912, the Trabzon–Bayezid road ceased to be a matter of concern in transimperial politics. Russia's mercantilist policies ended other states’ concerns to a great extent. One important question that remains to be answered is why the Ottomans finally surrendered to the Great Powers’ demand to annul the transit tax in 1873. British consular reports justify the Ottoman insistence on collecting customs duties from the Iranian merchants

until 1873 – in spite of all the pressure coming from foreign consuls, who since the 1850s had frequently raised the spectre of Russian competition as a pretext for the establishment of free trade and a liberal economy within the Ottoman Empire. As a matter of fact, Iranian transit trade witnessed a general growth during the period from 1866 to 1873, even though the rate of growth was gradually declining.[76] Therefore, Ottomans saw no reason to terminate the customs tariff until 1873. As mentioned above, concerns about Russian competition were widespread even before the 1860s; in other words, when the Iranian transit trade passing through Ottoman territories was actually increasing. This suggests that Russian competition was more an excuse to defend European interests in northeastern Anatolia than a real threat until the early 1870s, when the transit trade income of Russia finally started to exceed that of the Ottoman Empire.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on three spatial levels in order to highlight the significance of the Trabzon–Bayezid road for regional, local, and trans-imperial politics. In the first section, the unequal commercial relationship between Trabzon, Erzurum, and the Russian Caucasus was outlined. In this picture, Lazistan sub-province seemed to be more integrated to the Russian economy than to that of the Ottoman Empire because of high transportation costs between Trabzon and Erzurum provinces. The next two sections discussed the underlying causes for the inefficient transportation facilities between the two provinces. The Trabzon and Erzurum provincial governments were shown to be in disagreement over what the main function of the road should be. As a port city, Trabzon was interested in facilitating trade and extracting as many resources as possible from the interior regions, whereas Erzurum was more concerned about the military significance of the road. The fourth section, about the alternative Rize route, elaborated on the multiple layers of local politics, where not only provincial centres but also smaller residential areas within a single province might be in disagreement. Instead of Trabzon, residents of Rize wanted their town to become the port city which connected eastern Anatolia to the Black Sea. Therefore, they opposed the construction of the Trabzon road and supported building a shorter alternative route between Rize and Erzurum. The final section of the chapter described the significance of the Trabzon–Bayezid road for the Russo–Ottoman competition over the Iranian transit trade. This transformed the road into a trans-imperial arena on which various actors had a claim. Thus, it was not only the Ottoman state but also a variety of local, regional and global actors who were interested in the road's construction. This variety lies at the very root of the non-monolithic and dynamic nature of the modern Ottoman state.

Notes

1. B.O.A., DH.İD. 25/11 (18 April 1912).
2. ‘Umur-u Nafia’, *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1320* (1902–1903), 107; ‘Umur-u Nafia’, *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1321* (1903–1904), 202–3.
3. ‘Umur-u Nafia’, *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1319* (1901–1902), 196.
4. Musa Çadırcı, ‘Tanzimat Döneminde Türkiye'de Yönetim’, *Belleten* 52, no. 203 (1988):

622; Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, 'Tanzimat Dönemi İmar Meclisleri', *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (OTAM)*, no. 3 (1992): 326.

5. Tuncer Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı ve Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıla Dair Araştırmalar* (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1992), 13.
6. Akram Fouad Khater, ed., *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 18.
7. Joel S. Migdal, 'The State in Society: An Approach to Struggles for Domination', in *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, ed. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12.
8. Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959–May 1961*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1995), 191.
9. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 281. Similarly, Bauman writes, 'The modern way of being consists in compulsive, obsessive change: in the refutation of what 'merely is' in the name of what could, and by the same token ought, to be put in its place […]. The modern condition is to be on the move.' Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2004), 23.
10. Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 168.
11. Ibid., 187.
12. B.O.A., DH.MUİ. 10-2/7 (16 September 1909).
13. B.O.A., DH.İD. 25/11 (18 April 1912).
14. Ibid.
15. Alexander Pushkin, *A Journey to Arzrum*, trans. Birgitta Ingemanson (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1974), 80–1. William John Hamilton also observed in 1835 that the area was extremely barren and therefore in desperate need of wood. William John Hamilton, *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus and Armenia with Some Account of Their Antiquities and Geology*, vol. 1 (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 189. John Ussher also noted the barren nature of the mountains between Erzurum and Bayezid. Wood and timber were therefore too expensive and people burned dried cow dung as fuel in the winter. John Ussher, *A Journey from London to Persepolis; Including Wanderings in Daghestan, Georgia, Armenia, Kurdistan, Mesopotamia, and Persia* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1865), 670, 674. Kemal Bey, an Ottoman official who took the Trabzon–Erzurum road in 1905, also noted the sharp contrast between the two provinces' flora. Whereas forests surrounded the road in Trabzon, trees immediately left the scene as soon as one passed the Trabzon–Erzurum borderline. This situation symbolized the differences between the two provinces' level of wealth. While there were some gardens and orchards in Erzurum, they all belonged to the local notables. Therefore, the city needed to import fruit and vegetables from Trabzon in order to feed its population. B.O.A., HSD.AFT. 5/1 (29 July 1905).

16. B.O.A., SD.MLK. 1505/45 (23 October 1879).
17. *The War Correspondence of the 'Daily News' 1877–1878 Continued from the Fall of Kars to the Signature of the Preliminaries of Peace with a Connecting Narrative Forming a Continuous History of the War between Russia and Turkey*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 430. B.O.A., SD.MLK. 1505/45 (23 October 1879).
18. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 1330/13 (20 February 1880).
19. B.O.A., DH.İD. 25/11 (18 April 1912).
20. B.O.A., BEO. 2184/163770 (4 October 1903).
21. B.O.A., A.MKT.UM. 336/70 (2 December 1858).
22. In the nineteenth century, roads were modernized using new techniques such as macadamization or building wider roads, stone bridges, milestones, and ditches in order to prevent the accumulation of water on the road surface.
23. B.O.A., A.MKT.NZD. 295/99 (20 November 1859).
24. B.O.A., A.MKT.NZD. 297/7 (30 November 1859).
25. B.O.A., A.MKT.UM. 386/24 (19 December 1859).
26. Ibid.
27. B.O.A., ŞD. 1827/21 (11 January 1873).
28. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 460/6 (30 July 1873). More information on the annulment of this tax will be provided in the last section of this chapter.
29. B.O.A., İ.DH. 665/46304 (17 April 1873); B.O.A., ŞD.TNZ. 1504/36 (8 May 1873); B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 456/8 (5 June 1873).
30. B.O.A., ŞD.MLK. 1505/45 (23 October 1879).
31. B.O.A., İ.MMS. 68/3206 (21 March 1881); B.O.A., Y.A.RES. 10/18 (21 March 1881).
32. 'Report on the Provinces of Trebizond, Sivas, Kastemouni, and Part of Angora, by Mr. Consul W. Gifford Palgrave', in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls During the Year 1868, August to December* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1869), 388.
33. İsmet Miroğlu, 'Osmanlı Yol Sistemine Dair', *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi (Prof. Dr. M. Münir Aktepe'ye Armağan)*, ayrı basım, no. 15 (1997): 241; Franz Taeschner, 'Die Entwicklung des Wegenetzes und des Verkehres im Turkischen Anatolien', *Anadolu Araştırmaları* 1, no. 2 (1959): 188; idem, *Das anatolische Wegenetz nach osmanischen Quellen* (Leipzig: Mayer & Müller G.m.b.H., 1926), 54.
34. B.O.A., İ.MMS. 68/3206 (21 March 1881); B.O.A., Y.A.RES. 10/18 (21 March 1881).
35. B.O.A., ŞD.MLK. 1505/45 (23 October 1879).
36. B.O.A., İ.MMS. 68/3206 (21 March 1881); B.O.A., Y.A.RES. 10/18 (21 March 1881).
37. Ibid.

38. B.O.A., MVL. 1051/2 (14 September 1865).
39. B.O.A., İ.MMS. 68/3206 (21 March 1881); B.O.A., Y.A.RES. 10/18 (21 March 1881).
40. B.O.A., DH.İD. 25/11 (18 April 1912).
41. Ibid.
42. B.O.A., A.MKT. 92/7 (2 August 1847).
43. B.O.A., HR.TO. 192/45 (7 June 1850).
44. B.O.A., HR.TO. 213/52 (18 May 1850).
45. B.O.A., HR.TO. 215/2 (15 May 1850).
46. B.O.A., HR.TO. 196/69 (2 July 1856).
47. B.O.A., İ.DH. 425/28101 (26 February 1859).
48. B.O.A., MVL. 606/43 (29 December 1860).
49. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 246/32 (12 November 1862).
50. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 512/23093 (17 July 1864).
51. B.O.A., MVL. 680/8 (28 July 1864).
52. B.O.A., MVL. 698/55 (27 March 1865).
53. 'Report by Mr. Consul Taylor on the Trade of Erzeroom for the Year 1865', in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls in 1866* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1866), 218, 225.
54. B.O.A., HR.TO. 242/38 (1 March 1866); B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 355/96 (16 May 1866).
55. B.O.A., HR.TO. 244/18 (19 October 1867).
56. B.O.A., HR.TO. 77/57 (10 January 1868).
57. 'Report on the Provinces of Trebizond, Sivas, Kastemouni, and Part of Angora', in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls During the Year 1868* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1869), 342.
58. 'Report by Mr. Consul Gifford-Palgrave, on the Trade and Commerce of Trebizond' in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls in 1869* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1869), 429.
59. B.O.A., İ.DH. 598/41651 (9 September 1869).
60. B.O.A., HR.TO. 203/35 (13 May 1869).
61. B.O.A., HR.TO. 452/41 (12 July 1869).
62. B.O.A., HR.TO. 509/75 (21 June 1869).
63. B.O.A., HR.TO. 452/41 (12 July 1869); HR.TO. 510/13 (23 December 1869).
64. B.O.A., HR.TO. 452/41 (12 July 1869).
65. 'Report by Mr. Consul Palgrave, on the Trade and Commerce of Trebizond for the Year 1869', in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls, in 1869–70* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1870), 557, 559, 562.

66. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 460/6 (30 July 1873).
67. B.O.A., İ.MMS 68/3206 (21 March 1881); B.O.A., Y.A.RES. 10/18 (21 March 1881).
68. 'Report by Vice-Consul Biliotti on the Trade of Trebizond for the Year 1873', in *Reports from Her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce, &c., of Their Consular Districts, Part IV* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1874), 1632, 1636.
69. 'Report by Vice-Consul Biliotti on the Trade and Commerce of Trebizond for the Year 1875', in *Reports from Her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce, &c., of Their Consular Districts, Part IV* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1876), 1086.
70. B.O.A., HR.TO. 254/33 (7 October 1878).
71. Henry Fanshawe Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881), 404.
72. B.O.A., HR.TO. 333/85 (17 July 1883).
73. *Diplomatic and Consular Reports, Turkey, Trade of the Trebizond Vilayet for the Year of 1904* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1905): 12.
74. B.O.A., HR.TO. 104/41 (29 June 1883).
75. B.O.A., DH.İD. 25/11 (18 April 1912).
76. B.O.A., İ.MMS. 68/3206 (21 March 1881); B.O.A., Y.A.RES. 10/18 (21 March 1881).

CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ARMENIAN MIGRATION FROM THE HARPUT REGION TO NORTH AMERICA IN THE HAMIDIAN ERA, 1885–1908

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Ottoman historians have only in the past several years begun to treat the social and political history of the Ottoman East – and especially its Armenian and Kurdish populations – in the final decades of empire as a serious field of inquiry. ‘Taboo’ topics such as the fate of the Ottoman Armenians during World War I and the ‘Kurdish question’ in modern Turkey have, at least until recently, led scholars to avoid research into topics that touch upon this region and its populations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such scholarship, however, is critically important if we are to develop a clear understanding of the Ottoman East in the broader history of the empire and a more rigorous contextual foundation for approaching the legacy of genocide and ethnic conflict that have shaped this region's history in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

This chapter is intended as a small contribution in this direction. The point of departure for this work is the large-scale transhemispheric migration of tens of thousands of primarily Armenian peasants and artisans from the eastern provinces of Anatolia to North America. Between 1885 and 1915, upwards of 80,000 people, the large majority of whom were young Armenian men, left their home communities in the Ottoman East for North America. Over the same period, up to one quarter of these migrants eventually returned to their home communities.[1] Furthermore, more than half made this sojourn between 1888 and 1908, during which time the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II banned Armenians from both migrating to and returning from North America. As will become clear, fear of a direct link between transhemispheric migration from the Ottoman East and the growth of Armenian political organizations both inside and outside of the empire was the prime motivating factor for this prohibition.

The vast majority of Armenians who migrated to North America in the Hamidian period came from communities located within a 50-kilometre radius of the twin cities of Harput and Mezra in the province of Mamuretülaziz. This chapter argues that a unique conjuncture of

factors prompted thousands of migrants from the Harput region to undertake this perilous journey while their counterparts elsewhere in the Ottoman East largely did not engage in transhemispheric migration. Thus, this chapter argues, as historians work to develop a richer literature focusing on the Ottoman East, we must at the same time remain sensitive to the region's heterogeneity and eschew totalizing characterizations of its historical experience. We also must be careful not to paint an overly generalized picture of the Ottoman state's relationship with the region. While the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II was unequivocal in its opposition to Armenian migration to North America, its power was mediated through officials and other agents in the Ottoman East who, for a variety of reasons, often aided and facilitated this migration. Thus, the Ottoman state did not act as a homogenous entity in the region. In addition to examining the forces driving transhemispheric migration from the Harput region and the Ottoman state's response(s) to this phenomenon, this chapter also seeks to demonstrate that recognizing the diversity of actors, forces and experiences that shaped the region's history during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire is key to the development of a richer historical context for the tragic fate of its inhabitants both during and after World War I.

Situating Migration to North America: The Specificity of the Harput Region

In one of the few monograph-length studies of Ottoman global migration, Akram Fouad Khater locates the advent of large-scale migration from Mount Lebanon to North America in the decline of that region's silk economy in the late nineteenth century. According to Khater, the decline of Mount Lebanon's silk industry helps to explain the gender dynamics of the migration, as nearly half of the migrants who undertook this journey between 1880 and 1914 were women.[2] Large-scale migration to North America from the Harput region emerged out of conditions unique to that region. As will become clear, however, these conditions were much different from those that Khater argues gave rise to migration from Mount Lebanon. Unlike Mount Lebanon, strategically located on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean Sea and, by the late nineteenth century, connected both by steamship and rail to cities throughout the Ottoman Empire and Europe, Harput was remote even by the standards of the immense Ottoman Empire. The area would not receive a railway connection until well after the empire's collapse. The imperial capital in Istanbul was located 1,000km away to the north and west, the Russian frontier roughly 400km to the north and east. In the 1880s, just as the first migrants embarked for North America, the most accessible seaport for residents of the Harput region was the Black Sea city of Samsun, located more than 600km away, a two-week trip even in the best of circumstances.[3] In contrast with much of the Ottoman East, a region dominated by a rugged and mountainous terrain, the Harput plain's rich and fertile alluvial soils, a gift of the Euphrates River, gave it an oasis-like quality.

Also unlike Mount Lebanon, throughout the late Ottoman period the economy of Harput largely escaped incorporation into the Europe-dominated global economy. Yet, the structure of the Harput economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries does provide some important clues about the origins and dynamics of large-scale migration from the region to

North America. In the late nineteenth century, the Harput region possessed a diverse agricultural economy based on the production of a wide variety of crops including grains and cereals, cotton, silk and opium. Unlike Çukorova or Mount Lebanon, both of which developed monoculture export economies in the second half of the nineteenth century, a combination of geographic isolation and various climatic factors conspired to prevent a similar development in the Harput region. The region's cool, seasonal climate and short growing season meant that only rapidly growing cotton varieties could flourish in the region, resulting in the production of a low-grade, small-boll cotton crop unfit for export to global markets. Although silk and opium were the region's primary export crops, production of each varied greatly from year to year. For example, the regional value of opium exports fell from $300,000 to $14,000 between 1910 and 1911. This decline was the result of a brutal winter, followed by a drought that severely disrupted that year's growing season.[4] Considering these year-to-year fluctuations, rather than relying exclusively on the production of opium and silk, local agriculturalists may have engaged in the production of these crops largely for supplementary income.

Manufacturing was also a major component of the Harput region's economy. At the end of the nineteenth century, the region's primary item of manufacture was manusa, a rough cotton fabric commonly worn throughout the Anatolian interior.[5] To provide an idea of the importance of manusa manufacture to the economy of Mamuretülaziz (Harput) Province, in 1911 and 1912, exports of the fabric to surrounding provinces totaled over 10 per cent of the combined value of the province's other exports – both domestic and international. Furthermore, this figure exceeded the total value of regional opium exports in both years.[6] Manusa production was heavily reliant upon rural household labour. Local textile manufacturing involved combining imported cotton yarn with yarn spun from locally grown cotton. Seasonally rotating their labour, local women based in rural households and small workshops spun the majority of this cotton yarn during the winter months.[7] According to one historian, local women in a village located just outside the city of Harput regularly spun cotton yarn for use in local textile workshops, receiving dresses and other garments as compensation.[8] Women in the village also made use of the quiet winter months to produce textiles for home consumption and for sale.[9] Quataert's investigation into the state of local manufacturing in the Harput region revealed that households commonly possessed their own spinning wheels.[10]

The region's relative isolation insulated (at least to some extent) locally produced textiles from having to compete with factory-produced imports, allowing the sector to survive well into the twentieth century. As late as 1912 – even as returning migrants and remittances poured into the region from North America – the American consul in Harput expressed his exasperation over the inability of American-made products to make effective inroads into the region. He placed a large part of the blame for this on the regional population and its continued consumption of locally produced textiles.[11] The abundance of cheap household labour coupled with the availability of locally produced cotton were also key to the continued survival of local manufacturing. Notably, women played significant roles in both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the Harput region. As in Mount Lebanon, the role of women in the local economy may help to account for the gendered dimensions of large-scale migration from

the Harput region to North America. For Khater, the decline of Mount Lebanon's silk industry, a major employer of female labour in the region, drove many women from that region to seek new economic opportunities through migration, thus explaining the high percentage of women among those who migrated to North America from Mount Lebanon in this period. In contrast, migrants from the Harput region to North America, especially before 1908, were overwhelmingly male.[12] The significant differences between these two cases may, at least in part, be the result of the important role women continued to play in the economy of the Harput region well into the twentieth century. Women's work may have freed men to engage in transhemispheric migration as part of a broader economic survival strategy.[13]

In fact – and in stark contrast to Mount Lebanon – labour migration was already an established tradition in the Ottoman East long before the advent of large-scale migration to North America.[14] For centuries migrants, primarily men, from Harput and throughout much of the eastern provinces of Anatolia had flocked to Istanbul to take jobs, often as porters in the imperial capital's bustling ports. Throughout the nineteenth century, however, migratory patterns diversified and intensified. The emergence of economic centres such as the Mediterranean port city of Adana and Russian-controlled Tbilisi attracted (usually) young single men from Harput and elsewhere.[15] In 1867, before famine and the Russo–Ottoman war of 1877–78 led to a decline of migration rates (especially from regions further east of the Harput region), nearly 75,000 migrants from the east of Anatolia migrated to Istanbul alone. In that same year, migrant labourers remitted nearly 1.5 million lira to their home communities in the Ottoman East.[16]

Migration from the Harput region to North America grew out of this long-standing tradition of labour migration as strategy of household economic survival. The conjuncture of several additional factors in the final decades of the nineteenth century helped bring large-scale transhemispheric migration into the realm of the possible. Beginning in the 1850s, the presence of American missionaries, for whom Harput served as the centre of their activities in the Ottoman East, provided an important link to areas, especially in the northeastern United States, that would eventually become primary destinations for migrants from eastern Anatolia. In the 1880s, relatively affordable and regular steamship routes were established linking Ottoman port cities such as Samsun and Mersin with intermediate destinations, such as Marseilles and Liverpool. The long history of migration within the Ottoman Empire would also prove vital for the emergence of informal smuggling networks, an issue touched upon in greater detail below, that allowed North America-bound migrants from the Harput plain to leave the empire (and return to it) in the face of Ottoman prohibitions on migration and return. Finally, the extensive missionary presence in the Harput region likely provided a critical channel of information about the USA and economic conditions there, and may explain why New England (especially the small mill towns of Massachusetts and Rhode Island), where many of these missionaries originated, became the epicentre of early Armenian life in the USA.

The intersection of factors such as the presence of missionaries and an established tradition of labour migration provides some explanation for why this migration was largely both an Armenian and eastern Anatolian phenomenon.[17] They do not, however, provide an entirely

satisfactory explanation for the distinctly geographic/spatial dimension that defined labour mobility. After all, regions throughout eastern Anatolia with large Armenian populations, such as the provinces of Bitlis and Van, had economies similar to that of Harput, a long history of labour migration, and the presence of American missionaries – yet migration rates from these areas to North America were relatively low, especially in the period preceding the Young Turk revolution. What factors led young men from the Harput plain region to migrate to North America while their counterparts further east did not? The answer to this question may lie in the dynamics of conflicts over land and resources that engulfed much of eastern Anatolia during the course of the nineteenth century.

The early nineteenth century ushered in a period of dynamic and dramatic upheaval in the Kurdish and Armenian regions of the Ottoman Empire. Shortly after the promulgation of the *Tanzimat* reforms in 1839, the central Ottoman state sought to tap into the region's revenue-generating potential by embarking on an ambitious programme to break the power of autonomous Kurdish tribal potentates who had, by agreement of the central state since the sixteenth century, governed much of the region. This process, applied unevenly throughout the region, involved taking possession of the lands of these Kurdish tribal elites for redistribution through the sale of title deeds issued by the central state. This strategy was intended to create a population of landowners in the region whose right to the land could only be recognized through possession of a state-issued title deed. In theory, this process allowed the state to tap into the region's rich agricultural revenues in the form of taxes remitted to the centre by this new class of landholders.[18]

As Nilay Özok-Gündoğan demonstrates in her analysis of the *Tanzimat* state's efforts at dispossessing powerful Kurdish elites in the Palu region, however, the state was only partly successful in achieving its aims. The elite Kurdish families whose power the Ottoman state sought to undercut often were successful at marshalling their still immense authority to retain control over their lands through the purchase of title deeds. In addition, the new owners of these lands, responsible for remitting taxes to the central state, acquired funds by squeezing the peasants occupying the lands – usually for amounts much higher than the amount of taxes they (the landholders) owed. As a result, agricultural producers, both Armenian and Muslim, throughout the region increasingly found themselves working the land as sharecroppers or deeply in debt to local landlords and merchants.[19] Özok-Gündoğan also finds evidence, however, that some peasants were able to take advantage of the changing political and economic dynamics at play in the region by purchasing land and forming a nascent ‘middle peasantry’. Although not as economically and politically powerful as the large landowners who benefited the most from this process, these middle peasants were able to use some of the same tactics as the powerful emirs to extract labour and produce from their sharecropping counterparts.[20] The immiseration of Armenian (and Muslim) peasants as a result of high taxes, indebtedness, and subordination to powerful landowners was a byproduct of the historical dynamics discussed above. In addition, the increasing burdens placed on rural households as a result of these processes help explain the diverse economic strategies they adopted in order to survive.

By the late 1880s, however, large swathes of the Ottoman East, especially those regions close to the Ottoman borders with the Russian Empire and Iran, remained largely untouched by these Ottoman centralization efforts. For example, large territories of Van, Bitlis, and Diyarbekir provinces remained largely under the control of autonomous Kurdish tribal emirs.[21] In an attempt to bring these regions and their tribal populations 'into the Ottoman fold', Sultan Abdülhamid II ordered the creation of several light cavalry regiments in 1890, comprised of irregular troops drawn from several Kurdish tribes. As Janet Klein demonstrates, by arming and equipping these regiments, which he named the Hamidiye after himself, the sultan hoped to strengthen ties and bolster the loyalty of these Kurdish tribes to the imperial centre. The Hamidiye regiments were also intended to serve as a bulwark in the region against the perceived threat posed by Armenian revolutionary organizations and their increasing presence in Armenian communities throughout the region. Importantly for the purposes of this chapter, the Hamidiye, with tacit approval of the imperial centre, were responsible for a wave of land-grabbing and peasant dispossession efforts that disproportionately impacted Armenian agricultural producers throughout much of eastern Anatolia. According to Klein, 'The overall process whereby land and other resources changed hands from peasants to powerful Kurdish *aghas* began before […] the creation of the Hamidiye. But by the late nineteenth century the Hamidiye had largely come to be identified with the process […]'.[22]

Klein's assertion regarding the central role played by the Hamidiye regiments in the forceful land-grabbing and peasant dispossession that plagued the eastern provinces at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries provides a possible explanation for the specific geographic dimensions of migration from the region to North America. Of more than 60 Hamidiye regiments, none were stationed in or around Harput, where the land tenure regime had already undergone profound transformation in the decades prior to the cavalry's creation.[23] Thus, for most of the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth, agricultural producers residing in the general vicinity of Harput may have enjoyed greater security than their counterparts further east where most Hamidiye regiments were stationed.[24]

If this indeed was the case, the relatively higher degree of political and physical stability enjoyed by Armenian (and Muslim) communities in the Harput region likely made the possible economic benefit from migration to North America far more attractive than it was to more imperilled communities in the provinces of Van or Bitlis. As mentioned above, the process of land privatization and commodification that had become an important component of earlier attempts by the Ottoman state to consolidate its control over the region helped foster the emergence of a nascent landowning middle peasantry. By the late 1880s, however, land in Harput appears to have remained concentrated in the hands of a few very wealthy Kurdish and Armenian landlords. Village histories and other sources consulted for this project suggest that the advent of large-scale migration to North America and the subsequent influx of remitted wages by migrants working abroad led to a dramatic restructuring of landholding patterns in villages throughout the Harput plain. In his book *Illustrated Armenia and the Armenians*, Ohan Gaidzakian claimed:

In some sections of the villages of Harput and Diarbekir, twenty five years ago, the land was

owned almost entirely by Moslems, but rented and farmed by the Armenians […] [T]he acquirement of property upon the part of Armenians, largely by emigration to the United States, have led the Turks to sell their ancient estates to Armenians, who are supplied with funds from their friends who are working in (the United States).[25]

A historian of the Harput plain village of Parchanj wrote in the late 1930s:

By 1909, with the help of American dollars, three quarters of the village was in Armenian hands. The agha (local, usually absentee, land-holding elites) tenant relationship virtually ended. And many aghas were obliged to till the lands remaining in their hands so that they would not starve.[26]

A similar claim in the history of another Harput plain community, Habousi, linked remittances sent from migrants in North America to drastically changing patterns of land ownership in that village.[27] Finally, the United States consul based in Harput observed in a 1911 report on economic conditions in his consular district that the more than $600,000 annually remitted to the region from migrants in North America contributed to a considerably higher standard of living than 'the districts of Erzurum, Bitlis and Van, where there had been no immigration comparatively, to America'.[28]

These claims alone do not provide sufficient evidence to prove a direct relationship between migration to North America and shifting landholding patterns in the region, and other materials available for this project do not provide satisfactory corroboration for the link. However, the fact that each author's observations regarding the transformative effect of migration to North America on local landholding patterns are nearly identical cannot easily be ignored. Their claims suggest that migration to North America may not only have played an important role in the economic survival of households in the Harput region, but may also have facilitated the upending of one of the primary bases of socioeconomic inequality in the region: control over land. Such an outcome would have been impossible, however, if land-grabbing and forced dispossession posed a major threat to these communities.

This is not to say that Armenians living in communities closer to the frontier zones of the Ottoman and Russian empires did not engage in migration as an economic strategy at all. Migration to other destinations in the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Caucasus remained a fact of life for people living in places such as Van, Muş and Bitlis.[29] Compared to these more regional migration practices, however, the large-scale migration of people from the Harput region to North America was a qualitatively different phenomenon. Although migration to the USA could possibly be very remunerative, the costs of getting there (and back) were quite high. Armenians seeking to bypass Ottoman state restrictions could expect to pay perhaps as much as 20 gold liras to smugglers just to travel from their home communities in the Ottoman interior to the coast, a steep sum in an empire where daily wages of one piaster (1/100th of a lira) were common.[30] Those migrants who left their families and home communities behind to make this daunting and expensive transhemispheric journey must have felt the possible benefits outweighed the many risks involved (both in leaving and returning). The passages cited above

provide at least some clues to the economic importance that this migration assumed in households throughout the region. Thus, the Harput region's relative economic *stability* during this period, especially compared to regions further east, was a key factor in the emergence and continued flow of large-scale migration to North America. This conclusion, in addition to its importance for understanding the historical roots of this migration, also suggests the need to avoid providing an overly simplistic picture of the political and economic forces at play in what is often referred to as the 'six Armenian *vilayets*'. Rather than imposing a uniform narrative of the history of eastern Anatolia and its populations, it is important instead to recognize the historically, regionally, and locally contingent dynamics at play in the region in the decades preceding World War I and the Armenian genocide.[31]

Ottoman Prohibition against Armenian Migration to North America

The Ottoman response to Armenian migration to (and return from) North America before and after the 1908 Constitutional Revolution sheds important light on the state's relationship with its Armenian populations, and the population of the Ottoman East as a whole, in the final decades of empire. Until 1908, the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II associated Armenian migration to the New World with the growing visibility of Armenian political organizations opposed to his rule both within and outside the empire. Given Abdülhamid II's deep suspicion of all perceived political challenges to his rule, this conflation of migration and politics is not entirely surprising. The emergence of this migration as a large-scale phenomenon in the late-1880s coincided with the founding of the two Armenian political parties – the Social Democrat Hnchakian Party in 1887 and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutiun) in 1890 – that would come to dominate Armenian politics. Concerns about the growth of such 'seditious organizations' (*cemiyet-i fesadiye*), as these organizations are often called in Ottoman state sources, led the regime of Abdülhamid II to attempt enforcement of rigid prohibitions on migration. Although the central state also sought to prevent migration to North America from other parts of the empire (most notably the Levant), it would remain primarily concerned with stopping migration from the eastern provinces.[32] However, while the state's official stance on the issue of Armenian migration to North America was unequivocal in its opposition, as will become clear, representatives of state power in the Harput region were, for a number of reasons, just as (if not more) likely to be *facilitators* of migration rather than obstacles to it.

Although the Ottoman state had never permitted migration abroad without official permission, it appears largely to have tolerated the trickle of Armenians and others from the Ottoman East to America before the mid-1880s, most of whom left for purposes of study or trade.[33] A more coherent policy regarding Armenian migration to North America began to emerge in the final years of the 1880s, just as large-scale migration from the region to North America began in earnest. Although still in its infancy, the perceived threat of the Armenian revolutionary movement almost immediately became the primary concern shaping the Ottoman state's official stance toward this migration. The arrest in Istanbul of 70 North America-bound

Armenian labourers from Harput in March 1888 prompted the first specific ban, one that would remain in place until 1908.[34] The language of the decree introducing the ban reflects the extent to which, even at this early date, regime officials feared the political ramifications of Armenian migration to North America, and is worth reproducing at length:

Some Armenians are migrating, both for purposes of labor and education, to 'completely free' countries such as America. This should probably be considered as one of the sinister acts of the seditious organizations who aim to take advantage of the freedom of ideas [in America] in order to spread the 'well-known aims' of the [Armenian revolutionary organizations] to the Armenians of the Well-Protected Domains [the Ottoman Empire]. In addition, when these migrants return they will strive to poison minds. For these reasons […] from now on these migrants intending to go to America and other locations for purposes of work and to devote themselves to suspicious activities must not be given passports and a full prohibition must be placed on their ability to depart [the empire].[35]

This document in many ways reflects the extent to which central state officials had grown suspicious of the political leanings of Armenians in the east. The text reveals little doubt on the part of central state authorities that the emergence of large-scale Armenian migration to North America was a plot orchestrated by Armenian revolutionary organizations to incite sedition among the empire's Armenian population. It also reflects a concern that a large Armenian presence in the United States could fundamentally shift the spatial parameters of the political and economic struggle in the Ottoman East.[36]

Similar anxieties about the relationship between migration and politics also informed the Ottoman state's stance toward the many hundreds of Armenians who returned to the Ottoman Empire from North America before the 1908 Revolution. Ottoman authorities first and foremost feared the return of Armenian migrants who had naturalized as citizens of the USA over the course of their sojourn. Ottoman authorities believed that upon their return, these naturalized American citizens would claim capitulatory privileges that could allow them to engage in outlawed political activity without fear of prosecution. Along these lines, in the early 1890s, the Ottoman state adopted a policy of immediately expelling from the empire Armenian returnees determined to have obtained US citizenship while abroad.[37] By 1901, after several years of relatively high rates of return migration, this Ottoman state policy was expanded to include any and all Armenian returnees from North America.[38] Between 1901 and 1908, and especially following the July 1905 assassination attempt on Abdülhamid II carried out by Armenian revolutionaries, some of whom were suspected of having spent time in the USA, perhaps hundreds of Armenian returnees from North America were expelled from the empire.[39] Thus, regardless of their motivations either for migrating to North America or for returning to the empire, the state viewed their movements entirely within the context of the perceived threat posed by Armenian political organizations.

A narrow focus on the Ottoman state's stated policy toward Armenian migration to North America reinforces the narrative that the relationship of the Hamidian regime with Armenians in the Ottoman East was entirely antagonistic. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, the actual

enforcement of this prohibition reveals a much more complicated picture than the preceding discussion might suggest. Indeed, examining efforts to enforce these policies on migration to North America brings the complexity of the state's relationship with Armenian communities in the eastern provinces into perspective. Despite the government of Sultan Abdülhamid II's deeply rooted fears of Armenian mobility in the form of migration to North America, the state was in no position to curtail all forms of Armenian mobility. The eastern provinces were a primary supplier of the mobile labour force that drove the economies of Istanbul, the increasingly lucrative cotton fields of the Çukorova plain, and burgeoning port cities such as Mersin and Izmir. Ottoman desire to prevent Armenians from departing for North America was necessarily balanced with a recognition that any efforts to put an end to this migration could not at the same time interfere with the ability of Armenians to engage in 'legitimate' domestic mobility for purposes of labour and trade.[40] The tension between these two somewhat contradictory imperatives proved a major obstacle to enforcement of the prohibition on migration to North America. Would-be migrants often used domestic labour mobility as a pretext to access travel documents and gain entry to port cities such as Mersin and Samsun, which were jumping-off points for migration abroad.[41]

Furthermore, local and regional officials stationed throughout the Harput region frequently eschewed enforcement of restrictions intended to prevent migration to North America, often with the expressed concern that such measures could restrict domestic mobility and entail unintended economic and social consequences. Local and regional officials also had interests that frequently conflicted with the interests of the central state. Officials based both in interior and in port cities throughout the empire played vital roles in the smuggling networks that emerged in the face of the Ottoman prohibition on migration to North America. These networks linked communities in the Harput region to port cities as far afield as Batumi and Beirut. In addition to state officials, these highly profitable smuggling ventures also involved a wide variety of actors – from Armenian and Muslim local elites in the Ottoman East to Greek and Arab boatmen based in various Ottoman port cities and Armenian migrant boarding house operators in Liverpool and Marseilles. Indeed, these smuggling networks reveal the degree to which populations in the eastern provinces were part of a much larger Ottoman social and economic geography – in many ways of their own making – that existed largely outside the control of the central state.[42]

The preceding discussion has largely neglected the question of how the Ottoman state viewed non-Armenian populations from the Ottoman East, namely the Muslims and Assyrians who migrated to North America. The volume of migration to North America among these groups was dramatically less than that of Armenians. State officials did fear that Muslims migrating from the Ottoman East would come under the influence of Armenian political agitation in North America.[43] In addition, authorities also desired to prevent Muslims from migrating to North America for purposes of avoiding military service, and aimed to avoid situations whereby Muslims, unable to find work in North America, would seek monetary aid from the state in order to return to the empire. The documentation is less clear regarding the Hamidian regime's stance on the migration of Assyrian Christians. It seems, however, that authorities may not in practice have drawn a distinction between Assyrian and Armenian

migration. The evidence on the question of return migration is clearer: neither Muslims nor non-Armenian Christians were subject to the policy of deportation from the empire that encompassed all Armenians determined to have returned from North America.[44] Armenians were subject to this policy regardless of confessional identity. Thus, while Assyrian Catholic (Chaldean) returnees were spared deportation, the same treatment was not extended to Armenian Catholics. This suggests that at least in regard to the question of migration and return, the Ottoman state applied a strictly ethnicized definition of identity.[45]

The stance of Abdülhamid's regime toward Armenian migration to North America would stand in stark contrast to the stance adopted by the Young Turk government in the aftermath of the 1908 Constitutional Revolution. Less than two months after the reinstatement of the 1876 constitution, the new regime granted all Ottoman subjects (*bi'l-umum tebaa-i Osmaniye*) freedom 'to travel to and return from all locations both within the empire and abroad'.[46] For the first time, Armenians were free to migrate to and return from North America. This policy would remain in place until the outbreak of World War I, which effectively ended transhemispheric migration from the Ottoman Empire. Subsequent attempts by the constitutional regime to restrict international migration from the empire were adopted largely during the years of the Balkan Wars to prevent the migration of military-aged males, and these restrictions were applied empire-wide and without regard to migrants' ethnic and religious identities. Indeed, nowhere in the documentary material consulted for this project did state officials discuss Armenian migration to North America as posing any particular political threat. This fact is especially surprising given the extent to which the political activities of certain Armenian organizations and individuals would be used as a pretext for the deportations of Armenians from the Ottoman East during World War I. Further exploration of the post-1908 period remains outside the scope of this short chapter. Nonetheless, more thorough comparisons of the relationship between the Ottoman state and the populations of the eastern provinces during the Hamidian and Young Turk periods can provide a clearer sense of the ruptures and continuities between the two periods.[47] Such work is critical if we are to better understand the factors that led to the genocidal destruction of this region's Armenian population during World War I.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how even a relatively narrow focus, in this case on migration to North America, can shed extensive light on the social and political dynamics at play in the Ottoman East in the final decades of empire. Efforts to prevent migration to North America reveal the extent to which political concerns shaped the Hamidian regime's relationship with the region's Armenian populations. At the same time, a range of factors – including the unwillingness of local officials to enforce the prohibition – undermined the central state's attempts to prevent Armenian migration to North America. In addition, the important economic role that Armenians played in the broader Ottoman system as agricultural producers, merchants, and labourers, likely further restricted Ottoman efforts in this direction. This chapter also serves as a caution against viewing the Ottoman East as a region with a singular historical experience. The

conjuncture of historical factors that helped to give rise to large-scale migration to North America, especially in the years before 1908, restricted this phenomenon to one corner of this vast territory, the Harput region. Special consideration to the locally specific dynamics driving change in the Ottoman East can help to provide us with a richer understanding of this region and its broader place in the history of the empire.

Notes

1. For migrant statistics, see: David Gutman, 'Sojourners, Smugglers, and the State: Transhemispheric Migration Flows and the Politics of Mobility in Eastern Anatolia, 1888–1908' (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, Binghamton, 2011).
2. Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 70.
3. Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie: Géographie Administrative, Statistique Descriptive et Raisonée de Chaque Province de l'Asie-Mineur. Vol. 6: l'Anatolie centrale Angora, Koniah, Adana, Mamouret-ul-Aziz, Sivas* (Istanbul: Les Éditions Isis, 2001), 229–30.
4. N.A.R.A., United States Consul in Mamouret-ul-Aziz, William Masterson, to United States Ambassador, Constantinople, John Ridgley Carter (22 February 1911). Consular Reports Received, 1 January–31 March, 1911, Rg 84, Stack Area 350, Row 10, Comp. 7, Shelf 4.
5. Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 65–6.
6. N.A.R.A., Masterson to Carter (22 February 1911).
7. Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing*, 39.
8. Vatche Ghazarian, ed., *A Village Remembered: The Armenians of Habousi* (Waltham, MA: Mayreni Pub., 1997), 32.
9. Ibid., 31.
10. Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing*, 39, 65.
11. N.A.R.A., Masterson to Carter (22 February 1911).
12. Detailed statistics on immigration to the USA are difficult to come by for the period preceding 1908. Linda Avakian's meticulous documentation of Armenian arrivals to the USA using shipping records includes information about the gender of each arrival. Her work demonstrates that between 1880 and 1897, perhaps more than 90 per cent of Armenian immigrants to the United States were men (see: Linda L. Avakian, *Armenian Immigrants: Boston 1891–1901, New York 1880–1897* (Camden: Picton Press, 1996), 6–171). Women did not begin migrating to the USA in large numbers until the late 1890s after the Ottoman state formulated a policy that allowed Armenians to migrate to the United States legally on the condition that they renounce their status as Ottoman subjects, cut all connections with their home communities, and agree never to return to the empire (see: B.O.A., DH.TMİK.M. 20/59 (14 October 1896), Office of the Grand Vizier to

Ministry of Interior). This policy largely emerged as a legal avenue for Armenian nuclear families to join husbands and fathers already residing in the USA.

13. Like research on the Ottoman East as a whole, historical writing on the social and economic structure of this region in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remains thin. While the sources used in this chapter provide enough information to build a tentative composite picture of the structure of the Harput region's economy in this period, future research will hopefully shed further light on the role of the household and gender in the everyday lives of Ottomans in the eastern provinces. Similar dynamics, however, shaped labour migration patterns in regions as far afield as Taishan, China, and the Saxon-Oberlausitz in Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (For Taishan, see: Michael Szonyi, 'Mothers, Sons and Lovers', *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 1, no. 1 (May 2005), 43–64. For Saxon-Oberlausitz, see: Jean Quataert, 'Combining Agrarian and Industrial Livelihood', *Journal of Family History* 10, no. 2 (June 1985), 145–62.
14. Cem Behar's work on the Kasap Ilyas neighbourhood in Istanbul during the late Ottoman period sheds light on the process of migration from the Ottoman East to Istanbul. The majority of migrants to Kasap Ilyas came from the town of Arapkir, located 100km northeast of Harput. Cem Behar, *A Neighbourhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap Ilyas Mahalle* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003).
15. Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, 245.
16. Christopher Clay, 'Labour Migrations and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth Century Anatolia', *Middle East Studies* 34, no. 4 (Oct. 1998), 20–1. According to Clay, 1867 was apparently a peak year for migrations to Istanbul, and Clay claims that by the 1880s, migration to the imperial capital averaged around 30,000 a year, less than half the number that left in 1867. Also, as these migrations were very transient, it should be noted that these numbers undoubtedly include many thousands of repeat migrants returning after sojourns to their home villages.
17. Labour migration within the Ottoman Empire was far less common among populations living in western Anatolia or lower Mesopotamia.
18. Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, 'The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in the Kurdish Periphery' (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, Binghamton, 2011), 36–90.
19. Ibid., 159–242.
20. Ibid., 239.
21. Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 24.
22. Ibid., 151.
23. Ibid., 185.
24. Historians have traditionally singled out the Hamidiye tribes as primarily responsible for the mid-1890s massacres that devastated Armenian communities throughout the Ottoman East. Despite the lack of a Hamidiye presence, however, the Harput plain was a major target of this wave of violence. Joost Jongerden has provided a compelling challenge to

the notion that the Hamidiye tribes (at least in Diyarbekir), were front and centre in perpetrating these massacres. Jongerden's analysis provides some clues as to why Armenians on the Harput plain, despite being major targets of violence in the mid-1890s, did not face the same challenges to their economic livelihoods witnessed by their compatriots further to the east throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See: Joost Jongerden, 'Elite Politics of a Violent Kind: Milli İbrahim Paşa, Ziya Gökalp and Political Struggle in Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century', in *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbakir, 1870–1915*, ed. Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 55–84.

25. Ohan Gaidzakian, *Illustrated Armenia and the Armenians* (Boston: B.H. Aznive, 1898), 42–3.
26. Manoog Dzeron, *Village of Parchanj: General History (1600–1937)* (Fresno, CA: Panorama West Books, 1984), 164.
27. Ghazarian, *A Village Remembered*, 7.
28. N.A.R.A., Masterson to Carter (22 February 1911).
29. Clay, 'Labour Migrations', 24–6. As Clay notes, the Caucasus may have become a less common destination by the mid-1890s, as the Ottoman state sought to limit Armenian migration to the Russian Caucasus, a hub of activity especially for the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which was founded in Tbilisi in 1890.
30. B.O.A., DH.TMİK.M. 134/13 (28 October 1902), Port Commission of Iskenderun to Ministry of Interior.
31. For example, Stephan Astourian's otherwise rich comparison of changing Armenian landholding patterns in the eastern provinces of Anatolia and Cilicia (along the Mediterranean littoral) presents a uniform picture of Armenian dispossession beginning in the 1870s in eastern Anatolia without taking into consideration the possibility of differences within the region. See: Stephan H. Astourian, 'The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power', in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55–81.
32. On Ottoman policy toward migration from the Levant region, see: Engin Deniz Akarlı, 'Ottoman Attitudes Towards Lebanese Emigration, 1885–1910', in *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, ed. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: I.B.Tauris, 1992), 124.
33. Robert Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 36–44.
34. B.O.A., İ.DH. 1075/84332 (30 March 1888), Report of the Yıldız Palace Office of the Chief Secretary.
35. Ibid.
36. Along these lines, Ottoman consular officials stationed in various cities endeavored to monitor and spy on the activities of Armenian political organizations and migrant

communities more broadly in the United States. See, for example: B.O.A., HR.SYS. 2737/14 (n.d.).

37. See: B.O.A., İ.HUS 18/1311 Ca/19 (11 November 1893), Yıldız Palace, Office of the Chief Secretary; B.O.A., İ.HUS. 18/1311 Ca/18 (13 November 1893), Yıldız Palace, Office of the Chief Secretary; B.O.A., Y.A RES. 68/49 (20 December 1893), Office of the Grand Vizier, Decision of the Council of Ministers. See also below.
38. B.O.A., MV. 102/30 (May 1901), Decision of the Council of Ministers.
39. B.O.A., MKT.MHM. 550/1 (4 November 1905), Office of the Grand Vizier to the Ministry of Interior. This document claims that at least 500 Armenians who had returned from North America were living in the province of Mamuretülaziz alone. It further asserts that any attempt at a mass deportation of these returnees would be unwise, and instead recommends expelling from the empire only those that clearly raise suspicion. That said, the documentary record from this period is replete with expulsion orders directed both at recently arrived returnees and at those who had returned in years prior.
40. B.O.A., DH.TMİK.M. 89/55 (18 July 1900), Governor of Mamuretülaziz to Ministry of Interior.
41. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 1931/29 (9 March 1892), Ministry of Interior to Governor of Adana İzzet Efendi.
42. David Gutman, 'Agents of Mobility: Migrant Smuggling Networks, Transhemispheric Migration, and Time–Space Compression in Ottoman Anatolia, 1888–1908', *Interdisciplines* 3, no. 1 (2012), 48–84.
43. B.O.A., HR.SYS. 54/1 (24 October 1894), Ottoman Consul General in New York to Foreign Minister, Said Pasha.
44. B.O.A., DH.TMİK.M. 204/1 (27 January 1904), Ministry of Interior to Foreign Ministry and Coastal Provinces.
45. B.O.A., DH.TMİK.M. 237/46 (2 March 1907), Ministry of Interior to Halep Province.
46. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 2677/42 (13 September 1908), District Governor of Amasya to Ministry of Population.
47. Janet Klein's work provides some insight on this issue in relationship to the question of land and land-grabbing in the eastern provinces. See: Klein, *The Margins of Empire*.

CHAPTER 3

A PROVISIONAL REPUBLIC IN THE SOUTHWEST CAUCASUS: DISCOURSES OF SELF-DETERMINATION ON THE OTTOMAN–CAUCASIAN FRONTIER, 1918–19

Alexander E. Balistreri

The delineation of the current political boundary between the Ottoman/Turkish and Caucasian/Soviet states from 1914 to 1921 was an exceedingly convoluted process, a series of multilateral negotiations and armed struggles over the fate of tiny districts between governments that appeared and disappeared in turn. In this chapter, we turn our eye on the brief life of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, an administration centred in the polyethnic city of Kars that asserted political authority from Batum (Batumi) to Nakhchivan between November 1918 and April 1919. Born out of contingency, the Southwest Caucasian Republic confounds historians in its complexity. Most Russian-language sources refer to a ‘republic’ declared in December 1918, most Turkish-language sources refer to a ‘government’ declared in January 1919, and the memoirs of one southwest Caucasian nationalist refer to the declaration of an autonomous administration with its own army as early as November 1917.[1] Meanwhile, the polity's constitution, passed in January 1919, is not available in its original form, and the existing transcriptions vary significantly.

How to account for such fundamental discrepancies in the sources? Semantic ambiguity was, at least in part, cultivated by leaders of the Southwest Caucasian Republic themselves. They could be an ‘independent state’ when pressing the Allies to recognize their right to self-determination and a mere ‘provisional government’ when emphasizing a desire to reunite with the Ottoman Empire. They could use Vladimir Lenin's discourse of self-determination in the context of the Caucasus and Woodrow Wilson's in the context of Western Europe, all the while emphasizing the primacy of Islam and Turkishness at home. This chapter posits one feasible explanation for the varying discourses of self-determination found in four key texts produced by Muslim/Turkish nationalist leaders in the southwest Caucasus. Taken as a whole, these documents show how the discourse of self-determination was a direct function of audience rather than the reflection of an unchanging ideal. As a way of legitimizing a particular group's control over a limited territory in an international context, self-determination was not a

relentless cry for '*Independence!*' but was inevitably shaped by the relative position of nationalist groups and the international actors who had the power to recognize them.[2] Furthermore, the discourses of self-determination in the documents presented here also show how statehood more generally could be justified to an international audience through the deliberate use of statistics and claims of 'disinterested domination'.

The Southwest Caucasian Borderland until 1919

Ottoman territory since the mid-sixteenth century, Kars and the surrounding region became the site of intense contestation between the Ottoman and Russian Empires as the latter expanded to the South Caucasus in the nineteenth century. After four Russo–Ottoman wars in which Kars was sacked or besieged, the city was finally awarded to the Russian Empire by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. The Russians administered Kars province for 40 years, a period during which the administration, architecture, and ethnic makeup of the region was transformed in Russia's likeness.[3] For Kars and its environs, World War I played out as a 'fifth Russo–Ottoman War'. Aside from a disastrous initial Ottoman assault in the region, Kars stayed well behind the Russian front for the remainder of the war. Only the Russian Revolution and the resulting collapse of Russian authority in the South Caucasus gave the Ottomans the unhoped-for opportunity to recoup not only the losses incurred during the ongoing war, but also those imposed by the Treaty of Berlin 40 years prior. Article 4 of the peace treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Soviet Russia (Brest–Litovsk, 3 March 1918) promised Russian withdrawal from the greater Kars region and 'allow[ed] the populations of these territories to establish new governments in agreement with neighbouring states, especially with Turkey'.[4]

Brest–Litovsk was a decent enough win for the Ottoman Empire, but facts on the ground outpaced anything diplomats could achieve 2,000km away. Weeks before the treaty was even signed, Ottoman troops broke the ceasefire line and advanced toward Kars. Ferocious interethnic violence fuelled by near-anarchic conditions, the gradual introduction of ethnic Armenian militias to replace Russian soldiers on the front, and Joseph Stalin's January 1918 statement supporting Armenian claims in the southwest Caucasus had convinced Ottoman commanders that military control of the region had urgent precedence over diplomatic formalities. After Kars was easily captured in April 1918, work began on reestablishing Ottoman authority in the region. One task for the Ottoman Empire was to achieve diplomatic recognition of its occupation. A first attempt came at a conference in Trabzon in spring 1918 with the Transcaucasian Federation, a second in Batum in summer 1918 with the newly formed Caucasian republics.[5] Another task facing Ottoman administrators was to oversee a plebiscite on the annexation of the region to the Empire. Completed by mid-July, the plebiscite was naturally a resounding success for the Ottomans (98 per cent in favour of annexation), though neighbouring countries complained that the Ottoman military was the only body overseeing the voting process.[6] In this way, too, Brest–Litovsk's Article 4 never really became relevant – the establishment of Ottoman authority preceded any consultation of the local population and actually did away with the autonomous 'People's Government of Kars' that had emerged there after the October Revolution.[7]

The Ottoman advance through the Caucasus was halted by the end of the war and by the punitive armistice signed between the Ottomans and the Allies at Moudros on 30 October 1918. Article 11 required the Ottoman Empire, should the Allies deem it necessary, to evacuate its troops once again behind the pre-war frontier.[8] On 11 November 1918, British commanders decided that they would indeed demand an Ottoman withdrawal from Kars, an order they relayed to the Ottoman army on 25 November to vehement protests.[9] Nevertheless, the Ottomans completed their withdrawal from the region, dragging their feet, by January 1919.[10] Their stalling had a purpose: they sought to arm and provision the local population to prevent the British from establishing Armenian authority in the region and to prevent any war materiel from being handed over to the British.[11] They also sought to arrange a local, non-Ottoman administration to rule in their stead and to oversee the handover of weapons to local militias. Under the guidance of Ottoman army commanders and the *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* (an underground intelligence network established by the Unionist leadership during World War I), local Muslim notables took the reins of administration into their own hands. Local assemblies (*şura* or 'soviets') convened first in Ahıska (Akhaltsikhe), then in Nakhchivan, and finally in Kars in early November 1918. Alongside a handful of Unionist extremists in the army, a key figure mobilizing these assemblies was Cihangiroğlu İbrahim Bey [Aydın], a native of the Caucasus and a *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* operative who had played a similar role in Western Thrace when that region was cut off from the Ottoman Empire after the Balkan Wars.[12] But cross-empire Unionists and their armed agents were not the only basis for these assemblies; as in other Ottoman borderlands threatened with the prospect of being taken from the Empire by the Allies, such assemblies included a significant contingent of local notables with a more regionalist perspective. In the case of the southwest Caucasus, such regional notables had had a Russian education, considered themselves Caucasians, and could even be attracted by the notion of 'social democracy'.

By the end of November 1918, a 'great congress' in Kars, attended by 60 delegates from around the region, declared a new, independent mandate, known in most Turkish sources as the 'National Assembly' or 'National Muslim Assembly' (*Millî Şura, Millî İslam Şurası*).[13] On 1 December 1918, in a decision not referenced in Turkish nationalist secondary literature, the National Assembly declared the establishment of the 'Democratic Republic of the Southwest Caucasus' in the provinces of Kars and Batum and the surrounding districts (for discussion, see below). This early administration centred in Kars was not capable of conducting 'politics as usual'. Its main aim was to prevent, by whatever means necessary, conditions that would facilitate the handover of the region to Armenia. Its activities consisted of securing the loyalty of smaller national assemblies that had sprung up in the surrounding region, collecting and storing weapons and supplies from the departing Ottoman army, making the population aware of its existence through the local press, conscripting soldiers where possible, and holding congresses with regional dignitaries and representatives of the Ottoman government.[14]

Document 1: A Constitution for a 'Provisional Government'

A third Kars Congress (17–18 January 1919) represented the largest of such meetings to date.

The leadership of the National Muslim Assembly decided there to form a new, expanded administration that would from that time onward encompass all of the national assemblies of the southwest Caucasus. That very night, a constitution was passed, a president elected (İbrahim), and a cabinet of ministers assembled – including a Greek Orthodox man as education minister and a Russian woman as head of the Telegraph, Post, and Telephone Directorate.[15] Elections were called for parliament, with one representative for every 10,000 members of the regional population. Open to men and women over the age of 18, these elections meant that the Southwest Caucasian Republic joined the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan as the first two Muslim-majority countries to recognize women's suffrage – a sign, perhaps, of these countries' integration in the spirit of progressive legal reforms taking place in the South Caucasus at the time.

The issue of naming this polity, however, was not a simple one. Was it an assembly, a republic, or even a state at all? In most (but not all) of the official documents available, no reference is made to the 'Democratic Republic of the Southwest Caucasus', supposedly declared just a month prior. The most-cited copy of the constitution available refers to the polity officially as the 'Government of the Southwest Caucasus'.[16] Nevertheless, what the Muslim nationalists of the southwest Caucasus called their country in practice varied significantly, depending on what effect was meant to be achieved. Thus, during the first few days of the administration, when its status was least clear, official documents referred to the administration as the 'Provisional National Government of the Southwest Caucasus'.[17] The words 'provisional' and 'national' soon disappeared from official use, however. Starting in March 1919, official documents began to consistently use the term 'Republican Government of the Southwest Caucasus'.[18] The representatives of the administration in Istanbul, meanwhile, called it an 'independent government' (*hükümet-i müstakile*) in Turkish or an 'independent state' in English and French (see below). In one case, İbrahim even referred to the administration as the 'Islamic Government of the Southwest Caucasus'.[19] Then there is the question of what was meant by '*hükümet*' in the first place, as the word 'government' implies only a particular administrative configuration for a larger, more abstract 'state'. Indeed, for reasons that will be discussed shortly, the leaders of the administration in the southwest Caucasus deliberately avoided the term 'state' (at least when writing in Turkish). Yet they also used the word '*hükümet*' to refer to the *republics* of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.[20] (This chapter uses the word 'republic' to describe the polity, based on the nature of the state-like institutions it established, along with evidence that the words 'republic' and 'republican' were used at various points in its history.)

No original version of the Southwest Caucasian Republic's constitution has been found, nor is there a definitive copy. Two versions are available to us: a typewritten transcription into Latin characters, likely dating from the 1930s,[21] and a copy in the memoirs of the Southwest Caucasian Republic's foreign minister Fahrettin Bey [Erdoğan], likely penned in the late 1940s.[22] The seemingly minor differences in wording of each copy change the meaning significantly. For example, Article 1 of the constitution fixes the name of the polity: the 1930s version lists it as the 'Government of the Southwest Caucasus'; Fahrettin lists it as the

‘Southwest Caucasian Republic’.[23]

The constitution as reflected in each of these versions is a bare-bones law of 18 succinct articles (though, by comparison, the 1921 constitution of the Turkish Grand National Assembly only had 23). The lack of conceptual organization or institutional clarity in either version of the Southwest Caucasian Republic's constitution betrays a likely hasty, *ad hoc* drafting process led by delegates who had little prior experience with constitutions and were likely more concerned with the immediate needs of the day. Some of the articles attest to the Republic's intent of establishing itself as an internationally recognized state with a future and all the trappings of such (official name in Article 1, defensible borders in Article 2, flag design in Article 3, and official language in Article 4). Other articles, meanwhile, bear a relation only to local and immediate conditions. Based on the relative detail of articles related to elections and parliament, it was clearly essential for the Republic to demonstrate that they have a well-run, fair system of representation (Articles 5, 6, 14, 15, 17, 18). Indeed, Article 14 clearly stipulates that elections be held freely and fairly, ‘and in a manner befitting the glory and honor of the Turks’. Notably, unlike most constitutions, even provisional ones, this constitution makes no explicit claim to the legitimate rule of the National Assembly or its representation of the will of the regional population. State legitimacy is implied, however, through bodies of direct representation, successful defence of borders and the integrity of the state, as well as Turkish ethnicity. The constitution also does not formally establish the position of head of state, assuming the pre-existence of institutions like the council of ministers and the presidency that had been established in late 1918.

Of most interest here are the remaining articles, which deal with the unique problems of international and interethnic relations facing the nascent republic. Article 10 promises that the Republic will make a principle of maintaining friendly relations with its neighbours. However, it is clear that the Ottoman Empire (referred to as ‘Turkey’ by the southwest Caucasian nationalists[24]) is to be its most favoured neighbour. This is reflected, first, in the words used to describe the Empire – it is the Turkish ‘state’ (*devlet*), an almost sacred institution of which the ‘government’ of the Southwest Caucasus was merely a provisional extension.[25] Articles 8 and 9 of the constitution stipulate that the structures of the military command and of the bureaucracy are to be copied from ‘Turkey’, where a representative of the Southwest Caucasian Government would always be present to ensure that the two countries’ institutions are in harmony. While ‘minority rights and freedoms’ are to be protected and ‘religious differences among Muslim sects’ to be respected (Articles 12, 13) in this diverse region, it is clear in the constitution that Turkishness is to be the country's guiding ethnic character. In addition to defining Turkish as the language of administration and education in Article 3, the constitution's Article 7 states that any activity which offends the Turkish nation or government[26] is ‘to be absolutely avoided’. Most relevant to the discussion of self-determination is Article 11. Should the European governments (Fahrettin version: ‘Allied states’) decide to ‘give’ the southwest Caucasus to another nation, the government (or ‘republic’) has already decided not to ‘break away’ from ‘Turkey.’ While the constitution claims the right to self-determination for southwest Caucasian Muslims and Turks, Article 11 clearly puts the Southwest Caucasian Republic, as a ‘government’, in a politically subordinate position to the ‘state’ of the Ottoman

Empire.

Document 2: A Petition as an ‘Independent State’

If the government established by the southwest Caucasian Muslim nationalists was to have any chance of avoiding a handover to another administration, then they had to achieve recognition by the powers – especially Great Britain – who were in the process of shaping the postwar order. Better yet would be to have the southwest Caucasian Muslims’ very own delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. Thus, the main tasks of several nationalist groups in the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus after the war included nominating representatives to petition the Allied high commissioners in Istanbul for permission to participate in the Conference as well as collecting the funds required to send these representatives to Paris. On 7 December 1918, within weeks of its formation, the National Assembly in Kars appointed two local notables, Atbaşızade Asaf Bey [Atbaş] and Halilbeyzade ‘Topal’ Ali Bey, as its delegates in Istanbul. Asaf's credentials speak of the necessity of ‘uniting the Muslim residents of the Caucasus in aim and deed’ and of ‘demonstrating to the necessary parties the truth of the atrocities and disasters inflicted on the Muslims’; it counts ‘relentless pursuit of this aim among our important tasks and religious obligations’ and charges its holder with ‘working to establish welfare for us Muslims’. The French translation of Ali's credentials is much the same, though in much less flowery language and without many of the pervasive references to religion and ‘us Muslims’.[27]

Though they fell short of their ultimate goal of sending delegates to Paris, Asaf and Ali were at least able to plead their case to the Allied representatives in Istanbul. Naturally, the Turkish nationalist principles enshrined in the constitution would not endear Asaf and Ali to the Allies. Introducing themselves, therefore, as representatives of ‘the Southwest Caucasian Independent State’, they secured an audience with British representatives in Istanbul in late February 1919. The British tone at the meeting was, in the words of Deputy High Commissioner Admiral Richard Webb, one of ‘reserve’, and no promises were made. If Armenians were massacring Muslims in the Caucasus, Webb told them, then the British occupation forces there would surely hinder them; furthermore, travel to France was a matter for the French, and Britain would not intervene on Asaf and Ali's behalf.[28] Eric Forbes Adam, a member of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, similarly commented on the meeting by saying, ‘It is to be hoped that the French will not let them come to Paris, where we have already sufficient representatives of the Caucasian peoples and no immediate prospect of hearing or settling their cases.’[29] After this setback, Asaf and Ali postponed meeting with the French high commissioner and worked to secure better credentials and more funds.[30] We have evidence that they were able to meet, again as representatives of the ‘Southwest Caucasian Independent State’, with the American high commissioner in Istanbul in late March 1919.[31]

The actual petition submitted by Asaf and Ali to the Allied representatives in Istanbul is available to us today in two nearly identical versions, one in French translation (dated 15 February 1919), and one in Turkish (dated 30 March 1919).[32] The petition was prepared by the

‘Association of the People of Kars’ (*Karslılar Cemiyeti*), an Istanbul-based organization with connections to the palace, established in January 1919 to aid the cause of the southwest Caucasian Muslim nationalists. Submitted to the British, French, American, and Italian representatives in Istanbul, the petition asked the Allies, particularly the British, to recognize the Southwest Caucasian Republic, guarantee its security against its neighbours, send commissions to investigate massacres of Muslims by Armenians, and provide its representatives with the means of travelling to Paris for the Peace Conference.

The language and argumentation of the petition were clearly crafted with its audience in mind. In addition to defining the basic features of the new state, the petition presents several arguments in favour of the legitimacy of the Southwest Caucasian Republic. First, it links the government to a popular majority: the population, it states, consists of a ‘majority […] comprised of Tartars, Turkmen, Karapapaks, Terekemes, and Kurds’ with a ‘minority of Russians, Greeks, and Armenians’. (While implying a Muslim majority, it avoids the use of the words ‘Muslim’ or ‘Turkish’, which may have been thought to have negative connotations for the Allies.) Second, the petition makes a historical claim to legitimacy, arguing that the Republic represents the ‘earliest inhabitants of the region’. Tellingly, the petition emphasizes that the population is ‘not that of the Ottoman Empire or of other countries who have come to settle or make their homeland there’ (*faire la patrie*, *tavattun etmiş*). Third, it attempts to carve out a space for the southwest Caucasians among the ‘civilized’ nations of Western Europe. It points out that the residents of the Southwest Caucasus ‘counted themselves among the children of the *Entente*’ and contributed to the Allied war effort by volunteering for military service or donating money.[33] It also says that a great majority of the youth of the country were exposed to ‘Western civilization’ by being sent to Russian schools (This claim is directly opposed by most Turkish nationalists – even those of the southwest Caucasus at the time – who argue that Muslim children in the southwest Caucasus were deliberately not exposed to the Russian education system.[34]) Fourth, the petition makes a claim to reparations, not only for the sacrifices made by the southwest Caucasian population during the war, but also in response to the ‘more than 400’ villages destroyed and ‘forty thousand’ Muslims massacred by Armenian militias. It threatens a loss of security and the emergence of a ‘second Macedonia’ in Asia if the independence of the southwest Caucasian Muslims is not acknowledged. Finally, the petition emphasizes the equivalence of the national claims made by the Southwest Caucasian Republic and its neighbours, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Any *bona fide* nation capable of governing itself, it argued, ought to enjoy the right to declare independence.

Most of the discrepancies between the French and Turkish versions might be chalked up to the editorial preferences, or haste, of the translator. Nevertheless, some of the differences do help us better understand the nature of the petition. First, where the French version refers to ‘Turkey’ and ‘Turkish’, the Turkish version refers to the ‘Ottoman Empire’. This would not have been unusual for an official Ottoman document of 1919, since such documents never referred to the Ottoman Empire as ‘Turkey’. However, as seen in the constitution and other documents, Turkish nationalists in the southwest Caucasus regularly used the word ‘Turkey’ for the Ottoman Empire. The use of Ottoman, rather than southwest Caucasian, terminology in the

petition is thus evidence that it was prepared in close collaboration with, if not entirely by, the Association of the People of Kars in Istanbul. Second, the Turkish version includes even more language crafted to appease the Allies – language about minority rights in the southwest Caucasus, the close historic ties between Muslims and Armenians in the region, and so on. Most striking, however, is a passage not in the French, which lauds the progress made by India and Egypt under British administration and promises to administer the territory of the southwest Caucasus in accordance with British law and in close consultation with British advisors or other European officials. This passage – which completely contradicts Article 8 of the constitution – may be an addition intended to emphasize the Southwest Caucasian Republic's willingness to cooperate with the Allies (the Turkish version we have is dated one and a half months after the French). Indeed, after the unsuccessful meeting with the British High Commissioner in February 1919, the president of the Association of the People of Kars recommended taking a number of steps to improve the credibility of the Southwest Caucasian government in the Allies' eyes, including issuing new credentials, granting official and honorary titles, purchasing more suitable clothing, and producing state symbols like flags and medals.[35] Embellishing the narrative of self-determination presented to the Allies was clearly another part of this strategy.

Document 3: A Declaration by a 'Democratic Republic'

The trend leading from *de facto* to *de jure* independence was strengthened by an unusual resolution taken on 27 March 1919 by the Assembly of Deputies (*Meclis-i Mebusan*) of the Southwest Caucasian Republic. The resolution, which included a heading in both Turkish and Russian, began as follows:

Our Assembly of Deputies, which was directly elected by secret ballot in proportion to the number of men and women eligible to vote, now also confirms the declaration of independence of 15 January 1919 [*sic*] of the Democratic Republic of the Southwest Caucasus […]. On 25 March 1919, the Assembly of Deputies publicly announced the decision taken by […] the Congress of the National Muslim Assembly [on] 1 December 1918: 'The major revolution that took place in Russia abolished the Russian despotic regime. At that time, the southwestern region of the Caucasus, left to its own devices, was compelled to take the matter of determining the fate of the region into its own hands, and decided to establish a government. This was done in accordance with the law of the second provisional [i.e., Bolshevik] government established in Russia in October 1917, which recognized the right to self-determination of all of the small nations living in Russia.'[36]

While references like this to the Russian Revolution are rare in the official documents of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, other documents do make reference to the Republic's basis in 'social-democratic principles'.[37]

The 1 December 1918 declaration quoted here continues with points that are similar to those of the constitution: claims of territory including Ahıska (Akhaltsikhe), Ahılkelek

(Akhalkalaki), and parts of the district of Yerevan; pledges of cordial relations with neighbouring republics; and promises of equal rights to all citizens regardless of nationality or religion. While it mentions Russians, Greek Orthodox, and Molokans as religious minorities with special political rights, this declaration, too, denounces the massacres of Muslims by Armenians and refuses their right to resettlement until the decision of the Peace Conference. There is, however, one major difference in content. Article 4 of the 1 December declaration states:

The fate that awaits the Southwest Caucasian Government will exactly follow the final status of the other Muslim [*hem-mezhep*] governments established in the Caucasus region. Should the governments that have been established in the Caucasus be united with the Russian Government, we, as a member of these governments, will have the same status as the Muslim governments of the Caucasus, whatever it may turn out to be […]

This is nothing less than extraordinary – the constitution provided for institutions modelled on the Ottoman state; a petition to the Allies pledged to conform to British law; and this declaration envisions a union with Caucasian Muslims, if not with Russia! Furthermore, the declaration was signed not by the usual executive branch of the Southwest Caucasian Republic (İbrahim and Fahrettin), but by the leaders of its parliament, including its president, Dr Esat [Oktay], a native of the district of Çıldır and a graduate of the medical faculty at Moscow University. This document shows that Unionist operatives appointed from Istanbul or Erzurum were not the only ones interested in the project of an autonomous government in the southwest Caucasus: local notables educated in a Caucasian or Russian milieu had their own version of what self-determination would entail, one more tied to the Caucasus than to the Ottoman Empire. We have little information on whether any conflicts emerged out of the divergent backgrounds and perspectives of the southwest Caucasian nationalist leadership. However, the situation seems to resemble other cases around the former Ottoman Empire where Unionists and local notables collaborated on Turkish-rights organizations, the former emphasizing loyalty to the sultan and the Turkish nation and the latter prioritizing regional interests and identities.

Document 4: A Pamphlet by a ‘Defence of Rights Association’

Throughout early 1919, the British repeatedly demanded that the new government both hand over stockpiles of weapons and grain to British forces and that the government accept the return of tens of thousands of Armenian refugees to Kars. These demands were repeatedly rejected.[38] At the same time, there was a significant domestic push for British troops to take on a greater role in policing the postwar Caucasus.[39] While lack of means had led the British to an initial policy of tacit toleration toward the activities of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, by April 1919, British military authorities in the occupied South Caucasus grew weary of the Republic's constant obstructions and decided to proceed with their original plan of installing an Armenian administration there. On 13 April, General William M. Thomson, the commander of the occupying forces in the Caucasus, issued a decree in Turkish disbanding the government and had the decree air-dropped around the Republic's population centres. That evening, British

forces surrounded the parliament in session and arrested most of its leading members, who were sent as prisoners of war to Malta. Meanwhile, Armenian administrators were invited by the British to take over Kars, an act which resulted in yet another round of interethnic conflict and migration. The last telegram ever sent in the name of the Southwest Caucasian Republic was sent by Fahrettin Bey on 16 May 1919 from ‘exile’ in Erzurum. It asked the British occupiers to protect the lives and property of the Muslim population remaining in Kars.[40]

The ‘protection of lives and property’ became a mantra for the Muslim notables who continued to organize several regional assemblies and committees after the armed dispersal of the Southwest Caucasian Republic. The ongoing peace conference in Paris offered such committees an ideal (if perhaps utopian) audience to air their grievances. A 20-page booklet in French, entitled *L'Etat du Sud-Ouest du Caucase* (The State of the Southwest Caucasus), represents the major attempt by such commissions to reach this audience.[41] It was published in Batum in October 1919 by a group calling itself ‘The Central Committee for the Defense of the Interests of the Population of the Southwest Caucasus’. Its name hints that the organization was inspired by the dozens of Muslim ‘defence-of-rights’ groups springing up around Anatolia and the Caucasus at the time in hopes of providing logistical support to militias and to represent the interests of local Muslims at national (or even international) congresses.

From the Latin epigraph on the front cover to the use of the title ‘prince’ by its primary author, Server Feyzullah Atabek, the brochure subtly emphasized a shared political culture with Western Europe. In so doing, the authors of the pamphlet sought to frame their nationalist aspirations as similar to those of Western Europeans and, more to the point, as equivalent to those currently being made by Armenians and Georgians. The first item in the brochure is an opening letter by Atabek asking the Allied powers to recognize the independence of the southwest Caucasus. In large part, it uses argumentation similar to that of Asaf and Ali's petition to the Allies in early 1919.[42] ‘The territories of the Southwest Caucasus form a country [*pays*]’, wrote Atabek, with a shared (national) history of contestation and continual transformation under various empires. It also appeals to the notion that the Muslims of the southwest Caucasus ought to be compensated for violence inflicted on them, first by the Armenians and then the Georgians. It makes no reference to a future desire to join the Ottoman Empire, though it does make reference to the plebiscite of 1918. It argues that the right of self-determination of the southwest Caucasian Muslims was recognized as a result of the Russian Revolution. Nevertheless, in addressing the Allies, it makes several appeals to Wilson's principles of self-determination. It even reproduces a ‘declaration of independence’ apparently passed by the National Assembly in late 1918. The declaration of independence published here is broadly similar to that given above, except that all references to the Russian Revolution have been substituted by ‘Wilsonian principles’[43] – likely in response to the replacement of Russia by the Allies as the new external ‘determining’ power.

Following Atabek's appeal are four supplementary documents, sent in by national-Muslim ‘defence-of-rights’ committees from provincial cities near Batum. While Atabek's appeal to the delegates expresses the desire for positive recognition of the aspirations for independence of the peoples of the southwest Caucasus based on historic and political claims, the remaining

documents in the pamphlet are largely negative, charting the suffering that Turkish and Georgian Muslims had endured at the hands of Armenian and Georgian Christians over the last year. All four contributions emphasize how the Georgian state or Armenian militias invaded the territory of the southwest Caucasus 'against the will of the people'. These 'people' organized popular resistance movements to defend their lives and property against destruction, their wives and mothers against rape, their religion against defamation, and their 'rational' claim to territory against the 'tyranny' of the invader and their trampling of 'national legal rights'.[44] A significant feature of these claims is the inclusion of detailed tables of property destruction, calculated by a 'neutral commission', showing cumulative damage to homes, livestock, and crops. In this way, the booklet fits squarely in the genre of appeals to the Allies made by other Caucasian groups, using standards that they believed the Allies would find objective and legitimate.

The final two pages of the booklet present statistical information on the southwest Caucasus. On the first page are extensive population statistics, collected by the Russian Empire in 1916 and 1917 and sorted by 'ethnicity' – Muslims, Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Georgians, Kurds (i.e., Yezidis), Jews, Germans, Estonians, and Poles. On the second page, these data are presented as a bar graph alongside a detailed reproduction of a map produced by the Russian Imperial cartography division.[45] The plethora of statistics in the discourse of the Southwest Caucasian Republic was the result of an obsession with maintaining an overwhelming ethnic majority in the territory under the control of the state. Over the course of the nineteenth century, ethnicity had become a biopolitical category, representing the populations that would live and die for the state.[46] Ethnicity was perceived as a scarce resource, particularly in the Caucasus, where imperial policy had settled, deported, and resettled 'friendly' and 'unfriendly' populations for centuries: 'By the beginning of the twentieth century, forced population exchange was emerging as an almost routine practice, one that many regarded as logical and even salutary.'[47] The Muslim population in the southwest Caucasus had recently been subjected to deportation campaigns: a general call for out-migration in 1878, after which 'loyal' Armenians and Russians were resettled in their place, along with the revelation of Russian plans to depopulate the Muslims of the Adjaria region (around Batum) in 1915.[48]

The fear that this might be repeated loomed large in the minds of southwest Caucasian Muslim notables and their Unionist mobilizers (who were themselves well aware of, if not responsible for, what was happening to the Armenians across the border in the Ottoman Empire). They also realized that the self-determination claims they were making to the Allies would be severely threatened if a significant Armenian presence were established in the southwest Caucasus. This fear was expressed in two complementary policies: first, encouraging Muslims to move (back) into the region, and second, keeping Armenians out at all costs. In June 1918, during the Ottoman Empire's brief pre-armistice control of the region and shortly before a referendum was to be held on the region's fate, Yakup Şevki Pasha [Subaşı], commander of the Ninth Army in Kars, appointed İbrahim, future president of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, as district governor of Şüregel. İbrahim was charged with facilitating and encouraging the migration of Turks and their families to Gümrü (Gyumri) and the region east of

the Arpaçay (Akhuryan) River.[49] In September of that year, the Ottoman Empire's Office of Tribal and Migrant Affairs recommended strengthening the southwest Caucasus against the claims of neighbouring states by 'increasing the number and density of Muslims there through the settlement of [North Caucasian] migrants in the region, particularly in the Kars lowlands'.[50]

The second prong of the Southwest Caucasian nationalists' population policy, the prevention of Armenian in-migration, was seen by some as the very *raison d'être* of a Muslim administration in the southwest Caucasus. Cafer Bey [Erçıkan], one of the Unionist operatives involved in the establishment and provisioning of the National Assembly in Kars, expressed this sentiment plainly:

It was the duty of the Assembly Government not to allow Armenians into the *Elviye-i Selase* [Kars, Ardahan, Batum], not to allow any migrants to pass out of the *Elviye-i Selase* into the Erzurum region, to inform the Allied states that there was no Armenian presence, and to announce this in the press.[51]

The fact that equal importance was placed on *publicizing* the lack of Armenians in the southwest Caucasus attests to the power that such statistics held in the evaluation of self-determination claims by the Allies. The British, whose policy it was to award the region to an Armenian state, constantly pressured the Southwest Caucasian Republic to accept the return of Armenian refugees to its territory. Southwest Caucasian leaders, for their part, were equally adamant about countering such pressure: they rejected a visit by a British commander in the Caucasus in late 1918 because he planned on bringing a handful of Armenian administrators with him. A note sent to him by the Kars National Assembly threatened, 'Down to the very last one of us standing, we will not let a single Armenian cross the Arpaçay River into our country, even if it means shedding our blood.'[52]

Self-Determination between Discourse and Realpolitik

The brevity of the administrative life of the Southwest Caucasian Republic (November 1918–April 1919) and its blatant status as a contingency plan established to preserve Muslim/Turkish authority in the region do not detract from its value as an object of scholarly inquiry. On the contrary: observing this pseudo-state in the near simultaneous process of formation and dissolution allows us to better see the organic bonds between discourses of self-determination and claims to power. Through the four documents presented here, we have seen how claims to statehood based on self-determination were deliberately crafted in response to the presence of or change in external powers with the authority to recognize such claims.

In order to better understand the process by which this happened, an analogy might be drawn to Natalie Zemon Davis's well-known work on supplication to the king in sixteenth-century France.[53] In Davis's work, individuals accused of a crime petitioned the sovereign, in ways prescribed by law, for a pardon, while the sovereign had the option to reinstate supplicants' good social standing. In the scramble to define post-imperial space after World War I, the Allies played the role of the 'sovereign', commanding overwhelming military force

in the Caucasus and enjoying the power of recognition (or ‘pardon’) in the international arena. As the ultimate arbiters of claims to statehood, the Allies also conditioned the language and argumentation of those who sought recognition. Their adoption of self-determination as the yardstick for such recognition had enduring effects on discourse, local politics, and international dynamics, argues Michael Reynolds:

The affirmation of the nation-state by the great powers as the normative unit of global politics exerted a tremendous impact upon local politics already in turmoil. It made the language and program of nationalism essential to the central objective of modern politics, obtaining and maintaining control of the state, and thereby facilitated the spread of nationalist ideologies. The structure of the global order and interstate system provided powerful incentives to adopt nationalist ideologies by tying control of the state and its territory to claims made on behalf of the nation.[54]

The powers that led the process of restructuring the global order were very explicit about what they expected from a self-determination claim. For example, Fahrettin, the foreign minister of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, recalled being told the following in a meeting with a British officer of the Caucasian occupation forces: ‘For the local governments that have been established in the Caucasus to demonstrate that the land they occupy is theirs, they must provide proof of ancient works at least 500 years old. Any claim to land for which they cannot furnish such proof is illegitimate and will be rejected by the Allied powers.’[55]

The southwest Caucasian nationalists, for their part, could be likened to the supplicants of sixteenth-century France, suspicious from the start in the eyes of the sovereign. The ‘crime’ of which the Allies accused the southwest Caucasian nationalists was their flouting of the terms of the Moudros Armistice, their close ties to the Ottoman Unionists, and their preventing the return of Armenian refugees to the region. Supplicants in both cases could use flattering language, cite extenuating circumstances, or appeal to shared values in order to make their case. The discourse of nationalists resembled that of the petitioners in Davis's work in two more specific ways. First was the similarity in narrative structure among the claims of different petitioners. The fact that the criteria for recognition of self-determination claims were set by an outside power explains the equivalence of such claims made by different ethnicities in the same region. Local Armenians making a claim on the southwest Caucasus to the Allies used the exact same arguments as those made by Asaf, Ali, and Server Feyzullah Atabek: historical presence, victimhood, promises of good relations with neighbours, proximity to Western civilization, and contribution to the Allied war effort.[56]

Second, in both Davis's petitions and in southwest Caucasian nationalists’ appeals to the Allies, petitioners could employ extremely detailed accounts of the situation to ‘show’, rather than simply ‘tell’, the sovereign about the motives for their actions. In both cases, the intent was to prove that the ‘crimes’ of which the supplicants were accused were ‘unpremeditated, unintentional, in self-defense, or otherwise justifiable or excusable by […] law’.[57] This bears striking resemblance to Philip Abrams's definition of the state as a project: ‘The state’, he writes, ‘is a bid to elicit support for or tolerance of the insupportable and intolerable by

presenting them as something other than themselves, namely, legitimate, disinterested domination.'[58] When asked by the British forces who arrested him, for example, why he didn't let any Armenians into Kars (it was their first question), former President İbrahim explained that 'this was *simply an administrative matter*' taken so as not to inflame tensions.[59] In presenting their own rule as natural and logical, the leaders of the Southwest Caucasian Republic were merely doing what anybody seeking a state form of power would do: frame their claims to power in the understandable discourses and practices of the day.

Discourses of self-determination were not based on a predefined population or political configuration – internal contradictions in the demands made by leaders of the Southwest Caucasian Republic are proof enough of that. Ambiguity about the status of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, however, should not be taken by today's observers merely as a failure on their part to understand the 'real situation' in 1919. Rather, as we have seen, discursive ambiguity was an intentionally crafted strategy used to achieve immediate political ends. Self-determination claims were a justification of the exercise of state power, but as in the case of Davis's 'pardon tales', they did not in and of themselves determine the outcome.[60] An observer associated with the White Army wrote the following regarding the Caucasus in 1919:

It seems indubitable that the reconciliation of the conflicting aspirations of the Caucasian peoples is too extensive a task to be accomplished with the ready made formulae of national self-determination […] Therefore, in my opinion, one should not exaggerate the importance of the paper decisions which are being made today.[61]

Indeed, when the status of the southwest Caucasian borderland was finally settled by the Treaty of Kars in October 1921, not one of its signatories – the Turkish nationalist government in Ankara and the Caucasian soviet republics – had even existed in 1919, when the Southwest Caucasian Republic had made its case for self-determination.

Notes

1. For the Russian-language version, see: Aidyn Gadzhiev [Aydın Hacıyev], *Demokraticheskie Respubliki Iugo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza (Karsskaia i Araz-Tiurkskaia Respubliki)* (Baku: Nurlan, 2004), 52–3; A.L. Popov, 'Iz epokhi angliiskoi interventsii v Zakavkaz'e', *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* 6–7, no. 18–19 (1923), 256 fn. 2. For the Turkish-language version, see: S. Esin Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de (Kars, Ardahan ve Batum) Milli Teşkilâtlanma* (Erzurum: Kültür Eğitim Vakfı Yayınları, 1997); Ahmet Gökdemir, *Cenûb-i Garbî Kafkas Hükûmeti* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1989); M. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars, 1. Kitap* (Kars: Kars Turizm ve Tanıtma Derneği Yayınları, 1960). On the establishment of local autonomy in 1917, see: Fahrettin Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım* (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1954), 135.
2. Another potential hypothesis is that diverging discourses were the result of serious differences of opinion among Muslim nationalist leaders in the southwest Caucasus.

Indeed, the various backgrounds of local Caucasian and Ottoman/Unionist actors involved makes it highly probable that the goals held by members of the nationalist movement failed to coincide on every point. Nevertheless, the lack of biographical information and the limitations of the sources available prevent a more thorough testing of this hypothesis at this stage.

3. The major scholarly work on the period is Candan Badem, *Çarlık Rusyası Yönetiminde Kars Vilayeti* (Istanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2010); for a more classic approach, see: İlber Ortaylı, 'Çarlık Rusya'sı Yönetiminde Kars', *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9 (1978): 343–61. For an eyewitness account from a Turkish nationalist perspective, see: Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 27–32, 43–52.
4. For Russian, see: No. 78, 'Mirnyi dogovor mezhdu Rossiei, s odnoi storony, i Germaniei, Avstro-Vengriei, Bolgariei i Turtsiei – s drugoi' (3 March 1918), in Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR, *Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki SSSR, Tom Pervyi*, vol. 1 (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1959), 121; for Turkish, see: Stefanos Yerasimos, *Türk–Sovyet İlişkileri: Ekim Devriminden 'Millî Mücadele'ye* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1979), 43. An additional bilateral treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Russia dictated the schedule and manner of Russian withdrawal, the dissolution of Armenian militias, and the establishment of boundary commissions.
5. Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), chs 9–10. For the most detailed discussion on the minutes and exchanges of the Trabzon and Batum conferences, see: Enis Şahin, *Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Antlaşamaları (1917–1918)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002).
6. Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 61–7; Enis Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır: Gümrü Görüşmeleri ve Protokolleri–1918* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005), 311–30; Yerasimos, *Türk–Sovyet İlişkileri*, 87–8, 95–104.
7. Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 33; Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 135–6, 143; Erkan Karagöz, *Güneybatı Kafkasya: Siyasal ve Sosyal Mücadeleler Tarihi* (Istanbul: Park Kitap, 2010), 57, 75.
8. Kars is not mentioned specifically in the armistice. The latter can be found in: Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919–1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), 341–2. See also: Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 70–1; Hovannisian, *Armenia*, 239–40; Gotthard Jäschke and Erich Pritsch, 'Die Türkei seit dem Weltkriege: Geschichtskalender 1918–1928', *Die Welt des Islams* 10 (1927–1929): 7.
9. Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu, 'Mondros mütarekenamesinde Elviyei Selâse ile ilgili yeni vesikalar', *Belleten* 21, no. 84 (October 1957): 573–4, 576; Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 73–4; Gökdemir, *Cenûb-i Garbî Kafkas Hükûmeti*, 33; Richard G. Hovannisian, 'The Contest for Kars, 1914–1921', in *Armenian Kars and Ani*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2011), 279; 'Clearing Out the Turks – The Withdrawal of Forces to Asia Minor', *The Times* (16 November 1918): 6. Some sources give 23 November as the date of this order.

10. Most of the region, except Kars proper, was evacuated by early December 1918. Reports published in Western newspapers called the Ottomans' snail-paced withdrawal a 'Turkish Ruse' and accused them of committing atrocities against Armenians and taking the supplies and munitions they were supposed to leave behind for the British and Armenians. Turkish nationalist sources do not deny the reluctance with which the Ottoman army left, but prefer to use terms like 'passive resistance' (*pasif direniş*). Bıyıklıoğlu, 'Mondros mütarekenamesinde Elviyei Selâse', 579; Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 75–9; Gadzhiev, *Demokraticheskie Respubliki Iugo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza*, 53; Gökdemir, *Cenûb-i Garbî Kafkas Hükûmeti*, 69; 'A Turkish Ruse – Starting a New War in the Caucasus – Fighting Stopped by British', *The Times* (24 January 1919): 7.
11. Communication of Lieutenant Colonel Giorgii Melik Shakh Nazaroff to Armenian Minister for Interior Affairs, Lieutenant General Ivan Akverdoff [Ovanes Akhverdian] of 17 January 1919, reprinted in Jacques Kayaloff, 'From the Transcaucasian Past: Two Documents about Turkish Resistance in 1918', *Journal of Asian History* 6, no. 2 (1972): 125–8.
12. For the *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* connection between the foundation of these two provisional polities on the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, see İbrahim Şirin, 'İki Hükümet Bir Teşkilat: Garbî Trakya Hükümet-i Muvakkatesi'nden Cenub-î Garbî Kafkas Hükümeti Muvakkate-î Milliyesi'ne', *History Studies* 6, no. 2 (February 2014): 125–42. Orders to establish a new national organization in the region evacuated by the Ottomans seem to have come directly from Enver Paşa. For a firsthand account of the activities and rhetoric of the Unionist officers in the region, see the memoirs of Ebülhindili Cafer Bey in: Hasene Ilgaz, 'Ebülhindili Cafer Bey: Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Erzurum Müfreze Kumandanı–I', ed. Ali Birinci, *Türk Yurdu* 21, no. 165 (May 2001): 44–57; idem, 'Ebülhindili Cafer Bey: Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Erzurum Müfreze Kumandanı–II', ed. Ali Birinci, *Türk Yurdu* 21, no. 166 (June 2001), 34–46.
13. Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 80–9; Gadzhiev, *Demokraticheskie Respubliki Iugo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza*, 52–3; Gökdemir, *Cenûb-i Garbî Kafkas Hükûmeti*, 69–70, 250; Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 8. Gadzhiev lists the date of the founding of a certain '*Musul'manskii Natsional'nyi Komitet*' as 27 September 1918, well before the armistice. Gadzhiev, *Demokraticheskie Respubliki Iugo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza*, 48.
14. Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 90–9; Gökdemir, *Cenûb-i Garbî Kafkas Hükûmeti*, 97–146; Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 8–11.
15. The Greek Orthodox man was a certain 'Ksenofon Anderyanof' [Xenophon Andriianov?], a teacher from Kayseri, while the Russian woman, noted as being anti-Bolshevik, is listed only by her last name 'Arlof' [Orlova?]. A full cabinet list, with annotations, is in: M. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, 'Cihângîroğlu İbrâhim Aydın (1874–1948) 'daki Millî-Mücâdele'de Kars ve Atatürk İle İlgili Belgeler', *Belleten* 48, no. 189–190 (January–April 1984): 128–9. Given that Kırzıoğlu provides a facsimile of the original list in Ottoman Turkish, Erdoğan seems to be mistaken when he lists the education minister as being 'the Greek Orthodox woman Yelena'. Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 181.

16. Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 21.
17. Document of 18 January 1919, reprinted in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 20.
18. One of the earliest examples is a document of 29 March 1919, reprinted in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 37–8.
19. Letter of 20 January 1918 appointing Cihangiroğlu Hasan[han] Bey [Aydın] as defense secretary of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, reprinted in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 23.
20. Petition of 30 March 1919, reprinted in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 45.
21. Karagöz, *Güneybatı Kafkasya*, 120–1, 174. The earliest publication of this version of the constitution, however, appears to be a German translation in Gotthard Jäschke, 'Urkunden', *Die Welt des Islams* 2, no. 1 (1952): 25–61.
22. Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 185–6.
23. There are reasons to doubt the exactness of Fahrettin Bey's transcription, including the use of non-contemporary language in the constitution, apparent embellishments, and other inaccuracies found throughout the memoirs (see footnote 15). Nevertheless, such embellishments may actually offer us a window onto how the polity was perceived at the time by different kinds of nationalists.
24. 'Turkey' was not the name used for the Ottoman Empire in official Turkish sources; nevertheless, the Unionist operatives at the helm of the Southwest Caucasian Republic had ideological reasons to call the Ottoman Empire 'Turkey', while the European- or Russian-educated local elite would have followed outsiders' practice of using the name 'Turkey'. Thus, it is not, as Bülent Tanör claims, a case of the leaders of the Southwest Caucasian Republic inventing a future or 'virtual' state called 'Turkey' that they hoped to join. Bülent Tanör, *Türkiye'de Kongre İktidarları (1918–1920)* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1998), 39.
25. According to the contemporary definition of 'state' (*devlet*) by prominent nationalist thinker Ziya Gökalp, 'government' (*hükümet*) was merely one of its constituent components. The state – a 'sacred concept' (*mukaddes mefkûre*) along with the *ummah* and the nation – needed to rely on 'national principles' to ensure its 'eternal life'. See: Ziya Gökalp, 'Millet nedir?' *İctimâiyât Mecmûası* 1, no. 3 (June 1333 [1917]), 149; idem, *Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Muâsırlaşmak* (Istanbul: Yeni Mecmûa, 1918), 53, 58.
26. Presumably, 'Turkish government' here refers to the government of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, since the Ottoman government is referred to as the 'Turkish state.'
27. Asaf's Turkish credentials of 7 December 1918 and Ali's French credentials of 8 December 1918, reprinted in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 13–14.
28. Richard Webb's report of the meeting can be found in his correspondence with Lord Balfour, T.N.A., FO. 608/78 (28 February 1919), 208. Less than two months later, it was Webb who sought the arrest of Fahrettin, who had avoided capture when British troops raided the Southwest Caucasian parliament. See correspondence with Ottoman Foreign Ministry, B.O.A., HR.SYS. 2303/13 (13 May 1919).

29. Minute of 21 March 1919, T.N.A., FO. 608/78, 207.
30. Ahmet Zülkifil's memorandum of 22 February 1919, reprinted in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 31–3.
31. Telegram of 17 March 1919, reprinted in ibid., 37.
32. For French: T.N.A., FO. 608/78, 209–12; For Turkish: Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 42–6.
33. The authors of the petition are referring here to the so-called 'Savage Division' (*Dikaia Diviziia*), a volunteer unit founded in 1914 to support the Russian war effort and consisting mostly of Caucasian Muslims. Kırzıoğlu makes a point of denying any Turks from Kars or Batum took part in this endeavour. Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 43. Whether or not this (unsourced) claim is true, however, he ignores the fact that the petitioners here wished to *distinguish* themselves from Turks or Turkish nationalism. Indeed, an infantry battalion from Adjaria (the region surrounding Batum) did join the Savage Division as early as 1914. See: Michael G. Smith, 'Anatomy of a Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narratives of the Russian Revolution in Baku, 1917–20', *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 2 (April 2001): 223.
34. Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 29; Comité Central pour la défence des intérèts de la population du Sud-Ouest du Caucase, *L'Etat du Sud-Ouest du Caucase* (Batoum: Imprimerie H. Chmaïvsky, 1919), 4.
35. Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücâdelede Kars*, 31–4; a partial photograph of this document can be found in Şirin, 'İki Hükümet Bir Teşkilat', 142.
36. The original file is found in the Republic of Azerbaijan State Archives but is printed in facsimile and in modern Turkish transcription in: Yavuz Aslan, 'Türk Tarihinin İkinci Demokratik Cumhuriyeti Kars'ta Kuruldu: Demokrat Cenûb-i Garbî Kafkas Cumhuriyeti', *Toplumsal Tarih* 67, no. 12 (July 1999): 38–9. A satisfactory Russian translation is in Popov, 'Iz epokhi angliiskoi interventsii v Zakavkaz'e', 256 fn. 2. Passages which follow are translated from these sources.
37. See the updated credentials for Asaf Bey granted by the government of the Southwest Caucasian Republic, 1 February 1919, in Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücadelede Kars*, 26.
38. Dayı, *Elviye-i Selâse'de*, 131–6; Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 189, 193–4; Hovanissian, 'Contest', 278–81.
39. 'British Force Sent to the Caucasus – Turkish Atrocities Put Down', *The Times* (10 January 1919): 8; 'Three Helpless Republics – The Muddle in Transcaucasia', *The Times* (19 March 1919): 9.
40. Kırzıoğlu, *Millî Mücadelede Kars*, 72–3.
41. The copy used in this paper was the version held by the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*.
42. Unlike the 1919 petition, however, Atabek writes that education under the Russian Empire had little transformative effect on the population, making the Muslims of the region distinct in culture and tradition from other nations in the Caucasus.

43. Comité Central, *L'Etat du Sud-Ouest du Caucase*, 5.
44. The phrase ‘national legal rights’ is used in ibid., 16.
45. Ibid., 21–2.
46. Clearly, the conceptual framework of biopolitics, which ‘deals with the population as [a] political problem’, extends well beyond what the Southwest Caucasian Republic was ever able to implement. Interestingly, however, one of the complaints lodged against the invading Georgian army in 1919 was that they ‘gave no importance at all to preventing the ravages caused by typhus, which the Georgian soldiers brought to Ahıska and Ahılkelek’. Comité Central, *L'Etat du Sud-Ouest du Caucase*, 16. For the quotation from Foucault, see Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007), 245.
47. Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 148.
48. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 144; Mustafa Tanrıverdi, ‘The Treaty of Berlin and the Tragedy of the Settlers from the Three Cities’, trans. Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo–Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, eds M. Hakan Yavuz and Peter Sluglett (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 449–78.
49. Kırzıoğlu, ‘Cihângîroğlu İbrâhim Aydın’, 124.
50. B.O.A., DH.İ.UM.EK. 48/79 (22 September 1918).
51. Ilgaz, ‘Ebülhindili Cafer Bey–II’, 34.
52. Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 177.
53. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987). In one case, President İbrahim did actually petition King George V directly to protest the British attempt to bring Armenian administrators to Kars. While this document is not as generally related to statehood as the documents presented in this chapter, it does share some of the same features and language, including references to ‘Wilson's principles’, the region's overwhelming Muslim majority, suffering at the hands of Armenians, and the establishment of democratic governance in the southwest Caucasus. A translation into English of İbrahim's petition to the king can be found in: T.N.A., FO. 608/78, 218–20 (dated 17 March 1919).
54. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 18.
55. Such discourse was apparently meant to exclude Muslims, relative latecomers who mostly lived outside of urban centres, from making claims. It was also a way of diminishing the value of the ‘ethnic principle’ in evaluating a self-determination claim – a criterion which would have favored the Muslims in the region. Erdoğan, *Türk Ellerinde Hatıralarım*, 191–2.
56. For one example, see the work of an Armenian from Erzurum, cited by the founders of the Southwest Caucasian Republic (Ilgaz, ‘Ebülhindili Cafer Bey–I’, 44) as one of the most

important local Armenian nationalist mobilizers: G[rigor] Pasdermadjian, *Why Armenia Should Be Free: Armenia's Rôle in the Present War*, trans. Aram Torossian (Boston: Hairenik Publishing Company, 1918).

57. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 7, 37.
58. Philip Abrams, 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (March 1988), 76.
59. Recalled by İbrahim in a memorandum sent to Mustafa Kemal Paşa, April 1921, transcribed in Kırzıoğlu, 'Cihângîroğlu İbrâhim Aydın', 141 (emphasis mine). Quite similar language can be found in İbrahim's petition to King George V in March 1919; see: T.N.A., FO. 608/78, especially pp. 219–20.
60. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 48–58.
61. I. Mints, 'Vneshniaia politika kontr-revoliutsionnykh 'pravitelstv' v nachale 1919 g'. *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 37 (1929): 88–9; translated in Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917–1921)* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 239.

PART II

FLUIDLOYALTIES AND IDENTITIES

CHAPTER 4

SHAPING SUBJECTIVITIES AND CONTESTING POWER THROUGH THE IMAGE OF KURDS, 1860s[1]

Dzovinar Derderian

Nineteenth-century Armenian sources addressing conditions in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire often present the collective experiences of Armenians. Using such narratives as evidence of experience tends ‘to essentialize the identity and reify the subject’.[2] To overcome such essentialization I will turn to Joan Scott's proposal of providing a literary reading of texts to analyse the discursive making of subjectivities.[3] Through such an analysis I hope to start a questioning of how and why in the mid-nineteenth century the attitudes of Ottoman Armenians were discursively homogenized. I investigate this process through an Ottoman–Armenian discourse of reform that appears in the periodical *Artzvik Taronoy* (Little Eagle of Taron, 1863–65).[4] The editor of this journal, Garegin Srvandztiants, was concerned with the conditions of apostolic or orthodox Armenians in the Ottoman East.[5] In an attempt to bring out a connected history of Kurds and Armenians in this era, I pay particular attention to how Kurds and Kurdishness were represented in the periodical, as a foil for shaping Armenian subjectivities.

Before turning to the content of the periodical, a synopsis of the historical context in which an Ottoman–Armenian discourse of reform was shaped is due. In the 1830s, the Sublime Porte, in an effort to centralize its power, had led multiple military campaigns in the Ottoman East in order to crush the Kurdish emirates that ruled the region and to settle the nomadic tribes. The Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate, by asking local prelacies in the eastern provinces to provide Armenian military units to back the state in its suppression of the Kurdish emirates, had allied with the Sublime Porte.[6] Yet not all Armenians sided with the state and the patriarchate. Different sources also point to local Armenians having supported the incursions of the Kurdish emirs against the Ottoman state.[7] On the one hand, the participation of Armenians on both sides of the struggle stands as one of the numerous indications of differing loyalties and stances among Armenians with respect to the Ottoman state, the Armenian Patriarchate and the Kurdish emirates. On the other hand, the patriarchate's position in this conflict indicates a reason why the ecclesiastical leaders whose writings will be discussed below, contrasted the image of

Kurds – rather than that of Muslims or the Ottoman state – to the representation of an idealized Armenian.

Besides the politics that shaped the discourse, transformations were happening in the eastern provinces that brought havoc. By the late 1840s, the Ottoman state had successfully brought down the emirates, but disorder increased in the region as a result. A power vacuum emerged, leading to tribal conflict. '[W]ith tribes violating each other's pastures, and moving through agricultural areas in which they had no economic interest beyond exploiting them as much as they could before moving on', it was the land cultivators who suffered.[8] Another factor impoverishing the cultivators was the reforms undertaken to register and eventually privatize land. Although on paper the reforms were meant to protect the peasants, it was mostly powerful notables who benefited. '[P]eople who knew how to deal with government officials could have large tracts of land registered in their names. In Kurdistan, these were mainly *aghas*, *shaikhs*, and certain classes of townsmen: merchants and higher officials. The actual tillers of the land only realized what had happened when it was much too late.'[9] Kurds and Armenians were among both the exploiters and the cultivators who suffered from the above-mentioned transformations.[10]

The centralization of the Ottoman state went hand-in-hand with the centralization of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate, which was to be implemented through the execution of the Armenian National Constitution. Through the Constitution, which was promulgated in 1860 and reinstated in 1863, a representative body in Istanbul – the Armenian National Assembly – as well as locally elected councils were to be established throughout the empire. As Antaramian has argued, the implementation of the Armenian Constitution 'was a constituent part of the policy of state-centralization' and a new role of the ecclesiastical leaders was 'to implement the Armenian Constitution and, by extension, reform Ottoman governing structures'.[11] Thus, it should not be surprising that the Ottoman–Armenian discussion of reform significantly overlapped with the language and principles of the Ottoman set of reforms known as the *Tanzimat*, which 'stipulated an equitable taxation of subjects according to their means and pledged to ensure their security and property. It also specifically declared the juridical equality of all subjects […].'[12] Such reforms would bring representational politics to the provinces, albeit on the terms of the Sublime Porte and the patriarchate.

With representational politics there also emerged a system of discourse that depicted each ethno-confessional community as having a collective experience and singular subjectivities. Reports of the Armenian Patriarchate and National Assembly discussed the plights of those whom they represented, therefore separating the experiences of Armenians from those of Muslims.[13] As Judith Butler has argued, 'subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures'.[14] For example, 'In 1876, Karapet Panosian, a journalist and publisher of Armeno–Turkish newspapers, claimed that while Armenians in the eastern provinces could appeal to Istanbul by petitioning the patriarchate or sending letters about their plight to newspapers, Muslims did not have such channels.'[15] Muslims, of course, could petition the Ottoman government on an individual basis or on behalf of members of the local community.

Unlike Armenians, however, no institution collected the petitions of Muslims and submitted their summaries in whole to the government as the Armenian Patriarchate did. The biweekly newspaper that I discuss in this chapter also included similar narratives of the collective condition of Armenians. Yet, the homogenization of Armenians' experiences was not enough to turn them into subjects and ensure the functioning of the newly-created representative system. The institutional reorganization required cultural change, which reform-minded Armenian ecclesiastical leaders tried to implement.

The exigency of shaping a normative Armenian subjectivity emerged at a time of fierce struggles among Armenian power-holders and ecclesiastical leaders in Mush and Van. The implementation of the mid-century restructuring changes was met with resistance, among the individual targets of which were Mkrtich Khrimian (1820–1907) and Garegin Srvandztiants (1840–92).[16] These two individuals, originally from the province of Van, were among the first personalities who worked arduously for the implementation of social, economic, political and cultural reform in areas such as Bitlis and Van. With the aim of effecting change in the Ottoman East they preached, established schools and published their writings. In their lifetime among their most widely distributed publications were the periodicals *Artzvi Vaspurakan* (*Eagle of Vaspurakan*, 1855–64) and *Artzvik Taronoy*.[17]

Khrimian had founded the monthly *Artzvi Vaspurakan* in Istanbul in 1855, but two years later he transported his printing press to the Monastery of Varag, near Van, where he continued the publication, set up a school and served as an abbot.[18] Subsequently, between 1862 and 1869, Khrimian served as the Primate (*aradjnord*) of Mush in the district of Bitlis. He had brought along with him his student from Varag, Garegin Srvandztiants, who had also been a contributor to the monthly *Artzvi Vaspurakan*. The latter undertook the establishment of a school at the Monastery of St Karapet in Mush and started publishing and editing the biweekly *Artzvik Taronoy*.[19]

Their efforts in the provinces met with vicious resistance. Allegedly, both in Van and Mush attempts had been made to murder Khrimian.[20] Local ecclesiastical figures and laymen from Bitlis wrote a number of petitions to the Istanbul Patriarchate and the Armenian National Assembly complaining about Khrimian and his men, such as Yeremia Tevkants (1829–85).[21] They demanded the removal of Khrimian from Mush and insisted on having a local individual as the primate of Bitlis and not someone from Van. Towards the end of their letter they threatened that if their demands were not met they would create havoc.[22] The struggle was between having governance managed locally or mediated through the centre. Khrimian and Srvandztiants had to gain the support of the local population by convincing them of the benefits that the centre – the Sublime Porte and the Istanbul Patriarchate – could bring.

As most of the texts analysed in the following pages will come from *Artzvik Taronoy*, a synopsis about the biweekly's logistics and distribution is in order. The periodical's colloquial language indicates that the target audience included the masses, rather than being limited to the smaller, educated upper strata of the society. Each issue consisted of four pages. In the second issue the biweekly reported that in the area of Mush the paper had about 60 subscribers.[23] *Artzvik Taronoy* had correspondents in Mush, Bulanık, Baghesh/Bitlis, Van, Igdir,

Karin/Erzurum, Arapkir, Yerznka/Erzincan, Trabzon and Istanbul.[24] Presumably, the paper was distributed in all these regions. In one of the issues we also hear of reading rooms. In particular, a newly founded association in Trabzon wrote to *Artzvik Taronoy* to announce that their reading room consisted of 45 members. One can presume that such a medium would forge a space for the newspaper to be read out loud or to be discussed. The authors of the letter promised that they would send to Mush all the Armenian-script newspapers that they received, after keeping them for ten days. They volunteered to do this free of charge, but in turn they asked that a reading room be opened in Mush.[25] This shows that newspapers and journals were circulated and shared, thus finding a readership larger than the small number of subscribers.

Sometimes pieces that appeared in *Masis*, the organ of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, would be published in *Artzvik Taronoy*.[26] In turn, some articles printed in *Artzvik Taronoy* would appear in newspapers in Istanbul such as *Meghu* and *Masis*,[27] which indicates that the content of the biweekly was reproduced and therefore reached a wider readership. Although exact assessments cannot be made, it can be concluded that Armenians throughout the empire read and orally transmitted the texts that I will examine below.

Although Srvandztiants at times faulted local government representatives, overall in *Artzvik Taronoy* he praised the role of the central state. Direct criticism of the state was unlikely to appear in the press, as it was legally banned. According to a law passed in 1858, if a publication denounced the sultan, state representatives or the state, the materials had to be confiscated, the publication house closed (temporarily or permanently) and the publishers fined.[28] Over the course of its three-year lifespan, the biweekly's publication was halted at different times. Ajemian attributes the suspension of the biweekly in 1863 to an influential Armenian from Mush, Vardan Agha Mamikonian. According to Ajemian, Mamikonian was an opponent of Khrimian, and to harm his work in Mush he told the *mutasarrıf* (sub-provincial governor) that *Artzvik Taronoy* published libellous news against the Ottoman state. As a result the biweekly was temporarily closed.[29] Yet, Srvandztiants' investment in implementing reforms to facilitate not only the centralization of the Armenian Patriarchate, but also the Ottoman state, suggests that his appraisal of the state was not merely a front for protecting the journal against censorship.[30]

Attitudes towards Progress, Literacy, and the State

A discourse of reforming conditions in 'Armenia' (a geographical term used in the periodicals) and of transforming the behaviours, beliefs and loyalties of Armenians persists in both *Artzvi Vaspurakan* and *Artzvik Taronoy.*[31] As I will demonstrate, the authors of the periodicals, especially beginning with the first draft of the Armenian National Constitution in 1860, aimed to convince the local population of the eastern provinces to submit to standardized state law. To have subjects obey the law, pro-reform Armenian ecclesiastical representatives had to render the central state and church legible – sometimes quite literally – to the population in the Ottoman East. Both *Artzvi Vaspurakan* and *Artzvik Taronoy* were immersed in insisting on the necessity of progress (*haradjadimutiun*) and Armenia was represented as the space where

progress was to occur.

The contributors to the periodicals believed that for the actualization of progress, first and foremost laws had to be standardized, governance had to be centralized, and corruption and bribery had to be eliminated. Thus, in an attempt to convince the local population that the governing system in the region had to be changed, Srvandztiants wrote:

The style of the old administration was such that, the *Res* [village head] to the *Ishkhan* [local notable], the *Ishkhan* to his chief, the Bishop to his Primate, the Primate to his chief, would sacrifice anything to bribe or to please one another. [In the meantime] the pitiful society suffered […] I say with pain that here many would forget that the Ottoman benevolent state has a door of justice and court everywhere. Here [in Mush] the society did not know and the *Ishkhans* did not want to know that the Imperial government had granted permission to its subjects to have national courts and lawsuits in the provinces, cities and the center. Here it was not explained that a person can demand his own lawsuit, and can defend his own rights. They say, here […] is Kurdistan, we must behave like this. Such are the traditions here. It has been like this, it will be like this […] Injustice is the tradition here. It is impossible to have rule and law here.[32]

Srvandztiants referred to a perception among the local population that essentialized regional traditions. Accordingly, he thought that they did not believe that human agency could engender progress. Such a positioning towards progress had to be changed for the locals to recognize and accept the benefits of structural change.

The author insisted that the laws and regulations of the state would ameliorate the conditions in the eastern provinces if each confessional community solved their communal problems strictly within the court of their *azg* (confessional nation), evoking the *millet* system.[33] In addition to the legal boundaries that the *millet* system would impose between ethno-confessional groups, the state would have a role in imposing such divides. He wrote of the *kaymakam* (district governor) of Mush, the newly-appointed Avdi Pasha, that in his new position he ruled justly, and 'barbarities' had been reduced as a result. He added that the conditions had improved because a decree was released according to which all the Kurds of the Hasan tribe, 'who suck the blood of the pitiful subjects' of the Mush area, would have to retreat from Mush to Manazkert/Malazkirt. 'Thanks to God and to the new ruler's strong government, the benevolent *kaymakam* has started to implement this [the removal of the Hasan tribe Kurds]. Taron hopes to see a clear sun and sweet days. Let us always grant glory and blessing to the august Ottoman sultan.'[34] Srvandztiants insisted on the role of the central state in protecting Armenians from Kurds. The Ottoman state was to represent a shield between Kurds and Armenians. In addition in these texts he represented the Sultan and the state as a foil to the savagery of Kurds. Through terms such as 'blood-sucking', 'savage', and 'barbaric', Srvandztiants reinforced the 'uncivilized' image of Kurds. The state, on the other hand, was 'just' and 'benevolent'.

The prevailing heavy taxation and other exactions stood among the central problems of the time. Reportedly local officials, Armenian notables, and again Kurds were the three categories

of people depicted as creating financial burdens on the local – and particularly rural – Armenians. In *Artzvi Vaspurakan*, Srvandztiants introduced the conditions of Armenia to the reader. He depicted the lives of a few families, providing a singular image of rural Armenians in Kurdistan. He complained about the practice of *kışlak* (wintering-over), wherein 'the nomadic [*vranabnak* – literally tent-dwelling] Kurds [would] come every fall to spend the winter in the Armenian villages, and every year the Armenians' took care of them. 'Even though thanks to the powerful and benevolent Ottoman state this practice is now forbidden, in interior places the [*kışlak*] still continues.'[35] Here Srvandztiants admitted that the state was well-intentioned, although its plans did not work out in practice.

Later on in the article, however, he proposed a reason as to why the Sublime Porte's intentions were not materializing and suggested some remedies. 'But could it be', he wrote,

that the one who collects the Royal tithe on behalf of the benevolent State, also receives this type of unjust authorizations through his official position. No, no, never! God forbid. But who is complaining to the door of justice, where are the intermediaries? Where are the modern leaders and the community's (nation's) leaders, where are they?[36]

Srvandztiants recognized differences between local representatives of the state and the central state. Although at times he praised individual local state representatives, he also criticized those local state officials (not individually named) whom he believed failed to follow the law of the state and the orders of the Sublime Porte. Thus, he indicated that with increased involvement of the central state, conditions could be improved. The lines quoted above, however, also suggested that Armenian leaders could facilitate the contact between the central state and local Armenians. But not all Armenians could fulfill such a role. Srvandztiants encouraged Istanbul-educated priests to come and serve in Armenia and addressed them as follows: 'Let the villagers find protection under your shadow; let the barbarians revere your power; and bring civilization with you to Armenia.'[37] His encouragement of progress and his representation of the imperial capital as the agent of reform positioned the Ottoman East as a backward place, yet one that could be transformed.

The troubles that Armenians endured in the eastern provinces were also linked to Armenian power-holders. Yet the language used to accuse Armenian power-holders differed from that directed at the Kurds. When Srvandztiants accused Armenians of bringing misery upon their own community, he consistently used the pronoun 'we'. 'What impoverishes us', he wrote, 'are our diseases.'[38] Through this metaphor he showed characteristics among the Armenians that were harming the community, but could be removed the way a disease could be cured. In other instances Armenians held responsible for the condition of their community were characterized as sinful, another attribute that could be fixed if the rules of the Bible were followed.[39]

To regulate the actions of the above-mentioned exploiters, Srvandztiants in *Artzvik Taronoy* had a number of recommendations for reforms internal to the Armenian community. Besides the intervention of the state, he pointed to literacy, unity of the Armenians, and commitment to the public good as necessary components of progress. Srvandztiants argued that literacy would bring people closer to the state and therefore improve their condition. According to the

biweekly, some resisted learning how to read and write. They asked, ‘Will reading a newspaper free me from the Kurds, will it decrease my taxes, will it take me to the kingdom, will it take me to heaven […]?’ Rebuffing these questions that meant to refute the importance of literacy, he wrote, ‘A reader knows how much tax the state requires, and gives that much: the one who cannot read will give as much as they ask from him […] The literate person knows how to complain to the government of the state about the Kurd or the barbarian and how to win a lawsuit.’[40] Thus, literacy was to bring Armenians closer to the state, to the law and to justice, which would protect them from the Kurds.

As already indicated, Srvandztiants thought that people's ability to complain, and in particular to petition to the Sublime Porte would improve their condition. Petitions written on behalf of people from Mush and Van were also published in order to promote a culture of writing complaints to Istanbul. In other words, he encouraged Armenians to become more active in demanding the protection of their rights in accordance with the state and church law and regulations. Such encouragements were not being expressed only rhetorically, but there are reports that Khrimian and Srvandztiants encouraged people to write petitions.[41]

Through literacy, people would also be better informed about the administrative changes that were being imposed in the provinces. The news published in the biweekly was meant to advance public engagement among Armenians. News about the implementation of the Armenian Constitution and the celebration of its proclamation were regularly published. The biweekly reported on new appointments of primates, state officials, and elected councils, but also about conflicts among Armenian ecclesiastic and non-ecclesiastic power-holders in the region. It also praised certain primates against others, as well as certain local officials. With literacy people would be able to read about their local council members.

To ameliorate the conditions of Armenians Srvandztiants appeared to consider the Ottoman state as the necessary and legitimate power in opposition to the Kurdish emirates. In his biweekly, he attempted to redefine boundaries between Kurds and Armenians and reshape the ideal Armenian.[42] With this goal he worked arduously to construct normative notions of Ottoman–Armenian subjectivities. In the process he utilized various binaries, such as barbarism and civilization, urban and rural, progress and backwardness, justice and injustice, legal and illegal. To assert these binaries, however, Srvandztiants employed a generalized view of Kurds or Kurdishness as the opposite of a normative Armenianness, which allowed the reshaping of the image of the law-abiding and civilized Armenian against the barbaric and disloyal Kurd. On the ground, however, the contrast between Kurds and Armenians was not always apparent, especially to the eye of an Armenian who had a specific definition of ‘being civilized’. Srvandztiants, being exposed to the local culture, recognized that some of the ritual practices of Kurds and Armenians were rather similar. He sought to point this out, and encouraged the erasure of whatever he deemed ‘Kurdish’ among Armenians.

Shared Practices as Contested Sites of Power

The ecclesiastical leaders involved in the implementation of the Constitution in the provinces,

among them Yeremia Tevkants, Garegin Srvandztiants, and later Poghos Natanian, were concerned about the increased assimilation of Armenians among Kurds. In several issues of the newspaper, references were made to local cultural practices that the editor of the newspaper and other like-minded authors did not deem Armenian or belonging to the Armenian Church. Practices considered foreign to the Armenian way of being were often represented as Kurdish. Through a definition of stricter boundaries between Kurds and Armenians, the latter were to be molded as loyal subjects of the state and the church.

Srvandztiants accused the Taron Armenians of cooperating with Kurds, and singled out those Armenians who denounced their own people to the Kurds. The way to improve conditions, he affirmed, was by 'unity, friendship and hard work […] The first result of your unity should be to get rid of Kurds – your harassers – from amongst you.'[43] The reminder to his readers that Kurds were the harassers of Armenians indicates a realization that some Armenians perceived Kurds in other ways.

In his identification of the unacceptable aspects in the lives of Armenians in the eastern provinces, Srvandztiants complained that at burial ceremonies Armenians in 'this region' (i.e. the eastern provinces) did not follow the prayers and the rules of their Armenian Apostolic faith. The locals wore the clothes of the dead and came up with their own lamentations composed of Kurdish words and a Kurdish melody. However, he emphasized that the people could not be blamed. Who, he asked, had been 'the preacher, the teacher, the one who forbade them?' 'And when has the pitiful villager or the Kurdish-mixed Armenian ever been shown' how such ceremonies are supposed to be held? In other words, he suggested that the local religious leaders had failed to accurately preach to the villagers, and therefore the latter did not learn right from wrong.[44]

Another writer of *Artzvik Taronoy, Vardapet* Hovhannes Muradian, was sent to the eastern provinces by the patriarchate in order to collect information on the local problems, as well as to implement the Armenian Constitution.[45] Muradian's letter on the conditions of Armenians, published in three consecutive issues, listed a few practices that were shared among Kurds and Armenians, which he deemed problematic as they did not abide by the laws of the Armenian Church. He wrote:

In Kurdistan the worship of trees and water […] is immeasurable; both among Armenians, Kurds and Yezidis […] In the village of Qrtasor [Kozluk today] there is the wife of a Sheikh; when somebody's face swells, or somebody's tooth hurts they go to the hatun [woman] and put her shoes in their mouth for their own health […] The Kurds of this country gloriously venerate churches and the places of old churches that are in ruin now, in the same way the Armenians also venerate their places that are called Shehid [martyr] or Ziarat [visits]; they swear in the name of God with a lie, but they will not lie when they swear in the name of Sheikhpal […] On the day of the birth of Christ and Baptism the Kurds come to the priests especially to ask, 'for the love of God, what did your Cross say, is the winter going to be intense, will the summer bring abundance or trouble.'[46]

Apart from these shared rituals and beliefs, it was pointed out that Kurds often served as

intermediaries who helped Armenians to marry against Armenian Church regulations. The biweekly reported about Armenian men who practised polygamy and married close relatives. According to Srvandztiants this happened because people were following and were more aware of Kurdish traditions than of the Armenian Church rules. But also, he admitted that, local priests allowed such practices through the acceptance of bribes.[47] From the vantage point of the church, enforcing church law against polygamy entailed certain risks. In one issue it was reported that, 'An Armenian named Saqo, from the village of Haban' not being able to have a male child from his first wife, took a second wife. The issue was raised that if the local priest enforced the church law, the 25 household members had agreed to 'become Kurds'. Such an act would leave the church with 13 fewer members (presumably the author only counted the men of the household as church members).[48] Saqo, who wanted to marry another woman thinking that she would give him a male heir, was just trying to solve a problem in his life, albeit through a practice that Armenian reformist ecclesiastical leaders considered 'Kurdish' or 'Muslim'. As this case illustrates, the centralization of both church and state in the Ottoman East meant not only the enforcement of state law in terms of who could collect taxes and how much, but also the increased involvement of the state and church in regulating local relations, customs and individuals.

The examples of shared practices between the local Kurds and Armenians signify a space for contesting power. Armenian men who wanted to take a second or third wife took advantage of the ability to fluctuate between Christian and Islamic regulations or – to remain closer to the letter of the text – between Armenian and Kurdish traditions. Such a liminal position bestowed them some liberties and possibilities to challenge Church authority. These and other contested sites had to be eliminated, however, if the Church were to centralize its power and implement its regulations in a standardized manner. For Srvandztiants, for whom progress was to come through the centralized power of the church and the state, the Kurd had to be identified as the local Armenian's Other, regardless of the status or tribal belonging of the Kurd.

My purpose in this chapter has been to decipher the local and imperial dynamics that shaped *Artzvik Taronoy*'s narratives. It is nonetheless significant to note the overlaps with European discourses. The Ottoman–Armenian language of reforms was impregnated with notions with which European travellers discussed the Orient. Srvandztiants' language in many occasions intersected with the European writings directed towards the Orient. Just like the accounts of Europeans travellers described by Makdisi, Srvandztians inculcated 'the notion of public good' and criticized 'indolence'. He encouraged people to work, instead of complaining about taxes.[49] While the 'European consul and missionaries bewailed the 'degenerate' nature of Oriental Christianity and its bigoted and uneducated priesthood',[50] Srvandztiants did the same in regards to the Armenian priests of the provinces. Where, however, they diverged was in the attitudes towards the Sultan and Islam.

The local conditions, institutional exigencies as well as the existing Ottoman and European concepts, all shaped the way a normative subjectivity was being discursively shaped among Armenians through *Artzvik Taronoy*. In order for the reorganized representative system to function the attitudes towards the state, the law, strictly defined confessional rituals, progress

and literacy had to be molded. Furthermore, for reform to happen, the subjects of the Armenian Church had to be convinced that progress was something that could be effected by human effort, especially through education, hard work, communal (national) unity and cooperation. In this disciplining language the Kurds, represented as a homogenous entity, were to stand as one yardstick against which the ideal subjectivities were to be measured. I have suggested that both the struggle between the Kurdish emirates and the Ottoman state, as well as the close socio-cultural proximity of Kurds and Armenians inhabiting the eastern provinces, necessitated in particular the othering of the Kurds.

In critical approaches to the ethnic categories of Kurds and Armenians, scholars have pointed out some differences within each ethnic group, but this has not broken down each group's insularity.[51] Van Bruinessen in his seminal work on Kurdistan showed various structural differences among Kurds across space and time.[52] Soviet-era scholars from Armenia, due to the dominant Marxist paradigms of the time, were apt to consider class divisions within both ethnic groups.[53] In general, however, when discussing Kurds and Armenians simultaneously, the standpoints of each group have been treated as unitary categories, partly because the method of analysing relations between two entities inadvertently forces generalizations. Similar approaches to bringing out a connected history allow little space to challenge epistemic assumptions about the national identities of Kurds and Armenians. Most prominent of those premises has been the general categorization of Armenians as victims and Kurds as victimizers.

The broad themes in the historiography of Kurds and Armenians have covered conflict and cooperation between the two. Themes of periods of hostility and alliance between Kurds and Armenians have dominated Armenian historiography.[54] In Ottoman studies, scholars have concentrated on delineating processes that have led to conflict between the various Kurdish tribes and Armenians.[55] Outside of the Kurdish–Armenian cases a number of scholars have destabilized epistemic approaches to ethno-confessional groups and have complicated the frameworks with which ethno-confessional identities in the Ottoman Empire have been treated.[56] Except for the work of Ussama Makdisi, however, little research has been conducted to discover what discursive, political and social processes contributed to the formation and transformation of sectarian mindsets in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.[57]

In this short chapter, through an analysis of *Artzvik Taronoy*, I have tried to take one small step towards unsettling perspectives linked to national groups. In hopes of beginning to connect the histories of Kurds and Armenians, I set out to understand how they had become so rigidly separated in the first place. In this chapter I have delineated why and how Srvandztiants wanted to mold specific outlooks among Armenians. But many questions remain unanswered. How did this discourse, and accordingly the subjectivities it aimed to form, differ across time and space? How did the local population react to the disciplinary language? How effective was it? What practices and experiences, other than reading and writing, reinforced difference and specific attitudes among Ottoman subjects?

Notes

1. I would like to thank Neveser Köker for reading a draft of this chapter and for the productive comments that she provided.
2. Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Summer, 1991): 797.
3. I use subjectivity very simply to evoke a subject's positioning towards 'something outside of it – an idea or principle, or the society of other subjects'. Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). In this chapter I concentrate on how Armenian subjectivities were discursively shaped towards progress, literacy, the Ottoman state, and the regulations of the Armenian Church.
4. By discourse I mean 'a convergence of statements, texts, signs and practices across different, even dispersed, sites'. Kathleen Canning, 'Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience', *Signs* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 379–80.
5. I emphasize apostolic or orthodox because the sources I consult were closely linked to the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate. The patriarchate had jurisdiction only over Armenians who were members of the Armenian Apostolic Church and therefore also defined Armenian identity not by ethnicity but by confession. Thus Catholics or Protestants would not be considered Armenian in the texts considered regardless of their ethnic background.
6. Maghaqia Arqepiskopos Ormanian, *Azgapatum: hay ughapar yekeghetsvoy antsqery skizben minchev mer orery*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Sevan, 1961), Col. 2596.
7. Haik Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri sotsial-tntesakan ev qaghaqakan katsutiuny, 1800–1870* (Yerevan: Haykakan S.S.H. G.A.H., 1967), 239; Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1992), 179.
8. David McDowal, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 49.
9. Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 183.
10. Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri sotsial-tntesakan yev qaghaqakan katsutiuny*, 263–8. Janet Klein, 'Conflict and Collaboration: Rethinking Kurdish–Armenian Relations in the Hamidian Period, 1876–1909', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 1–2 (2007), 155.
11. Richard E. Antaramian, 'In Subversive Service of the Sublime State: Armenians and Ottoman State Power, 1844–1896' (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014), 6.
12. Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (London: University of California Press, 2000), 10.
13. For example, 'Teghekagir gavarakan harstaharutiants qnnutian handznajoghovoy', in *Atenagrutiunq Azgayin Joghovoy*, (8 October 1871): 468–83.

14. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 3.
15. Massayuki Ueno, 'For the Fatherland and the State: Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat Reforms', *IJMES* 45, no. 1 (February 2013): 98.
16. Antaramian extensively discusses the local resistance that Khrimian and Srvandztiants faced particularly in the second and fourth chapters of his dissertation (Antaramian, 'In Subversive Service of the Sublime State').
17. Vaspurakan is an Armenian toponym for the region roughly east of Lake Van, while Taron is a toponym for the region west of Lake Van. The publications of both journals were interrupted for various reasons over the years. *Artzvi Vaspurakan* and *Artzvik Taronoy* differed from other Armenian periodicals of their day in that they were published in the Ottoman East and were the first periodicals that called for attention to Armenia.
18. Mkrtich Khrimian is a distinguished figure in Armenian history. Among his highest positions were Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul (1869–73) and Catholicos of All Armenians (1892–1907).
19. Srvandztiants was ordained a celibate priest in 1864. He is famous for having recorded the local oral traditions of Armenians in the eastern provinces, and for writing down the epic *Sasuntsi Davit*. For more, see *The Heritage of Armenian Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times*, vol. 3, ed. Hagop Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, Nourhan Ouzounian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 372–4.
20. Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, Col. 2776; Haik Ajemian, *Hayots Hayrik* (Tavriz: Atrpatakani hayots temakan tparan, 1929), 280–4.
21. Tevkants was also an ecclesiastical leader from Van.
22. B.N.U., C.G.P.R. 100 (10 February 1864).
23. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 2 (15 April 1863): 8.
24. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 24 (15 August 1864): 94.
25. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 34 (15 January 1865): 39.
26. For example, *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 27 (1 October 1864):10.
27. Garegin Srvandztiants, *Yerker*, vol. 2, eds V.H. Bdoyan and Emma Kostandian (Yerevan: Haykakan S.S.H. G.A.H., 1982), 516.
28. Alpay Kabacalı, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze: Türkiye'de Basın Sansürü* (Istanbul: Gazeteciler Cemiyeti Yayınları, 1990), 19.
29. Ajemian, *Hayots Hayrik*, 347–9.
30. Antaramian extensively discusses Srvandztiants' role the process of centralization. Antaramian, *In Subversive Service of the Sublime State*, 166–91.
31. 'Armenia' should not be understood as a perfectly defined geographical area, but rather as the places in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire where a majority of the empire's Armenians lived. I discuss the concept of Armenia in more detail in 'Mapping

the Fatherland: *Artzvi Vaspurakan's* Reforms through the Memory of the Past', in *Ottoman Armenians: Life, Culture, Society*, vol. 1, ed. Vahé Tachjian (Berlin: Houshamadyan, 2014): 145–69.

32. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 5 (1 June 1863): 17–18. The *ishkhank* were local notables who either dominated the local bazaar, worked in finance, or were merchants. They also served on the local government councils (Antaramian, *In Subversive Service of the Sublime State*, 122–3).
33. At this stage when using the word *azg*, which now means nation, what Srvandztiants had in mind were the members of the Armenian Apostolic Church.
34. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 29 (1 November 1864): 20. In Armenian the Hasan tribe is most likely what is known as the Hasanan tribe in Turkish.
35. *Artzvi Vaspurakan*, no. 2 (1862–63): 72–3.
36. Ibid., 78–9.
37. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 30 (15 November 1864): 22. A very similar address to priests in Istanbul and in 'other free cities' can be found in an earlier issue as well. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 25 (1 September 1864): 2.
38. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 3 (1 May 1863): 10.
39. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 2 (15 April 1863): 6.
40. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 12 (15 September 1863): 47.
41. Karo Sasuni, *Patmutiun Taroni ashkharhi* (Beirut: Taron–Turuberan hayrenaktsakan miutian kedronakan varchutiun, 1957), 235.
42. Unlike Khrimian, who in *Artzvi Vaspurakan* emphasized the necessity of women's education and encouraged women to write for his monthly, Srvandztiants in *Artzvik Taronoy* did not put a similar emphasis on female subjects. Srvandztiants emphasized the loss that Armenian women endured when their husbands migrated to Istanbul to work. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 24 (15 August 1864): 96. Yet by repeatedly addressing the audience of the newspaper as brothers, fathers and sons he makes it rather clear that the message of *Artzvik Taronoy* was directed to a male audience. In Srvandztiants' writing women were not given agency, which leads me to the conclusion that he was crafting an exclusively male subjectivity.
43. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 31 (1 December 1864): 26.
44. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 42 (15 May 1865): 70.
45. Sasuni, *Patmutiun Taroni ashkharhi*, 226.
46. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 46 (15 July 1865): 86.
47. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 25 (1 September 1864): 4.
48. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 38 (20 January 1865): 56. In this issue the journal provides multiple other instances of polygamy.
49. *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 3 (1 May 1863): 10.

50. Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 10.
51. For examples, see Gerard Libaridian, ‘The Changing Armenian Self-Image in the Ottoman Empire: Rayahs and Revolutionaries’, in *Modern Armenia: People, Nation and State* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2004): 73–85; Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Ronald G. Suny, ‘Introduction: From National Character to National Tradition’, in *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).
52. Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*.
53. See, for example, Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri sotsial-tntesakan ev qaghaqakan katsutiuny*.
54. Vahan Baibourtian, *The Kurds, The Armenian Question and the History of Armenian–Kurdish Relations*, trans. Mariam Mesropyan (Ottowa: Vahan Baibourtian, 2013). Tessa Hofmann and Gerayer Koutcharian, ‘The History of Armenian–Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire’, *Armenian Review* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 1–45; Stepan K. Poghosian, *Krdery yev Haykakan hartsy* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1991); Karo Sasuni, *Kurt azgayin sharzhumnere yev hay krtakan haraberutiunnery: Zhe daren minchev mer orery* (Beirut: Hamazgayin, 1969). This book was also translated into Turkish in 1991.
55. Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Klein, ‘Conflict and Collaboration’.
56. For example, see Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*. (London: University of California Press, 2011); Julia Phillips Cohen, ‘Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism: Jewish Imperial Citizenship in the Hamidian Era’, *IJMES* 44, no. 2 (May 2012): 237–55. Ueno, ‘For the Fatherland and the State’.
57. Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*.

CHAPTER 5

LOCALIZING MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN TONDRAKIANS, PROTESTANTS AND APOSTOLIC ARMENIANS IN KHNUS IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Yaşar Tolga Cora

In the summer of 1855, *Avetaber*, the Armenian-language journal of Protestant missionaries in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, reported the persecution of a Protestant messenger from the district of Khnus (present-day Hınıs) who had delivered a letter to an Armenian notable (*ishkhan*) in the city of Van. When the letter was read and its contents – 'simply references to the Bible of Jesus Christ', according to *Avetaber* – were publicized, a local crisis unfolded. The bishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Van captured the Protestant messenger and investigated the affair, in the course of which he allegedly made the messenger suffer horribly, beating him twice and '[making] him stand at the door of the church [so that] passers-by would spit on his face'. *Avetaber* did not give the name of the bishop but instead equated him with the Roman emperors Nero and Diocletian, who had persecuted Christians during their reigns.[1]

Meanwhile, *Masis*, the periodical of Istanbul Armenian patriarchate published a letter signed by the Armenian *ishkhan*s of Van to show 'how the grim incidents recounted in *Avetaber* are far from reality'. The letter, as might be expected, gave its own version of the incident, rejecting almost all of the claims made by *Avetaber*. The introductory section of the *ishkhan*s' letter is worth quoting:

A few ignorant people from Khnus, seduced by the teachings of a false clergyman by the name of Simeon, left the holy orthodox [i.e., Apostolic] church of Armenia and, on 25 March, wrote a letter to the prominent personalities of Van. The messenger came to Van and gave the letter to an infamous exile named Shirvanian Gaspar […] Gaspar, instead of giving the letter to the prominent members [of the community], opened it in a coffee-house and read it out to publicize the news. As [the letter] was in *ashkharhabar* [vernacular Armenian], pious people listened to the words, which were contrary to holy Christian belief and not in themselves worth remembering. This struck their conscience, and they went to the bishop to complain […] After two days, he [the letter-bearer] requested [that] the bishop [let him] testify, asked for a Gospel, and, taking it in his hands, swore that he was a *lusavorchakron* [Apostolic] Christian

Armenian, that the liar and false priest Simeon had given him [the letter], and that once it passed into the hands of Shirvanian Gaspar, [its contents] had spread by word of mouth.[2]

Similar contesting narratives pitting Protestant Armenians and Apostolic Armenians against each other can be found in contemporaneous journals published in other major cities of the empire.[3] However, this one stands out in two important respects. First, Simeon 'the false clergymen' was located not in a major urban centre of Ottoman Anatolia but in Khnus, a small country town that had developed around a historical fortress in the south of Erzurum province, with Armenian and Kurdish villages in its vicinity.[4] Second, local Armenians and native preachers, in addition to American missionaries, were the actors involved in spreading Protestantism in this region during its early stages.[5] Based on these two essential points, this chapter tells the story of Simeon Davitian and the Protestant community in the village of Chevirme, in Khnus, where Simeon preached throughout the 1850s.

This chapter relies on a variety of archival documents and personal narratives, including a very rare source – Simeon's personal diary. I use them to reconstruct the life story of a native pastor and the story of the 'Protestant' community of Chevirme, whose members claimed to be followers of the Tondrakian/Paulician creed. As a critique of the accounts in the historiography that emphasize the role of American missionaries in the process of evangelization, the present chapter considers the important yet unexamined issues involving the personal identities of non-Western actors, the cultural peculiarities of the district, and the local political economy in the early history of missionary activities in the region.

The issues of non-Western agency, cultural identity, and the socio-economic background of Protestantism in Anatolia have not received due attention in historiography on missionaries, with a few notable exceptions.[6] The main reason for this is the existence of two dominant bodies of scholarship. There is, on one hand, a West-centric, missionary-dominated historiography emphasizing the 'white-men's burden'.[7] On the other, there is the historiography that focuses solely on the actions and motives of the Ottoman central state and its responses to the missionaries.[8] Within this scholarship, it has been rightly argued that missionaries worked against the homogenization of Ottoman society under Sunni Muslim dominance through their interaction with the peoples who formed local cultural pockets – namely, the Kızılbaş/Alawites, Yezidis, Assyrians, Nestorians, and above all Armenians in the Ottoman East. According to Hans-Lukas Kieser, missionaries had 'a vision of integrating [these groups] into a new form of society which was in some ways diametrically opposed to the ideas of the ruling groups'.[9] This being generally true, supported by the case presented here of the native pastor Simeon and his community, the present work claims that certain identities were rendered into the more easily recognizable and relatively stronger category of 'Protestant' in the process of missionary activities. However, this does not mean that such groups were passive in the evangelization process; rather, they actively pursued their own agendas and saw the integration of their peculiar identities into a broader 'Protestantism' as the best option in the face of socioeconomic and political struggles. My claim also takes into account that the American missionaries may have chosen to evangelize what was already a religiously dissident community. In short, seeing every struggle between the Apostolic and Protestant

Armenians as a reflection of sectarian identities would be a simplistic interpretation, as such struggles had social, economic, and cultural roots, and identities were crystallized, if ever, precisely through these conflicts.

The present chapter, therefore, begins with an outline of the life of the native pastor Simeon based on his diary in order to provide a personal account and to show how Simeon differentiated himself not only from Apostolic Armenians but also from the generally accepted category of Western missionary.[10] I then examine the local Protestants' claims in Khnus, their reconciliation of the long-forgotten Tondrakian/Paulician belief with the newly arrived Protestantism, and particularly their efforts to claim agency for themselves rather than accepting a passive role in their interactions with the missionaries. The last section examines the local political economy of the region and shows how violent struggles between this dissident group and the local Armenian landowner necessitated the submission of peculiar local identities to a larger and stronger form, that is, Protestantism, and resulted in their failure to create an alternative form of religious culture – an Armenian Protestantism – in the long run. In short, the chapter investigates the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds against which American missionaries worked to build up Protestantism in the Ottoman East in the early period of their activities, attempting to uncover which personal and local identities were subordinated to the general term 'Protestant' and eventually lost their importance in the broader, stronger culture of the missionary movement.

Pastor Simeon: Life of a Native Pastor in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

My reconstruction of the life of Simeon is based on excerpts from his diary that were published in a *hushamadian* (memory-book) on Khnus. It was edited by Yeghishe Meliqian and published in 1964 in Lebanon.[11] The major drawback of Simeon's diary is that Meliqian omitted the sections of Simeon's writing that he considered unrelated to his own project. Unfortunately, the entire diary seems to have since been lost, as Simeon Davitian's family members sent the diary and other books to different people for examination.[12] Therefore, it must be kept in mind that the diary of Simeon the native pastor presents certain problems as a historical source, but the excerpts in hand are nevertheless very valuable, particularly when used in conjunction with other sources, as they offer a very rare local view of early missionary activities.

Pastor Simeon belonged to a peasant family from the densely Armenian-populated region of Sasun, north of Batman province in contemporary Turkey.[13] Simeon converted to Protestantism while he was a low-ranking member of the Apostolic Church's hierarchy. The extant evidence consists of sporadic entries from his diary dated from 1849 to the 1860s. In the diary's beginning, an introduction summarizes Simeon's early life. His introduction to reading and writing at Araqelots (Holy Apostles) Monastery in the Mush region, where he was placed to save him from the plague, and his decision to leave his village to become a priest and travel in pursuit of this goal are two learning points in his early life. Readers learn that Simeon took this

decision against the will of his father, who even arranged a marriage for Simeon in an unsuccessful attempt to bind him to his home town. Despite some hesitation, Simeon left for Jerusalem, taking the Palu–Edessa–Aleppo route. He had several unpleasant experiences en route, and he was not happy in Jerusalem, where he openly declared his dissatisfaction with the Apostolic Church by declining the post of deacon. After this, he was beaten and excommunicated from the church. Then he travelled to Beirut, where he would meet American missionaries. From Beirut he left for Smyrna (Izmir) and from there travelled to Istanbul, where he later began attending the missionary seminary in the neighbourhood of Bebek. Soon afterward, he was appointed as a teacher to a school in the neighbouring province of Nikomedia/Izmit.

Simeon was very important in the eyes of missionaries in Istanbul. Cyrus Hamlin, a pioneer of American missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire and a director of the Bebek Seminary between 1840 and 1860, praised the native pastor in the following terms before Simeon's departure for Khnus: '[Simeon] […] has united in an eminent degree wisdom, prudence, and zeal; and there is no one upon whom we could lay hands with more confidence that he will do his Master's work, without turning to the right hand or the left'.[14]

Many points of this cleric's early life are quite obscure. To begin with, Simeon's diary never talks about the reasons behind his dissatisfaction with the clergy in Jerusalem and never explains why he rejected his promotion to the rank of deacon or even why he was offered this position in the first place. More important, he does not discuss how or why he decided to become a Protestant or whether he had ever met any missionaries before his interaction with them in Beirut. However, Pastor Yeghia S. Qasuni, in his history of Protestantism among Armenians, claims – unfortunately, without citing any sources – that Simeon had met a Protestant *varzhapet* (religious instructor) in Jerusalem from whom he received the truth of the Gospel.[15] In Simeon's own version of the story, he encountered a certain Vardapet Petros in Beirut whom he had known before. When they met, Simeon says, Petros had already stopped attending the Apostolic Church and was in the company of the American priests.[16]

The reasons for Simeon's dissatisfaction with the Apostolic Church are less obscure than the reasons for his conversion. Simeon had been constantly subjected to physical violence by higher-ranking priests before and after deciding to leave Jerusalem. He also stated his dissatisfaction with the Armenian Apostolic Church, particularly the ignorance of its members, whom he denounced as superstitious, illiterate, and corrupt. His comment on the celebration of Carnival (*Bun Barekendan*) in a monastery summarizes his view of the Apostolic Church (and even more): 'The things that were done on the last night in this sacred monastery were done neither in the dirtiest street of Constantinople nor among the Kurds.'[17]

Leaving aside for a moment his criticisms of the Apostolic Church, it should be added here that Simeon directed critiques toward the missionaries as well, something that distinguishes him from his Western counterparts. His first frustrating encounter with the missionaries took place in Istanbul, when he realized that his money had been stolen – most probably by his colleagues in the seminary. 'I had thought all Evangelists were just and fair!' Simeon noted.[18] A second instance came many years later in Khnus, when an American missionary scolded

Simeon because his horse was slow. Simeon wrote in his diary:

I had not seen such anger and scolding even when I was among the [Apostolic] priests. What is the difference between these men and the bishops? No bishop treats his priest so disrespectfully. As if I had not worked for thirteen years and were just a shepherd. I am traveling with Mr. [Lysander T.] Burbank not as an equal brother but like a servant. I recalled how Roman aristocrats treated the priests of small towns and villages before the development of the papacy.[19]

One might speculate that Simeon had formed an ideal regarding relations among the members of the clergy or fellow brothers, and perhaps he considered himself worthy of a better position than the missionaries gave him. Neither the Apostolic Church nor Protestantism fulfilled his life-long expectations; however, the latter, despite its defects and the frustrations it caused, still provided more opportunities than the former had. It is almost impossible to place Simeon, or other native pastors like him, in the same category with missionaries because he differed from them substantially, particularly in terms of ethnicity, social background, and social status. As Simeon's brief life story shows, in combination with his distinctive social background, he was neither one of the Western missionaries as a group nor a member of the community of Apostolic Armenians that he had left – but with whom he continued to share culture, language, and space.

This is not to suggest that Simeon or other native pastors were caught between two distinct belief systems and communities, as doing so would reproduce the dichotomy of two conflicting worlds, one modern and Western and the other uncivilized and Oriental. Not only the missionaries rejected native pastors as equals, but they also saw themselves as harbingers of a nascent religious identity – namely, 'Evangelical Armenians', as they called themselves – not followers of a particular Protestant church.[20] Most important, they had a different vision of their service; as one native pastor stated in a critique of missionaries, for the native pastors 'the people to whom the missionary effort is directed are not savages and heathens, but civilized Christian people, though ignorant and superstitious'.[21] When one takes into consideration the relatively high numbers of native pastors and missionaries' native assistants in the mid-1850s one understands how crucial their work was for the movement among Armenians. There were 17 native preachers and 40 native helpers – about half of them working in provinces in the Ottoman East – compared with 27 missionaries and 31 female assistant missionaries.[22] In short, native pastors such as Simeon, whose voices are rarely heard in the historiography, aimed to reform their *own* people: their goal was to bridge gaps between the missionaries and the people by creating an alternative approach to evangelizing the Armenian community.

It was not only Simeon and other native preachers who struggled with the missionaries to keep their distinctive cultural group identities; there were other groups in Eastern Anatolia in the same situation. And it was no coincidence that Simeon was sent to preach to one such group in Chevirme village, in the district of Khnus.

Cultural Identity, Agency, and Protestantism in an Armenian Village in Khnus

Writing in 1854, Harrison Gray Dwight, a major figure in the early missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Ottoman Armenia, mentioned that Simeon 'was ordained as an evangelist, and is at present preaching to *an interesting congregation newly organized in Khanoos*, near Erzroom'.[23] Dwight was correct in calling the new community 'interesting', but it is problematic to call it 'newly organized' for the very reason that makes it interesting: the community in Chevirme village hosted adherents to the ancient Tondrakian belief.

Historical Development of the Tondrakian Movement and the Khnus Connection

The Tondrakian creed was a popular religious movement that emerged in the first half of the ninth century in Anatolia and persisted for at least two centuries.[24] It differed from the Apostolic Church in that it rejected the church hierarchy, priestly functions, and the sacrament of the Eucharist, understanding the bread and wine symbolically as the teaching of Christ in connection with the practice of 'communal meals'.[25] However, it can easily be argued that the creed's socio-economic worldview, which rejected social inequality in the Armenian feudal system and the wealthy hierarchy of the church, was just as important as its religious character.[26]

The Tondrakian belief merged with another dissident religious movement of the period, Paulicianism, after 872, when the latter was suppressed by the imperial Byzantine army. Many Paulicians, who were of Armenian origin, took refuge in historical Armenia, the home of the Tondrakian movement, and the latter was revitalized as a result.[27] The new Tondrakian/Paulician movement was also suppressed in the eleventh century and seems not to have been active again until the appearance of a Tondrakian/Paulician group on the Russian side of the Ottoman–Russian border in the 1830s. That group had migrated from Khnus.

During the 'Great Immigration' of Armenians from the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, particularly from Erzurum, following the 1828–29 Russo–Ottoman War, some Tondrakians were resettled in the Arkhvelli and Gyumri regions of the Russian Caucasus.[28] In 1837 the former bishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Erzurum, then the bishop of Georgia, reported to the Holy Synod in Edjmiatzin that there were some followers of the 'heretical' Paulician sect in Arkhvelli. They had migrated from Chevirme village in Khnus and consisted of around 25 households.[29] After this disclosure, in 1837 the Synod of the Armenian Apostolic Church initiated an investigation. Then, between 1838 and 1841, at the request of the Armenian Church, the case was examined in the provincial court in Gyumri. The households living in Arkhvelli, accused of being heretics, were acquitted based on the Russian general amnesty of 1841. During the investigation, the belief system of the nineteenth-century Tondrakians/Paulicians was revealed: Christ is not God, but only the Son of God who suffered and died on the cross and rose again from the dead and now sits at the right hand of the Father;

the moral law as given to Moses in the Decalogue should be obeyed, but no trust should be placed in external rites and observances. Making the sign of the cross and genuflections are superfluous; the veneration of crosses and pictures of saints is idolatry. The sacrifice of the mass is a lie, and the elements used in it are not the body and blood of Christ but ordinary bread and wine; confession to a priest is of no profit in the forgiveness of sins. Armenians, Russians, Georgians, and all others except German Evangelicals are false Christians and idolaters whose baptism is not valid.[30]

The Armenian Church objected to the provincial court's decision, and the case was reexamined in Tiflis between 1843 and 1845. Subsequently the case was closed; some of the accused were fined to pay the expenses of the court, and some were later exiled to Siberia.[31] However, at least two of the Tondrakian households went back to their former village, Chevirme, around the year 1847.[32]

During the investigations the Tondrakians, in addition to revealing the main characteristics of their belief system, also confessed that a priest named Hovhannes had preached at the end of the eighteenth century in Khnus and the Taron/Bitlis region from a book called the *Banali jshmartutian* (*Key of Truth*). The book was confiscated during the trials, and it is considered the only surviving document on the Tondrakian belief system to have been penned by its followers.[33]

For some historians, the discovery of the *Key of Truth* is the only verified historical fact in the whole affair.[34] Others, like Leon Arpee, have made further interpretations, considering it 'the most important discovery of the inquisition of 1837–1845'[35] and the major link between the ancient Paulician belief of the Armenians and modern Protestantism.[36] Ecclesiastical authorities of the Armenian Apostolic Church interpreted the events in a similar vein. For instance, Maghaqia Ormanian, the patriarch of Istanbul (1896–1908), in his *Azgapatum* (National History) claimed that 'the problem of Protestantism' first resulted in the revitalization of a 'sect' – that is, the Tondrakians – but later it began to disappear or evolved into 'real' Protestantism. He added that 'until today [ca. 1910s] the Tondrakian belief persists among the Protestants of Chevirme, who [think] of themselves as the descendants of the Tondrakians and not new disciples of Protestantism, although everyone else considers them to be Protestants.'[37] Therefore, it is true that from the perspective of both the Protestant Armenians and the Apostolic Armenians, the Protestant missionary movement gave life to a long-forgotten religious movement in a new guise. However, as the sources available imply, the actors saw this process in a different light from later interpreters.

Tondrakians into Protestants in Chevirme: Diverse Accounts from Different Actors

One of the major problems in the historiography, as already stated, is the lack of diverse voices in the history of the missionary movement in the Ottoman Empire. This problem results in a representation of the missionaries as the dominant if not the sole actors in that history. However, the Tondrakians, Simeon the native pastor, and the American missionaries were all

involved in the Tondrakian–Protestant movement, and each provided a different interpretation of this particular set of events. The multiplicity of accounts not only balances the narratives provided by Western missionaries concerning the spread of Protestantism but also challenges the aforementioned narrative about the flight of at least two Tondrakian families back to Chevirme village and questions the central role of the *Key of Truth* in this whole process.

To begin with, Meliqian's early twentieth-century personal communication with Sahak Arabelian, a native of the region, provides an alternative, Tondrakian-centred version of the same story:

In 1839 when the American missionaries arrived to Erzurum, Malo Mesropian, one of the followers of the Paulician sect from the village of Chevirme, Khnus, went to Erzurum to meet the Protestant missionaries and to understand the doctrine that they preach. [After] combining the [doctrinal] information that he gathered from the missionaries [with his own belief], he returned to his village and gathered his co-religionists [i.e., Tondrakians/Paulicians] – Petros Ghazandjian, Harutiun Targeian, and Baghdasar Bdeian – and told them the Protestant belief. Those gathered together accepted Protestantism, saying that it resembled the Paulician belief, [and] they formed a Protestant community. They applied to the missionaries in Erzurum to send them a preacher, or whatever the tradition is, [that is,] a pastor who exhorts Protestants. The missionaries responded by sending a *varzhapet* named Martiros.[38]

After Varzhapet Martiros's death, it was Simeon who was sent to Chevirme village as a native pastor in September 1852.[39]

Missionary activities were relatively new in the region: evangelists had been active in the city of Erzurum since 1839, and a church was established after 1847.[40] At this stage the Protestant community was very small, and its members were among the poorest of the city.[41] These facts, together with Arabelian's account, explain why Chevirme would have been an attractive place for the Protestant missionaries to start a ‘new community.’ Moreover, it also shows that the local people were not passive in the process of evangelization; rather, they may have pursued their own agenda, retaining their particular characteristics as a distinct socio-religious group but in a new form.[42] What is more interesting is that according to this narrative, there were already Tondrakians in Chevirme before 1847, as their meeting took place at an earlier date and before the alleged flight of the two families back to Chevirme. This points to the continuous presence of Tondrakians in the region or if not – that is, if the date given by Sahak Arabelian is wrong – then it means they wanted to dissociate themselves from the immigrants from Arkhvelli and claim an older presence in the land. Last but not least, this was the time when the synod in Edjmiatzin asked the bishop of Erzurum to carry out an investigation in the region to see whether any of the Tondrakians were still present.[43] Thus, the local Tondrakians might have sought refuge under Protestantism while some of their brethren were being persecuted on the other side of the Ottoman–Russian border; this would testify not only to the fluidity of the borders but also to the Tondrakians’ own active role in the missionaries’ ‘discovery’ of them. However, versions of the same story by Simeon and Jonah Peabody, an American missionary in Erzurum, further complicate the story.

The question whether Simeon knew about the Tondrakians in the village before his mission began is a crucial one; it seems most likely that he did not. The following excerpts from the diary make one think that neither Simeon nor other major Protestant figures outside the village knew about the history of the Tondrakians in the village or about their sacred book, the *Key of Truth*, before Simeon's arrival in Khnus. Indeed, he first heard about it from an old villager:

There was an old man here. He came by in the evening and talked about [missing from the text]. About sixty years ago, he began to preach the Gospel and rebaptized about thirteen people secretly, two of whom are still alive. That priest was captured, taken to Edjmiatzin, and imprisoned [there]. At night, he tore the rug in this room into pieces, and turning the pieces into a rope, he escaped from the window. Then he fled to London.

A few years later he returned to Khnus. That priest possessed a book called *Banali jshmartutian* [*Key of Truth*]. In that book there were many things written on the deviance of the Armenian Church from the truth and many prayers in the everyday language.[44]

It should be noted here that the fate of the priest and the manuscript became an intriguing story for other Protestants, as well. Varzhapet Sahakian, a notable Protestant missionary and a friend of Simeon with whom he undertook a major excursion in Ottoman Armenia before his mission to Khnus, asks about the priest and the book in a letter that is recorded in the diary. Sahakian wanted to know about the priest who had gone to England and spoken against superstitions (i.e., the dogma of the Apostolic Church) and asked, 'Where did he get that book from, the Key of Truth? […] It seems there are still some alive, and since you are there, I really would like to know the truth about him and also about the dates.'[45] Interestingly enough, Simeon's diary never hints at the existence or distinct practices of the Tondrakians in his own community in Chevirme, although he was aware of the Tondrakians' presence in the region because he made excursions and gathered information about them in his later years.[46]

Likewise, when Peabody, the American missionary in Erzurum, met the 'Protestants' of Chevirme around 1849, he preferred not to mention their Tondrakian background at all. For him, their evangelization was carried out by an Armenian priest who had traveled in Europe some 50 years earlier and accepted the Protestant faith.[47] Peabody says that a delegation of evangelized Protestants, two years after their return from Russia, visited him in 1849. They had made the same request repeatedly: assuring the missionary that many in their village were convinced that the truth was with the missionaries, nevertheless 'they would not venture to separate from the old church until they should be supplied with an evangelical preacher'.[48] Peabody's narrative negates the aforementioned account of local villagers visiting the missionaries as early as 1839. The history of Protestantism in Khnus in this narrative begins in Europe, with a certain priest being evangelized and the community revitalized only after having been sent first a *varzhapet* and then Simeon, a native preacher. Thus, the distinct religious and cultural identity of the Tondrakians was denied in the writings of the Western missionaries, and in their minds a new historical era began only after their arrival. However, it is difficult to determine which account has more truth to it, and Simeon's interest in the Tondrakians alongside his failure to mention their presence in Chevirme further complicates matters.

Nevertheless, this complex picture itself allows us to reach some conclusions.

First, both the Protestant missionaries and the Tondrakians in Chevirme had their own agendas. The Tondrakians/Paulicians might have wanted to retain their identity under the new guise of Protestantism or even to merge with it, as suggested by different versions of the same story and by contemporary interpreters of the events. The Tondrakians might also have expected to enjoy strong backing in this effort from the missionaries and from the British consul in Erzurum, who had begun involving himself in the affairs of the Protestants in the district.[49] Moreover, as I discuss in the next section, the Tondrakians needed the missionaries' support in their struggles not only with the Apostolic Church's hierarchy but also in the political economy of the district and with the local landowner. The agenda of the missionaries, on the other hand, was no less complex. Their numbers were very low in this period, and they may have preferred to work with a local community that was already at odds with the Apostolic Church. Moreover, a challenge to the region's political economy – specifically, the rule of the Armenian landowner – would have been highly welcomed by the missionaries, as he was seen as the main bulwark against evangelization there.[50]

As these differing versions of the same story attest, the reality lies somewhere in the totality of different voices. Relations between the local Tondrakians, Simeon, and the missionaries in the centre move beyond the 'discovery' of a small cultural group by Western missionaries or a small dissident group's deception of missionaries. It can easily be argued that at an early stage, when Protestantism was still a weak movement, it was rather a compromise between different sides and that what the Tondrakians believed as 'Protestantism' and continued to follow was probably different from what was being preached to them.[51] However, the main reason for reaching a compromise was the common enemy, the local Armenian landowner of the region. The struggle against him and the involvement of various actors in this struggle made the transformation of Tondrakians into Protestants a necessity.

The Political Economy of the District and the Tondrakians' Transformation into Protestants

The political economy of the region – particularly, relations between the local landowners, known as *agha*s and *bey*s, and the Protestants – was the other crucially important link between the Tondrakians and the missionaries in Chevirme and its environs. Such relationships, which were not unique to Khnus, have not received much attention in scholarly works, except for those between the important Kurdish landowners and Muslim religious leaders, on one hand, and the missionary leaders, on the other.[52]

Simeon's diary provides details concerning the antagonistic relations between the landowners of the region and the missionaries. The landowner of Chevirme and the nearby Haramik village was not a Kurdish Muslim *bey* but a very powerful Armenian landowner, referred to as the *meliq*, the traditional title for historical Armenian landowners in the medieval era, making this issue all the more interesting.[53]

The *meliq* was the richest landowner in the region, possessing enormous stretches of land and massive herds, and was the arbitrator in judicial cases. He is depicted in Simeon's diary as a very negative character who demanded money from the inhabitants for the expenditures of his village and asked Simeon to find a young virgin to marry his widowed son.[54] Such descriptions align with Peabody's explanation of the reason why Protestants were persecuted: 'Is it because the *Moodir* [local governor] is a worse man than other Turkish governors? This I do not believe. But the head of the Armenians, himself an Armenian, is very wealthy, and a perfect monster of oppression and cruelty.'[55]

Demands by the *meliq* and Simeon's rejection of them on behalf of the Tondrakians/Protestants were important elements in the formation and consolidation of a 'Protestant' identity in the district. At Simeon's instigation, the Tondrakian/Protestant Armenians in the village refused to pay a sum demanded by the *meliq*, saying that they '[were] not Armenians, [so why should] we pay this money?'[56] Simeon also claimed that he did not find a girl for the *meliq*'s son because such a practice did not have roots in Protestantism.[57] It is interesting to note here that the *meliq* and his Apostolic allies in the town centre also actively opposed missionary activities in their district throughout the 1850s. They wrote a petition to the patriarchate in Istanbul in 1859 asking that Vardapet Mambre be appointed abbot of the St Karapet Monastery because he was an able *vardapet* and would counterbalance the Protestants' activities by fostering education.[58]

According to observers, relations between the Protestants and the Apostolic Armenians had never been smooth in the region.[59] The tension between the Tondrakians/Protestants in the village and the *melik*, however, intensified and indeed became a Protestant–Apostolic struggle in the course of disputes over such issues as the aforementioned tax collection, providing a burial ground for the Protestants, building a mission house,[60] refusing to provide water for non-Apostolic villagers,[61] and the alleged discovery of 24 lost sheep that belonged to the Protestants' leader in the *meliq*'s herd.[62] However, the Protestant–Apostolic struggle in Chevirme had another facet: continuous attempts by the Protestants to have the aforementioned Malo, who was the leading Tondrakian/Paulician in the village, appointed to the local assembly in Khnus. They claimed that the Apostolic members of the assembly hindered the hearing and application of issues regarding Protestants.[63] This was a direct challenge to the authority of the *meliq*, who, as the major landowner, had the traditional right to represent the local Armenian community. It was also an attempt to reorganize local society under the auspices of a modern Ottoman political institution, the local assembly, and to transform and redefine existing social and cultural differences into modern political categories based on belonging to certain sects. These events marked the emergence and solidification of profoundly pronounced sectarian identities in the context of modernization and violence.[64] Struggles in everyday life and politics led to the murder of the brother of one Sargis, the head (*res*) of the Chevirme's Apostolic Armenians.[65]

In February 1860, three Protestants of the village, two of them named Mkrtich and the other named Melkon, after visiting their *res*, Malo, attacked Baghdasar, the brother of the *meliq*'s butler Sargis. Baghdasar died a few days later.[66] The murder case not only crystallized the

tension between Protestants and Apostolic Armenians in the village but also, owing to its symbolic value, was taken as a challenge to the social and political order and received considerable attention from various authorities in Istanbul.

On one side, the Armenian Apostolic patriarchate in its official correspondence with the central government claimed that the attackers 'have been looking for an opportunity for a while to put into action their grudge and lust', and the patriarchate tried to present it as an excess of the Protestants.[67] The British ambassador in Istanbul contested that the Protestants did not receive fair trial, most probably because of their faith.[68] The British consul in Erzurum had already adopted this view as early as 1853; he claimed that since the Apostolic Armenians were richer and more numerous, the Protestants had no chance if cases of molestation against them were taken to the local assemblies, and he added that the Apostolic Armenians had won the local governor of Khnus to their side.[69] It is important to note here that all the actors involved in this debate, from the Apostolic patriarchate in Istanbul to the American missionaries and the British consul in Erzurum – albeit for different reasons – labelled the Tondrakians as Protestants and thus as social and religious dissidents who were more easily recognized according to the categories set out in the official language of the Ottoman state.

The murder of Baghdasar remained unresolved for months owing to the involvement of different interest groups, each petitioning the government to pressure the local court to decide in their favour. Throughout the years of struggle, the persons involved in the murder ceased to be individual Tondrakians and were instead transformed into representatives of a religious community, Protestants. Both the American missionaries and the Apostolic Armenian authorities accepted the once-dissident Tondrakians as part of the Protestant *millet*. Thus, local cultural-religious and socio-economic grievances could not evolve into a *sui generis* Armenian Protestantism with historical roots on its own soil but rather were translated into a general category of belonging to a *millet*. One is reminded again of Ormanian's assessment: they '[think] of themselves as the descendants of the Tondrakians and not new disciples of Protestantism, although everyone else considers them to be Protestants'.[70]

Conclusion: Identities in Flux and Early Protestantism in Anatolia

This chapter examining the life of a native pastor and the evangelization of an already dissident religious community in Khnus shows the multiplicity of actors in the early history of missionaries in the Ottoman East. It demonstrates that the seemingly unified identity of 'the missionaries' was indeed diverse, particularly when the native pastors are scrutinized. It also shows that the Protestant community's emergence in the early period of the missionary movement has a complex history: most important, this complexity necessitated the transformation of local cultural identities and their integration into a general and more accepted one. The socio-economic and political context within which this transformation took place played a central role in this integration process.

First, Simeon depicted himself in his diary as the standard bearer for reforming religion in

Chevirme, initiating and leading a struggle for the community rather than simply taking over the leadership of an existing and not necessarily pure Protestant community. He never identified himself with the missionaries; on the contrary, he asserted a distinct identity. On excursions he searched for the history of *his* people among ancient churches or collected words from local dialects to enhance the Armenian vocabulary.[71] Simeon and other native pastors, with their different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, distinguished themselves from the missionaries, and because of their views on the evangelized community, they often had conflicts with them. The history of native pastors, their role in the missionary movement, and their distinct identity deserve further research.

Second, as the voices of different actors have revealed here, relations between the American missionaries and the Tondrakians were complex and multidimensional, both parties hoping to benefit from those relations. The Tondrakians' important role in the evangelization of Armenians was observed in other localities, as well. For instance, Pastor Yeghia S. Qasuni attributes a central role to Simeon's conversion in the late 1850s of a 'monstrously ugly' Tondrakian and the latter's transformation into the leading Protestant preacher in the city of Bitlis, marking the establishment of a community there.[72]

The question whether missionaries had a deliberate policy vis-à-vis the Tondrakians is not known for now, and only further studies on the cultural and religious history of the Ottoman East can answer such inquiries. It may be argued, however, that the missionaries at least perceived the Tondrakian belief as a means of reaching the broader Armenian nation and even of encouraging them to find their 'Protestant roots'.

The head of the evangelist Armenian community in Istanbul did not refrain from using the Tondrakians when 'inventing traditions', even in official correspondence. For instance, the Protestant representative to the Sublime Porte was bold enough to make the following claim on the issue of a Protestant cemetery in Chevirme: 'the mentioned place [i.e., the place where they want to bury their dead] was a Protestant cemetery seven or eight centuries ago' ('*mahal-i mezkur bundan yedi sekiz yüz sene mukaddem Protestan mezarlığı olduğu*').[73] A similar attitude is observed in the Western missionaries' use of the *Key of Truth*. After the manuscript's 'discovery' in 1880 in Yerevan, where it had been taken after the inquisition, the missionaries published it in 1898 in English and Armenian.[74] The important point here is that among those who examined the *Key of Truth*, Conybeare, the missionary who examined and published the book, is the first one to have confirmed its authenticity, dating it between the seventh and the ninth centuries,[75] although its authenticity was reasonably questioned in 1880.[76] In short, the missionaries aimed to historicize their roots in Anatolia by using the Tondrakian belief but did not always acknowledge the existence of culturally different followers in their missions.

Last but not least, the socio-economic and political context within which the Tondrakian creed and Protestantism developed in the village of Chevirme draws attention to the importance of the local context in the history of such movements. The existence of an Armenian *meliq*, not a Muslim landowner, further complicates the history and lends a sectarian tone to the struggle between the two groups. There are hints in the diary that relations between Simeon and the Muslim landowners were friendly, as the latter did not view them as a challenge, and

one of them even saw Simeon as a tool for keeping his people under control.[77] On the other hand, the existence of a politically active non-Apostolic group was a direct challenge to the authority of the *meliq* as well as to the Apostolic community, as he was its leader. Struggles between the *meliq* and the Tondrakian/Protestant community were important in transforming the Tondrakians into Protestants: they needed outside support resisting the landowner, and in return, their local social struggles paved the way for sectarian identities.

The modernization of the Ottoman state at the time also had a role to play in this transformation, as it permitted this dissident group to exist only under a label that would be visible and recognizable to everyone. In this context, the Protestantism of the American missionaries was the best option available to them and even a necessity if they were to make use of modern institutions such as the local assembly. Thus, the last followers of the Tondrakian/Paulician belief in the Ottoman East, despite their agency in forming the early Protestant communities in the region, lost their place in the narrative as they were integrated into broader Protestant beliefs. A chance to create an alternative and modern 'Armenian Protestant' movement, vociferously championed by native pastors of the day, was thereby lost.

Notes

1. *Avetaber*, vol. 8, no. 14 (4 July 1855): 54.
2. *Masis*, no. 186 (25 August 1855): 3. In the original text, the word *ughghapar* is used. Here it is translated as 'orthodox' and refers to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is not to be confused with Orthodox Christianity or Orthodox Greek Church.
3. James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse, 1839–1878* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), 205–9; Erdal Açıkses, *Amerikalıların Harput'taki Misyonerlik Faaliyetleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), 205–6.
4. According to an observer who visited the region in the early 1910s and whose statistics are based on information obtained from the bishop of the district, the number of Armenian households in the town of Khnus and in the 32 villages in its vicinity was about 2,185. There were 180 Armenian households in the village of Chevirme alone. See A-Do, *Vani, Bitlisi yev Erzrumi vilayetnery: usumnasirutyan mi pordz ayd yerkri ashkharhagrakan, vijakagrakan, iravakan yev tntesakan drutian* (Yerevan: Kultura, 1912), 185.
5. It should be admitted that it is not easy to firmly establish differences between historical periods in the missionary movement in Anatolia, as the scholarship based on accounts provided by the missionaries themselves views the movement as ever-expanding and progressing toward the end of the century. However, what I claim here is this: within that progressive and linear development, many challenges to the missionary movement arose from different social groups and institutions and in different historical contexts. These nuances were lost as the 'success' of the missionaries in later periods was projected retrospectively to the period of the movement's inception in Anatolia in the middle of the nineteenth century.
6. There is developing scholarship on these issues, particularly on the interaction between

missionaries and ‘heterodox’ communities in the Ottoman Empire. Some notable examples are Hans-Lukas Kieser, ‘Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia: The Interactions between Alevis and Missionaries in Ottoman Anatolia’, *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 4 (2001): 89–111; and Zeynep Türkyılmaz, ‘Anxieties of Conversion: Missionaries, State, and Heterodox Communities in the Late Ottoman Empire’ (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2009).

7. Frank A. Stone, *Academies for Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program, and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey, 1830–1980* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984) and Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika: 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okulları* (Istanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2000) are two of the notable examples of such an approach in English and Turkish scholarship, respectively.
8. Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1998), 112–34; Emrah Şahin, ‘Responding to American Missionary Expansion: An Examination of Ottoman Imperial Statecraft, 1880–1910’ (PhD Dissertation, McGill University, 2011).
9. Hans-Lukas Kieser, ‘Mission as Factor of Change in Turkey (Nineteenth to First Half of Twentieth Century)’, *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations* 13, no. 4 (2002): 391.
10. Türkyılmaz, whose work stands as an exception to the mainstream literature on the missionaries, claims that even the agency of Western missionaries is denied in the historiography: ‘concepts of denominational differences, of political stance, and of place of origin mean next to nothing when talking about ‘the missionary’. Türkyılmaz, ‘Anxieties of Conversion’, 279.
11. Simeon Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, in Yeghishe H. Meliqian, *Harq-Khnus* (Antelias: Katoghikosutian Hayots Metzi Tann Kilikioy, 1964), 186–213.
12. Private letter from Mrs Simeonian to Rev. A. A. Bedikian, dated 21 January 1959. I thank Chuck Dennis for sharing this information with me.
13. The following section is based on Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 188–93.
14. ‘Letter from Mr. Hamlin, 1 May 1853’, *Missionary Herald* 49, no. 8 (August 1853): 233.
15. Yeghia S. Qasuni, *Lusashavigh: Patmutiun hay avetaranakan sharzhman 1846–1946* (Beirut: Shnorhoqian, 1947), 103.
16. Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 193.
17. Ibid., 189.
18. Ibid., 193.
19. Ibid., 210.
20. Pastor Thomas Boyajian, ‘An Appeal against the Policy of the American Missionaries among the Armenian Christians’, in *The American Missionaries and Armenian Protestants* (N.p.: N.p., ca. 1869), 5.

21. Ibid., 7.
22. Turkish Missions Aid-Society, *Annual Report of the Turkish Missions Aid-Society* (London: Turkish Missions Aid-Society, 1855), 12–13.
23. H.G.O. Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey: A Narrative of the Protestant Reformation in the Armenian Church* (London: J. Nisbet, 1854), 314–5, emphasis mine.
24. Vrej Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement: Religious Movements in the Armenian Church from the Fourth to the Tenth Centuries* (Alison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1988), 39.
25. Ibid., 64.
26. Ibid., 42.
27. Ibid., 54.
28. For the movement of peoples in the region, particularly their immigration to Russia after the Russo–Ottoman War of 1828–29, see A. Melqonian, *Erzrum: Erzrum nahangi hay azgabnakchutyuny XIX dari aradjin yeresnamiakin* (Yerevan: G.A.A.H., 1994), particularly 131–54.
29. Agheqsandr Yeritsiants, 'Tondraketsi haiq mer orerum', *Pordz*, no. 10 (1880): 91.
30. Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening: A History of the Armenian Church, 1820–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), 70–1.
31. Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, 89–90.
32. Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening*, 72–4.
33. Yeritsiants, 'Tondraketsi Haiq Mer Orerum', 113.
34. Karapet Ter-Mkrttschian, 'Die Thondrakier in unsern Tagen', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* XVI (1896): 261.
35. Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening*, 76.
36. Ibid., 91.
37. Maghaqia Arqepiskopos Ormanian, *Azgapatum: hay ughghapar yekeghetsvoy antsqery skizben minchev mer orery*, vol. 3 (Edjmiatzin: Mayr Ator Surb Edjmiatzin, 2011), Col. 4297–4298.
38. Yeghishe H. Meliqian, *Vijakagir Khnus (Kharq) gavari yev Tondraketsots aghandin yev boghoqakanutian kapy i Khnus* (New York: Yeprat Press, 1943), 28–9.
39. Davitian, 'Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny', 194.
40. Qasuni, *Lusashavigh*, 101.
41. As late as 1858, the governor of Erzurum claimed that there were only 13 Protestants in the Protestant *millet* and that most them were unemployed immigrants from Mush and Arapkir. B.O.A., HR. MKT. 267/51 (2 December 1858). The governor mentioned this number in order to demonstrate that there was no need for a Protestant representative in the assembly of Erzurum. A congregation and a *millet* were different categories for the Protestants in the Ottoman Empire, so the actual number might be higher.
42. Here 'difference' is taken as an identity issue related to the group's consciousness about

being Tondrakian/Paulician in origin (and to the lack of reference to this fact in non-Tondrakian narratives). Unfortunately, the differences between this group and Western Protestants in their everyday religious practices are not yet known.

43. Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening*, 69.
44. Davitian, 'Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny', 195.
45. Ibid., 197.
46. Ibid., 209, 212.
47. 'Letter from Mr. Peabody, September 10, 1852', *Missionary Herald* 48, no. 12 (December 1852): 359.
48. Ibid., 360.
49. T.N.A., FO. 195/410 (2 June 1853), dispatch no. 22, from Consul J. Brant in Erzurum to Viscount Stanford de Redcliff.
50. 'Letter from Mr. Peabody', 361.
51. Scant information is available about the ritual practices of Tondrakians in Chevirme; Simeon's diary provides more information about his discussions with Apostolic Armenians on religious issues. However, the following quote relates one of the rare dialogues he had with the Tondrakian Malo about a religious practice: 'I [Simeon] said, 'You should trust each other; you should be sincere and honest to each other in all of your affairs.' He [Malo] said to me, 'Let's go to my father's tomb and read two sections from the Gospel,' and I replied, '[Let's] read for his soul.' He said, 'No!' [I added,] 'Armenians would see and say, 'They also read [Gospel] at their tombs'. This would give them a wrong idea.' Davitian, 'Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny', 195.
52. It must be mentioned here that these relations were not always antagonistic. For instance, the Jalilis of Mosul worked for the spread of Catholicism in the districts where they owned property in order to establish the independence of their villagers from the existing religious structure and in order to exert more control over them. Dina Rizk Khoury, 'The Introduction of Commercial Agriculture in the Province of Mosul and Its Effects on the Peasantry, 1750–1850', in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Faruk Tabak and Çağlar Keyder (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 169.
53. Although there are no references to the *melik* of Chevirme in the literature, there seem to have been Armenian landowners outside traditional Armenian strongholds, such as Sasun and Zeytun (See Cihangir Gündoğdu's chapter in this volume). What is important here is that Yeghishe Meliqian, a descendant of the *meliq*, based on accounts by family members, claims that the *meliq*'s family had come to the region from Sasun at an unknown date, following an Ottoman–Persian war in which the Meliqians fought on the side of the Ottomans. Meliqian, *Harq-Khnus*, 125–6. The central place of the notion of alliance with the Ottoman polity in this account should also be noted.
54. Davitian, 'Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny', 199.
55. 'Letter from Mr. Peabody', 361.

56. Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 195.
57. Ibid., 199.
58. Meliqian, *Harq-Khnus*, 133.
59. T.N.A., FO. 195/410 (4 March 1853), dispatch no. [10] from Consul J. Brant in Erzurum to *charge d'affaires* in Constantinople Colonel Hugh Rose.
60. Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 197, 204.
61. Ibid., 208.
62. Meliqian, *Harq-Khnus*, 135.
63. B.O.A., HR. MKT. 230/59 (14 March 1858); HR. MKT. 256/288 (16 September 1858); HR. MKT. 315/98 (28 November 1859).
64. For the classic examination of this phenomenon, see Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
65. Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 204. *Res* is a term that denotes the lay head of a village community who usually represents it and is responsible for running local affairs.
66. *Masis*, no. 427 (31 March 1860): 3.
67. B.O.A., MVL. 605/70 (26 November 1860).
68. B.O.A., HR.MKT. 342/67 (24 July 1860).
69. T.N.A., FO. 195/410, dispatch no. 22.
70. Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, Col. 4298.
71. Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 198.
72. Qasuni, *Lusashavigh*, 105.
73. B.O.A., HR.MKT. 215/61 (12 November 1857).
74. Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare, *The Key of Truth: A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898).
75. Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, 91.
76. Yeritsiants, ‘Tondraketsi haiq mer orerum’, 114.
77. The following anecdote written in the diary is illuminating on this issue: ‘Yeghian the Pilgrim told me [Simeon] that Mehmed Bey of Tatos had ordained an [Apostolic] priest for his village who is illiterate. Mehmed Bey asked the priest whether he reads *Narek* [the Book of Lamentations by Gregory of Narek] during the mass or not? And the priest answered, ‘I can only read Saghmos [the Book of Psalms]; I don't know anything else – what shall I do? Mehmet Bey forced me to be ordained and stay at his village so that the Armenians of his village do not flee.’’ Davitian, ‘Patveli Simeon Davitiani oragrutiuny’, 201.

CHAPTER 6

‘DEVIL WORSHIPPERS’ ENCOUNTER THE STATE: ‘HETERODOX’ IDENTITIES, STATE BUILDING, AND THE POLITICS OF IMPERIAL INTEGRATION IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Edip Gölbaşı

Introduction

In 1906, the ‘representatives of the Yezidi community submitted a petition to the Ottoman government requesting that their religious affiliation on identification cards be changed from ‘Muslim’ to ‘Yezidi’. A special Council of Ministers, which gathered at the Sublime Porte in order to discuss the Yezidis’ petition, rejected the request since, according to the council, the Yezidis were essentially Muslim, and to officially recognize them as non-Muslim due to their ‘evil beliefs’ would not be politically appropriate. Therefore, the Council of Ministers resolved that Yezidis continue to be registered in population records as Muslim, which would mean that their identification cards would not be subject to any alteration.[1] By doing so, the special council arrogated to itself the right to determine the ‘true identity’ of a specific confessional community, relegating the Yezidis’ pleas to mere subjective assertions, which could not compete with the state's claim to being an objective and absolute authority in confessional matters.

Commonly labelled by outsiders as ‘devil worshippers’, the Yezidis[2] (also spelled Yazidis) are a Kurdish-speaking religious minority, whose faith has often been categorized as a syncretic religion combining ancient Iranian beliefs with a variety of Christian and Islamic religious elements. Their public image as ‘devil worshippers’ has led to the persecution of the Yezidi community for centuries. If one were to focus even solely on the factual basis of such claims, or rather accusations, it is clear that the Yezidis worship one eternal god; yet, their understanding of cosmogony is quite different from that of Christianity and Islam.[3] Although the Yezidis do not identify themselves with any particular sect of Christianity, Islam or any other religion, the Yezidi religious tradition seems to have been historically rooted in a particular interaction of local religious beliefs, including Zoroastrianism, with those of a Sufi order, which was disseminated among the Kurdish-speaking highland populations by Sheikh ‘Adi b.

Musafir, a twelfth-century Sufi mystic born in Lebanon.[4] Indeed, Sheikh ‘Adi's shrine at Lalesh in the Nineveh province of Iraq continues to serve as a pilgrimage site for the Yezidi community.

Today, the vast majority of Yezidis live in northern Iraq, where they are concentrated particularly in the Sheikhan and Sinjar districts, although smaller Yezidi communities are dispersed across Armenia, Georgia, Syria, Iran, and Turkey. Additionally, Yezidi groups have migrated over the last few decades, especially from Turkey to Western Europe, which has created a fairly large Yezidi diaspora, particularly in Germany. The total Yezidi population in the world is estimated at around 600,000.[5] Most Yezidis consider themselves Kurds, though older generations place more emphasis on their religious identity, while the majority of Armenian Yezidis do not classify themselves as Kurds in ethnic terms.[6] The practice of endogamy and prevalence of hereditary castes, kinship bonds, and tribe-based affiliations play a significant role in the organization of social relations within Yezidi communities.[7]

The interactions between the Yezidis and the Ottoman government throughout the nineteenth century were characterized by three fundamental issues. The first was the Ottoman identity politics that defined the Yezidis as a ‘heretic’ population that had deviated from orthodox Islam centuries ago. While the community constantly strove to gain official recognition as a legitimate religious confession, Ottoman political elites and official religious authorities denied that Yezidism was a religion in itself, and that the Yezidis were a separate non-Muslim confessional entity. The second was the constant struggle between the community and the state over the obligation of military service, which the Yezidis consistently refused to fulfill. The Yezidis were apparently unwilling to carry out compulsory military service for the same reasons as so many other imperial subjects in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere. Yet, what was particular, if not unique, about the Yezidi case is that the community leaders claimed that military service was incompatible with their religious rituals and practices. The issue of military conscription, therefore, had very much to do with the question of identity, as well as with the emergence of a new regime of power that had begun to impose new obligations on Yezidi tribes and therefore ultimately threatened their relatively independent livelihood. Finally, the third was the attempt of the Ottoman government to convert the Yezidis to Islam during the Hamidian period (1876–1909), which sought to produce docile Islamic subjects out of ‘heretic’ and ‘savage’ Yezidis. The Hamidian bureaucrats tellingly named their conversion policy as the ‘correction of the beliefs’, or *tashih-i akaid*, which revealed the state's categorization of Yezidi beliefs as ‘incorrect’ and ‘deviant’ from some orthodox understanding of Islam. The Ottoman authorities assumed that the internalization of Sunni Islamic values by the Yezidis would facilitate their integration to the imperial order and make them conform to the image of the empire's loyal Muslim subjects. The state's aggressive conversion campaign against the Yezidis as well as other ‘heterodox’ groups was also an indication of the Hamidian regime's desire to transform fluid, communal, and ‘ambiguous’ identities into fixed, unthreatening, and officially promoted categories.

The overall picture of these interactions reveals the ideological and political distance between the Yezidis and the Ottoman authorities. Focusing on the interconnected and often

overlapping issues of identity politics, military conscription, and state-imposed Islamization, this chapter investigates the state–Yezidi relations as a window onto the dynamics of Ottoman state building and policies of imperial integration vis-à-vis a small religious community that had barely confronted the state authorities on a regular basis until the first quarter of the nineteenth century.[8] Consequently, this chapter will demonstrate how the Yezidi–Ottoman state interactions in the nineteenth century were transformed by central concerns over the rearrangement of state power, confessional statuses, and imperial identities.

Context of Nineteenth-Century State–Yezidi Encounters

Up until the nineteenth century, Ottoman political elites referred to the Yezidis as *kefere* (infidels), *mürted* (apostate), and *mülhid*, one of the connotations of which is 'a disguised atheist'.[9] There is no evidence, however, that Ottoman authorities sought to propagate 'the true religion' of Islam among the Yezidis, or punished them on the sole basis of their religious identity before the nineteenth century. Moreover, although Ottoman political elites regarded themselves as patrons of Sunni Islam, condemning and punishing 'heresy', their attitude towards not only the Yezidis but also other nonconformist communities was not uniform.[10] The interactions between the state and such populations were largely shaped by political contexts, security perceptions, demographic characteristics, imperial rivalries, military and fiscal strategies, and local contingencies. Although the Ottoman authorities carried out numerous punitive expeditions targeting the Sinjari Yezidis, these missions were often intended to suppress what the imperial administrators regarded as the 'banditry' of 'rebellious mountaineers' involved in brigandage and tax evasion. Therefore, quotidian experiences of Yezidi communities under Ottoman rule cannot be reduced to the binary opposition of religious persecution versus confessional tolerance. Yet, it was in the very context of the political dynamics of the nineteenth century that the confrontations between the authorities and the Yezidi tribes became much more intense and violent.

The Ottoman state's efforts at centralization in Kurdistan, where the powerful Kurdish emirates dominated the local politics, led to the split of the previous order and created new conflict zones in the 1830s. A large military campaign against the Kurdish emirates in the region also targeted the Yezidi tribes of Mosul, as the expeditions carried out in 1837 aimed to establish 'order' and 'security' in the region against the threat posed by the Sinjari Yezidis, in addition to the collection of their outstanding tax debts.[11] Although state authority still remained limited in the region, the goal of extending state power into the provinces and rural areas gradually rose on the political agenda. In fact, establishing a permanent and efficient mechanism of tax collection, providing recruitment for the army based on universal conscription, and policing the highland populations became central objects of Ottoman statecraft during the *Tanzimat* period. Indeed, from the 1850s onwards, the Yezidi tribes started to confront government authorities more than ever before due to these three demands. Perhaps the most striking novelty of the Tanzimat state with regards to its impact on the Yezidi community was the introduction of compulsory military service, which posed a major threat to their communal lives.

Along with the transformation of state–society relations in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, the official terminology used to designate population groups such as the Yezidis changed considerably. Thoroughly exclusionary categories like ‘apostate’ and ‘infidel’ were replaced by key Hamidian constructs such as *fırka-i dalle*, meaning ‘a heretic sect or group’.[12] Although these terms had their own history embedded in the Sunni Islamic tradition and still carried certain prejudices, this terminological adjustment, in accordance with a parallel shift in ‘governmentality’, suggested that such non-conforming groups could nevertheless be integrated into the empire's imagined community of Muslims. For Yezidis were no longer the enemies of Islam deserving extermination, but ‘deviant’ imperial subjects capable of transformation under a new governmental regime that monitored and corrected each and every aspect of a given subject population.[13] Furthermore, the Ottoman official discourse of ‘Yezidi deviance’ in the late nineteenth century was accompanied by a complementary civilizational discourse, which underlined the ‘ignorance’ and ‘savagery’ of target populations. The epistemology of this key late-Ottoman discourse was constructed on a binary opposition set up between ‘civilization’ and ‘backwardness’, which, in self-referential terms, provided a justification for executing a project of modernization. The ‘pre-modern other’ emerged as a natural object requiring state intervention in order to step up the civilization ladder through such conscious state efforts as military service, schooling, religious conversion, and sedentarization.[14]

At this particular junction of the discourses of heresy and savagery, mobilizing Islam as a means to transform ‘heretic’ and ‘uncivilized’ communities into imperial subjects became a central policy during the Hamidian period. As was the case in other imperial contexts, religious conversion was supposed, but not proved, to be a ‘rebirth’ or a process of cultural transformation and assimilation to the ‘norm’ in a society where religious affiliation largely defined cultural, political, and social patterns.[15] To put it in a colonial analogy, through religious conversion, which rose to become one of the central colonial techniques for controlling colonial subjects, the Hamidian administration aimed to conquer the mind and the soul in order to reconstitute the subjectivity of its ‘heretic’ subjects.

The enforcement of a Sunni orthodoxy among ‘heterodox’ communities also took place in a context where Hamidian rule was struggling against imperial disintegration and centrifugal nationalist challenges. As a response, the Hamidian administration sought to elaborate a cohesive political strategy that defined the empire as the protector of Muslim unity and solidarity, thereby appealing to supra-national threads of identity which were expected to generate increased loyalty.[16] Another factor that galvanized the Ottoman authorities towards conversionary policies was the presence of Christian missionary organizations, especially American Protestant missions, stationed in various parts of the empire's eastern provinces, which were in close contact with local Christian populations and ‘heterodox’ subjects of the sultan. Even though the missionary endeavour to recruit the Yezidis to Protestant Christianity came to naught, these contacts were enough to disturb the Sultan and the government.[17] In such a context, the conversion of ‘heretics’ to an orthodox Sunni Muslim identity was supposed to contribute to the regime's manufacture of ‘reliable’ subjects.[18] As a result, the state's conversionary zeal aimed to close the distance between Sunni authorities and Yezidi tribes, a

process that was expected to yield a conformist Yezidi population. Although conversion does not necessarily imply the sudden emergence of loyal subjects, Hamidian authorities, somewhat naïvely, considered religious conformity to be the basis of public order, imperial loyalty, and obedience.

However, within a complex network of political and social processes there exist multiple actors that contest the political, social, and cultural policies elaborated by states. In this sense, it is problematic to focus merely on the projects created by central governments and to uncritically regard them as constitutive of reality. Rather, this chapter underscores the determining agency of the Yezidis, and displays how state authority and directives were likely to be challenged, negotiated and manipulated. As will be seen, the Yezidis were not passive victims of state policies, but agents actively pursuing their own strategies, who negotiated with the government and struggled for survival. In fact, the Yezidis resorted to every conceivable method in order to evade and resist military conscription, including the submission of petitions to the government, bribing officials, avoiding population censuses, ignoring summons, immigrating to Russia, appealing to the representatives of foreign countries, etc. Likewise, the Yezidis resorted even to armed resistance to battle the state's forced conversion policies. The Yezidi case, therefore, reveals that the power relations between the central government and the community were, of course, asymmetrical, but not so clear-cut.

Resisting and Negotiating Military Conscription

The story of the Yezidis' resistance to and negotiation over the obligation of military service started in the late 1840s, when a group of Yezidi men from the province of Diyarbekir were registered in the population records and conscripted into the army. According to the petition that the Yezidis submitted to the Sublime Porte, some 55 Yezidis from the province of Diyarbekir who had been conscripted and taken into the barracks in and around Aleppo died on the way into, and in, the barracks.[19] Although it seems that the Yezidi leaders sought to dramatize the situation by saying that all of the Yezidi conscripts had died, the British archeologist and diplomat Austen H. Layard, who established close contact with the Yezidis during his excavations in the ancient city of Nineveh, wrote that the recruiting officers enforced the order of recruitment with extreme and unnecessary severity. They had refused to listen to Yezidi objections that the baths in the military barracks were, in Layard's words, 'pollution to them' when taken in common with Muslims, and that the colour blue, which is a taboo for the Yezidis, and certain portions of the soldiers' uniforms, were absolutely prohibited in their faith.[20] With the hope of gaining the help of Layard, the chiefs of the community delegated a number of Yezidis to the capital in order to lay their grievances and give a petition to the Sublime Porte requesting that they be exempted from military service. In their petition, they implied that they were non-Muslims and therefore, like other non-Muslim groups, could not be subjected to military service. The group stayed in Istanbul for several months, and thanks to Layard and Stanford Canning, the British Ambassador at Istanbul, they succeeded in obtaining an imperial edict that exempted them from military service in return of 50 liras per person as a commutation tax.[21]

As a result, at least the Yezidis in Diyarbekir and Mosul provinces were not called to the army until the early 1870s, when the Baghdad governor Midhat Pasha further and more effectively applied the Tanzimat reforms in Mosul. Seeking to consolidate state power over tribal populations, the energetic governor attempted to put an end to the relative autonomy of the Yezidi tribes in Sinjar, forcing them to pay the arrears and agree to annually provide recruits to the army. In 1871, a military troop led by a colonel took a census of healthy young males, and conscripted few of them into the army.[22] However, Midhat Pasha's resignation from the governorship of Baghdad paved the way for a second chance at exemption for the Yezidis. Approaching the new governor, Rauf Pasha, the Yezidi leaders indicated that they had been exempted from military duty until that time, and that they did not want to be recruited because of their religious beliefs. Upon this remark, Rauf Pasha suggested that they prepare an official statement setting forth the justification of their objections to performing military service. Accordingly, the Yezidi leaders sent a petition that explained the reasons for their refusal to serve in the army. What became known as the '1872 Petition' revealed for the first time the basic principles, rules, and codes of Yezidism to the outside world in a written form. Given that the Yezidis were very reluctant to explain their religious faith and rules to those outside of their community, the composition of the 1872 Petition must have been an interesting, even traumatic, experience for them. This case also clearly illustrates the extent of growing state intervention in the everyday lives of Yezidi communities that ensued from the emergence of a new regime of power in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

The petition, penned in Turkish, Arabic, and French, summarized the religious maxims that an ordinary Yezidi was expected to follow in 14 articles, on which the petitioners based their objection to military conscription. The following are abbreviated versions of some of these articles:

- Every Yezidi must visit [Lalesh to venerate] the cult of the Peacock Angel, or *Melek Tawus*, three times a year, in April, September, and November. If they fail to do so, they become unbelievers.
- Every member of the Yezidi sect must visit the shrine of Sheikh 'Adi at least one time a year [as part of attending the yearly pilgrimage in September].
- At sunrise, a Yezidi must go to a place where he can see the rising of the sun, and it must be a place where no Muslim, Christian, or Jew is present.
- A Yezidi must kiss the hand of his 'Brother in the next world' (*Bıra Ahirati*) and the hand of his sheikh every day.
- If a Yezidi hears any Muslim saying the phrase 'I take refuge in God from Satan', he must kill that Muslim and himself.
- When a Yezidi fasts, he must do it at home, not elsewhere, and be with his people.
- If a Yezidi travels abroad and stays there more than one year, his wife has the right to desert him, and no other Yezidi woman can be his wife.
- A Yezidi may not wear light black [blue] dress at all. He may not comb his head with the comb of a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, or any other.
- A Yezidi cannot enter the toilet of a Muslim, or wash himself in a public bath.

At the end of the petition the signatories noted, ‘For these and other reasons, we cannot enter the military service’.[23] However, it would be an illusion to consider the petition as an immediate and pure expression of religious code and rules. First of all, while the petition overall indicates the religious code of conduct that any pious Yezidi must conform to, some of the rules and practices specified in the petition may not have been performed by the Yezidis so firmly and perfectly as the authors of the document portrayed. Given that the sacred texts of Yezidism had almost disappeared from circulation since the fifteenth century, it may be surmised that the community perhaps partly reinterpreted its religious tenets and transformed some fluid customs into fixed codes through a text whose form, style and discourse were influenced by the context of the community's engagement and negotiation with the state over a governmental demand.

As a result of this application, the Yezidis succeeded in obtaining exemption from military obligation once again, and at least in Mosul and Diyarbekir were not subjected to recruitment until the end of the first decade of the reign of Abdülhamid II. With the change in the recruitment system in 1885, the Yezidis’ exemption from conscription started to become a problematic issue in the eyes of Hamidian bureaucrats. In 1888, the government openly declared that the Yezidis were no longer exempt from military service and had to fulfill their obligations on the same basis as the other Muslim subjects of the empire.[24] Moreover, the issue of military conscription became intertwined with the government's conversion drive during the Hamidian period, since the regime saw military service as a means to discipline, ‘tame’, and ultimately convert the Yezidis to Islam. Having ordered Yezidi conscripts to ‘be treated among Muslims as if they were Sunni’, the Ottoman government believed that it was more likely to ensure Yezidis’ conversion in the barracks, where they would not only be exposed to imams’ religious indoctrination, but also would be surrounded by Sunni Muslims for an extended period of time.[25]

In early 1892, the Yezidi chiefs, who faced the seriousness of the government in enforcing the conscription law to the community, resorted to an altogether different and curious strategy. They submitted a petition to the Fourth Imperial Army Commander Mehmed Zeki Pasha requesting permission to form a Yezidi-only regiment within the Hamidiye Light Cavalries.[26] This was extremely unusual for the imperial authorities, since until then only Sunni Muslim tribes, consisting mostly of Kurds, had been recruited to the Hamidiye regiments. The Yezidis probably believed that joining the regiments would absolve them from the burden of military conscription, which would help them keep their distance from Muslim conscripts and military authorities. While it is true that being part of the Hamidiye regiments would certainly have subjected Yezidi tribes under military scrutiny and governmental supervision, it is quite likely that this was the lesser evil compared to outright military conscription and may even have allowed them to retain their local and communal ties. Besides, by joining the venture they would also benefit from the privileges and opportunities enjoyed by the Hamidiye forces – the system would grant them a special legal status and immunity, a high degree of freedom from the oversight of civil administrators, tax exemption, and the opportunity to strengthen and expand their authority over the neighbouring tribes that were not involved in the Hamidiye regiments.[27]

The Hamidian administration, however, immediately declined the offer, and declared that the Yezidis had to fulfill their military service by attending the regular army. According to the sultan's highest secretaries, the Yezidis' faith was 'as weak as the cobweb', and they would give up the 'deviant way' if they performed their military service together with Muslims in the regular army.[28] It was also stated that performing military service in the regular army would help eliminate their 'savagery' and 'nomadism', clearly indicating the government's wish to use the barracks in the service of a 'civilizing mission' and religious conversion. Therefore, it was politically more appropriate not to incorporate the Yezidis and the Kizilbash (*Kızılbaş*) of Dersim into the Hamidiye regiments.[29] In fact, as the case of Hüseyin Kanco, one of the Yezidi chiefs settled in Tur Abdin, demonstrates, the government accepted a Yezidi tribe to the endeavour only when the chief and his family converted to Islam, though their conversion apparently remained nominal.[30]

In the end, neither the Hamidian administration nor the subsequent Ottoman governments managed to conscript the Yezidis into the army on a regular basis. Why were the Yezidis so unwilling to carry out military service? Of course, they were not the only community that evaded and resisted the draft. Ordinary people in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in other parts of the world, often saw military service as a major burden and, therefore, were not keen on being conscripted into the army. Military service meant for many being far from home and business for long periods of time, enduring onerous military training and discipline, and the risk of death, injury, epidemics, illness, mistreatment, cultural estrangement, etc.[31] In addition, the Yezidis, who, like many tribal and nomadic populations, had lived for centuries in an environment more or less isolated from bureaucratic regulations, state directives and the everyday control of government authorities, regarded military conscription as an unnecessary burden that brought new responsibilities to their lives and ultimately threatened their independent communal existence.

What makes the Yezidi case interesting, if not unique, however, is the fact that the Yezidis had always seen military service as incompatible with their religious rules, practices, and taboos. Given the long-standing scepticism and reluctance of the Yezidis towards military service that went on to persist under Republican Turkey and colonial Iraq, their objections to the military draft on religious grounds should not be seen as mere pretence. In fact, the Yezidis were not the only religious group that opposed military service on grounds of religious practices and taboos. The Molokans and Dukhobors in the South Caucasus, for instance, consistently refused to serve in the Imperial Russian Army for religious reasons, claiming that military service contradicted their religious commandment of 'thou shalt not kill'. These borderland populations were also concerned about the prohibitions imposed upon their daily religious practices in the army, where they were also forced to eat food forbidden by their confession.[32] Furthermore, the interactions of Yezidis with Muslim communities and authorities were historically often tense. At different times, they were persecuted, enslaved and forced to convert to Islam by the powerful Sunni Muslim tribes who surrounded them. Therefore, in the eyes of Yezidis, interactions with Muslim conscripts and military authorities during military service were bound to be uneasy. Lastly, as seen in the attempts of the Hamidian administration to use military service to require the potential Yezidi conscripts to mix with Muslims, the

possibility of being forced by authorities to convert to Islam also made the Yezidis leery of recruitment. The evidence thus suggests that the Yezidis genuinely regarded military service as a threat to their religious identity; they therefore resisted and negotiated over the draft.

Forced Conversion to Islam and Struggle over Identity

In the early 1890s, Hamidian authorities launched a conversion campaign against the Yezidis. Although other 'heterodox' communities such as the Nusayris were also urged or forced by the Hamidian administration to convert, the Yezidis were subjected to the most systematic and violent conversion campaign. In order to make the Yezidis 'return to the true way', i.e. Sunni Islam as defined by the Ottoman rulers, the government applied a series of methods and instruments ranging from 'advice and persuasion' to coercion and violence, from religious propaganda to schooling.

The first 'mission' assigned to 'correct' the beliefs of the Yezidis was the 'Advice and Persuasion Committee', or *Heyet-i Tefhimiye*, which was sent to Mosul in April 1891 under the leadership of a military commander, Abdülkadir Bey, accompanied by a group of religious scholars and government officials. The purpose of the committee was to, in official terms, 'eliminate the Yezidis' ignorance and deviance' and 'familiarize them with the sacred military service'.[33] As soon as the committee arrived in Mosul, they set off for Şeyhan, the religious and political capital of the entire Yezidi population, and gathered the Yezidi chiefs including Mirza Bey, the emir of the community, in the village of Baadre. Bringing the sultan's message to the community, the committee told the Yezidi chiefs that they had originally been Muslims, and the sultan was calling them to return to their so-called previous religion, Islam. Major Abdülkadir also reminded that if they did not accept the offer, they would have to pay all the arrears immediately and fulfill the obligation of military service. The Yezidi leaders declined the offer, defiantly declaring that their own faith was older than Islam, and that Islam itself actually grew out of Yezidism.[34] Over the following 21 days, the committee continued to fail to persuade the Yezidis to accept conversion to Islam. While, at the beginning, the committee members had sought to convert the Yezidis to Islam by advice, their methods turned more violent as the community strongly rejected the idea of 'becoming' Muslim. Several Yezidi chiefs were exiled to Benghazi with their families, as Major Abdülkadir suggested that without their leaders the community could easily be brought under control.[35] Moreover, a group of Yezidi men, including Mirza, was conscripted, forced to wear blue military uniforms and taken to the military barracks.[36] In the following days, some more Yezidi chiefs were forced to cast lots for recruitment and 18 of them were recruited under compulsion.[37]

Working for about two months in Mosul, the first committee had failed to convince the Yezidis to become Muslim.[38] Consequently, the Hamidian administration decided to deploy a much more coercive means to 'tame' the Yezidis and bring about their conversion to Islam, sending to Mosul a reform – or, more correctly, a 'taming' – force named *Fırka-i Islahiye*. The *Fırka-i Islahiye* was a special mobile military force undertaking several administrative missions, which was led by a general, Ömer Vehbi Pasha, from the Fourth Imperial Army.[39] In

essence, the purpose of the *Fırka-i Islahiye* was not only to convert the Yezidis to Islam but also to implement a series of administrative reforms in the provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra such as the collection of tax debts, the conscription of draft evaders, the punishment of 'disobedient' tribes, the conduct of a population survey in several places, and the sedentarization of several nomadic groups. All these reforms primarily aimed at tribal populations, as they were conducted on the basis of the policies of '*ıslah-ı aşair*', i.e., the 'taming of tribes', first in Mosul, and then Baghdad and Basra.[40] The case of *Fırka-i Islahiye* perfectly demonstrates the domestic missions of the Ottoman field armies, as well as the political and administrative agenda of the Ottoman government in the areas largely inhabited by tribal and nomadic populations.

The extraordinary mission assigned by the sultan to the commander of *Fırka-i Islahiye*, Ömer Vehbi Pasha, was 'to convert the Yezidis to the supreme religion of Islam'.[41] He would seek to implement these objectives with a strong tendency toward the use of extreme force and violent measures. One of his first steps regarding the conversion of the Yezidis was to organize an attack on two Yezidi villages in Sinjar following the negative response of the Yezidi chiefs to the Pasha's call for conversion or punishment. During this first attack, which turned into a battle when the armed Yezidis responded, several Yezidis were killed and several more injured, while two soldiers died and four were wounded.[42] In addition, according to British consulate sources, 120 Yezidis were captured and brought to Mosul, where some of the captured were either conscripted or put in prison.[43]

Following this battle, the *Fırka-i Islahiye* commander gathered the members of the Mosul Provincial Council and summoned the Yezidi leaders to the city. The Yezidi chiefs who accepted the invitation were once again ordered to 'correct their beliefs' and 'convert to Islam'. Upon the refusal of the Yezidi leaders, the Pasha's soldiers insulted, beat and severely injured six or seven of them. Those who refused to convert were locked up in a section of the government building for eight days. However, as an investigating committee that was sent out by the Sublime Porte to Mosul a few months later would reveal, the Pasha had told a completely different story about this event to the authorities in Istanbul. According to Pasha's report, 'the superstitious Yezidis, who have been in a wrong way for ages', came to Mosul without any force in order to 'be honored to convert to Islam with their own good will and consent'. They were welcomed with respect by the Pasha, sheiks and religious scholars. On the following day, the story goes on, the Yezidis 'willingly and orally' accepted the suggestion offered by the mufti of Mosul and became Muslims by making the profession of faith, or *shahada*, in a ceremony. Followed by the Pasha's speech and mufti's prayers, the ceremony was completed with enthusiastic cries and acclamations: 'Long live my Sultan!'[44]

After this severe oppression and imprisonment, the leading figures of the community such as Mirza, Hamza and Bedii announced that they had 'corrected their beliefs' and become Muslims – though this conversion would remain in words. They were granted the rank of pasha, and put on a salary of 2,000 piasters.[45] However, Ali Bey, who was going to be the new emir of the community after Mirza Bey's death in 1899, was exiled from Mosul to Sivas as he 'disturbed public security' and refused to convert.[46] Mirza Bey and others never did receive the monthly

salary assigned to them, and when the government discovered that they had not truly converted, the salaries granted as an incentive for conversion were cut, since the goal had not been achieved.[47]

In accordance with the suggestion of the *Fırka-i Islahiye* commander and the provincial administration, the government also ordered the construction of a small mosque and school in each of several Yezidi villages to educate Yezidi children. Teachers were expected to have a good command of Kurdish and Arabic, and to know 'the customs and dispositions' of the local population.[48] Although the Ottoman administration could never manage to sustain the Yezidi tribes' attendance in these schools and mosques, it is obvious that they were the two key instruments deployed to discipline the 'savage', 'ignorant', and 'heretic' communities. Perhaps the most obvious outcome of this policy of 'enlightening' the tribal populations and incorporating them into the structure of the imperial government was the opening of the School for Tribes, or *Aşiret Mektebi*, in Istanbul, where the sons of leading Arab and Kurdish tribal notables were educated for five years.[49]

Furthermore, the Yezidis lost their sacred site and objects at Lalesh. With the approval of the Sublime Porte, the Provincial Council of Mosul transformed the Yezidis' pilgrimage site, the Sheikh 'Adi's shrine, into a madrasa and appointed a madrasa teacher, or *müderris*, who would teach 21 students there. The pasha's soldiers also broke into the shrine and seized various sacred objects, among which were five bronze Peacock Angel statues.[50] Meanwhile, the *Fırka-i Islahiye* troops had carried out four more attacks on the Yezidi villages in Sinjar and brought about the death of about 500 Yezidis.[51] Ottoman forces also suffered large losses in these fights, especially in an ambush laid by a group of Yezidi chiefs in Sinjar.

After his arrival in Mosul, Ömer Vehbi Pasha caused conflict and turmoil in the province. His actions included cancelling the tax farming and tithe contracts in the provincial centre of Mosul and its towns; employing some prisoners in collecting weapons that belonged to the tribes; compelling some convicts to go around the city centre with fetters on their ankles; attempting – contrary to the sultan's order – to include women in the population census; and lastly, in direct relation to the previous action, arresting and detaining a few notables and members of the Mosul Provincial Council without trial. Various local sources, including provincial administrators, notables and foreign representatives, had sent reports and petitions to the central government and the palace about the affairs in Mosul. As a result, the sultan dismissed Ömer Vehbi Pasha on account of, among other things, shedding the blood of his subjects and organizing a military expedition without government authorization. At the same time, the sultan sent an investigative committee to Mosul.[52] With the completion of the investigation, Ömer Vehbi and his son were found to be responsible for torturing and causing the death of hundreds of people, as well as plundering their possessions.[53] For that reason, instead of returning to his office in the Fourth Army headquarters, the pasha was called to Istanbul with his son to be tried.[54] The Investigation Committee also revealed that, contrary to the information given by the Pasha, none of the Yezidi villages had 'corrected their beliefs' and the Yezidi community was 'insistent in its deviance'.[55] In the following months, the pasha was tried by a commission affiliated with the State Council, and exiled to the Fifth Army in

Damascus as a result of the hearing. After a while, he went into obligatory retirement, yet two years later his rank was given back to him.[56] As a consequence, the attempt to 'correct' the faith of the Yezidis, either by persuasion or force, failed – not to mention that the *Fırka-i Islahiye* could not complete even the first part of the reform project designed for Ottoman Iraq.

Concluding Remarks

From the perspective of Muslim authorities, the Yezidis were an indefinable community and their loyalty to the state was suspect at best. Similar to other 'heterodox' communities, they were 'liminal characters' in the sense that they were neither here nor there, neither Christian nor Muslim. Given that peripheral identities were often regarded as secondary, marginal, and a threat to the political order, conversion was intended to function as a normalizing practice through which the 'abnormal' or the 'heterodox' might be regulated and disciplined. Yet, in the end, the project of reformulating 'heterodox' identities proved to be difficult, and ultimately remained unaccomplished. Moreover, the policy of forced conversion had definitely intensified the asymmetry between the community and the central state.

The Hamidian administration's forced conversion campaign particularly illustrates the endemic violence embedded in policies of imperial integration, which is true not only for the late Ottoman Empire but also for other imperial contexts. On their part, the Yezidis have always carried a strong memory of persecution, violence, and injustice that has dramatically affected the ways they think about their own identity and interactions with non-Yezidis. Examining Yezidi oral sources and the 'ethnographic present' embodying the popular narratives of a particular religious community, one can easily see that the *Fırka-i Islahiye* and the violence it inflicted have formed the most salient historical memories for the Yezidis. For over a century, they have remembered and narrated all these events through a song named 'Ferik Pasha',[57] in which they convey those hard times and the Pasha's cruelty to new generations of Yezidis. However, the song also tells how the ancestors resisted the oppression and persecution of the Ottoman pasha, thereby underlining the 'heroism' of older generations.[58] Given that it is one of the three most important Yezidi songs[59] and that, though recently declining, oral transmission of religious principles and historical narratives has been the norm for the community for centuries, it should be obvious that the song 'Ferik Pasha' is central to the Yezidi collective memory and identity-construction, indicating how they conceptualize their history, identity, experience, and agency.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how the effects of state centralization, modern administrative techniques and imperial integration policies transformed the state–Yezidi interactions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The birth of new governmental practices and the emergence of novel conceptions of sovereignty and power had a fundamentally transformative impact on the state's relationship not only vis-à-vis the Yezidi community, but also on its perception of confessional identities and statutes. It is this fundamental change in the ethos and practice of Ottoman governance that transformed hitherto unknown Yezidi subjects into an object of state policies and governmental regulations. In fact, modern bureaucratic regulations concerning population registers, identification cards, military

service, and marriage and divorce practices, on the one hand, and the increasing importance of ethnic and confessional boundaries in political life, on the other, brought the religious and cultural identity of Yezidi tribes to the forefront in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ultimately, the Yezidi communities were more or less successful in keeping themselves away from the effects of state building and imperial integration policies that would serve to undermine communal ties and make them conform to the new demands of loyalty.[60] In addition, although the Yezidis solicited the state's assistance in the early twentieth century for solving internal disputes in a power struggle taking place within the community, it is safe to argue that the disputes over the interpretations of religious tenets and narratives, intra-communal disagreements, or tribal and familial conflicts did not link the Yezidi communities to the state on a regular basis.[61] However, while it is true that the Yezidis ultimately maintained their cultural identity, integrity, and collective existence, they nevertheless felt the growing presence of government authorities and other external influences in their lives, and gradually became more subservient to state authority and intervention throughout the period in question.

The Yezidi communities underwent many changes and faced novel challenges in the later periods of the twentieth century, whether under the sovereignty of post-Ottoman regimes in Iraq and Turkey, or in Armenia and elsewhere. Their social and cultural transformation is still ongoing. Yet, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the degree of persecution, discrimination, and violence against the Yezidi community remained the same throughout this period. Various forms of violence still continue to threaten the very existence of the Yezidi people. In August 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces launched a massive offensive on the Sinjar area, which culminated in the slaughter of hundreds of Yezidi civilians and the abduction of many Yezidi women and girls, who were later enslaved and sold in slave markets by the ISIS militants. Thousands of displaced Sinjari Yezidis, fleeing the attacks, were stuck and desperate atop Mount Sinjar for weeks. The situation was so dire that Human Rights Watch and similar international observers were reporting that the abduction and abuse of Yezidi civilians might amount to crimes against humanity.

Notes

1. B.O.A., MV. 113/161 (29 July 1906).
2. In recent years, the very name of the community has become a sensitive issue for the Yezidis as the name ‘Yezidi’ is usually identified with a notorious historical figure, Caliph Yazid bin Mu‘awiya. In fact, members of the Yezidi community, especially those in northern Iraq and diaspora, call themselves *Ezidi* or *Ezdi* (plural, *Ezidiyan*) instead of Yezidi, and prefer to be called as such. Although the origins of the community's name are not entirely clear and the word ‘Yezidi’ is not historically derogatory, one should adhere to their wishes and call them what they prefer to be called. However, since they are predominantly known as Yezidis or Yazidis in the English-speaking world, I preferred to use the terms ‘Yezidi’, ‘Yezidis’, and ‘Yezidism’ in this chapter.
3. According to the core Yezidi myth concerning the creation of the world, God punished *Melek Tawus* (*Tawuse Melek* in Kurdish), or the Peacock Angel, the chief of seven

angels, for his refusal to bow to Adam, representing mankind. Cast into the fire by God, the preeminent angel spent 40,000 years crying in limbo, where his tears extinguished the flames of hell – hence, there is no concept of hell and heaven in Yezidism. Forgiven by God, *Melek Tawus* acquired the first rank again, and became God's viceroy regulating the daily affairs of the world. The Peacock Angel is incorrectly identified by non-Yezidis with Satan; however, for the Yezidis, he is not the source of evil, and not the same figure as Satan, whose name they never mention.

4. Yezidi studies have always been marked by a major tension between what I would like to call ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ perspectives regarding the genesis of the community's religious cosmology, textual tradition, and ritualistic practices. Those who constantly seek to find some form of coherence and uniformity in either Yezidism or available Yezidi sources – textual or oral – have generally failed to come up with a comprehensive understanding of the way in which Yezidis themselves perceive and interpret their religious concepts and traditions. In addition to this fundamental disconnect between what Yezidis profess and what Yezidi observers proclaim, Yezidism's relationship to Islam as well as its standing vis-à-vis other non-conformist confessions such as Alevism constitutes yet another dark spot in Yezidi scholarship. Needless to say, the very problematic nature of the concept of ‘heterodoxy’ and its wanton usage – both in general and in the Yezidi case – by scholars either for ideological or purely heuristic purposes simply aggravates the problem further. The confines of the present chapter, however, do not allow us to delve into these problems. For a few relatively recent studies on the Yezidis and Yezidism, see John Guest, *Survival among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis* (London: Kegan Paul, 1993); Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston: Edwin Melle Press, 1995); Birgül Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010); Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999).
5. See Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 33–4.
6. Ibid., 13 and 70.
7. It is certainly problematic to reify the foundational categories of ‘tribe’ and ‘caste’ derived from traditional sociology without attention to context. I use these terms as heuristic concepts for lack of more rigorous alternative translations.
8. One can justifiably question whether the Yezidis under Ottoman rule were a monolithic confessional entity, every member of which was affected by state policies in the same way. It is noteworthy that differences within and between the Yezidi tribes, inequalities among the ‘castes’, gender, and internal struggles over political leadership and economic resources were definitely important. However, this chapter is not concerned with the internal dynamics of the Yezidi communities under Ottoman rule.
9. See, for instance, B.O.A., HAT. 3430A (29 April 1795); HAT. 2088 (2 May 1802).
10. Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010) aptly challenges cliché and unambiguous

narratives centring on the some unyielding and constant oppression of ‘heretic’ groups under Ottoman rule. Winter shows how flexible Ottoman policies were towards Lebanon's Shiite communities, which were shaped by pragmatic concerns and unfolded, somewhat, in contradictory ways.

11. See, for instance, B.O.A., HAT. 22332A (17 June 1837); HAT. 22378 (6 January 1837); HAT. 22350F (22 September 1837); HAT. 22350 (19 September 1837). Also see Frederick Forbes, ‘A Visit to the Sinjar Hills in 1838, with Some Account of the Sect of Yezidis, and of Various Places in the Mesopotamian Desert, between the Rivers Tigris and Khabur’, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 9 (1839): 409–30.
12. See, for instance, B.O.A., Y.PRK.BŞK. 22/57 (16 July 1891); A.MKT.MHM. 723/4 (13 June 1894).
13. See Michel Foucault, ‘Governmentality’ in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87–104; idem, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 135–48.
14. See Ussama Makdisi, ‘Ottoman Orientalism’, *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–96; Selim Deringil, ‘“They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery”: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003): 311–42; Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849–1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and Edip Gölbaşı, ‘19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Emperyal Siyaseti ve Osmanlı Tarih Yazımında Kolonyal Perspektifler’, *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 13 (Fall 2011): 199–222.
15. In the Russian imperial context, spreading Orthodoxy among non-Christian and ‘heretic’ subjects was an instrumental aim to assimilate and integrate such populations to the imperial centre. See Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga–Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).
16. It should be noted that the Hamidian regime was not alone in appealing to some supra-national identity for procuring the loyalty of imperial subjects, nor was it the only regime that mobilized religious symbols in order to preserve imperial unity. As Dominic Lieven demonstrates in his *Empire*, the Russian and Austria–Hungarian empires too adopted a plethora of political tools and responses against increasing nationalist and quasi-democratic sentiments by reinforcing Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism in their respective domains. See Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals*, 2nd ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 49–51, 275–81.
17. For the interactions between the Protestant American missionaries and the Yezidis, see Guest, *A History of the Yezidis*, 76–85, 124–45.
18. Indeed, Selim Deringil argues that the Hamidian regime sought to create a reliable population by means of a systematic indoctrination and propaganda of Sunni Islam, which

was regarded as an ideological defense line. See Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999), 68, 93–4.

19. B.O.A., MVL. 77/53 (8 August 1849); A.MKT. 228/54 (7 October 1849); Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert* (London: John Murray, 1853), 3.
20. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 3.
21. B.O.A. A.MKT. 228/54 (7 October 1849); Layard, ibid.
22. B.O.A., İ.DAH. 41492 (4 August 1869); İ.DAH. 43898 (2 May 1871); and Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Abede-i İblis: Yezidi Taifesinin İtikadatı, A'datı, Evsafı* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i İçtihad, 1328 [1910/11]), 53.
23. The full text of the 1872 petition was published in English by Isya Joseph, who firstly compiled the Yezidis' holy books: Isya Joseph, *Devil Worship: The Sacred Books and Traditions of the Yezidiz* (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1919), 77–82. Also see Nuri Paşa, *Abede-i İblis*, 54; Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 6–7; Guest, *A History of the Yezidis*, 122–3.
24. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 1555/58 (18 October 1888). For further information, see Edip Gölbaşı, 'Heretik' Aşiretler ve II. Abdülhamid Rejimi: Zorunlu Askerlik Meselesi ve İhtida Siyaseti Odağında Yezidiler ve Osmanlı İdaresi', *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 9 (2009): 87–156.
25. B.O.A., Y.PRK.BŞK. 22/57 (16 July 1891).
26. B.O.A., Y.EE. 139/13 (23 March 1892).
27. See Bayram Kodaman, 'Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları (II. Abdülhamid ve Doğu Anadolu Aşiretleri)', *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 32 (1979): 427–80; and Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).
28. B.O.A., Y.EE. 139/15 (23 March 1892).
29. Ibid. For the details, see Gölbaşı, 'Heretik' Aşiretler ve II. Abdülhamid Rejimi', 99–103. Janet Klein argues that there were plans in foot to incorporate the Yezidis and Alevis into the Hamidiye regiments; yet, archival evidence clearly demonstrates that the proposal of joining the Hamidiye regiments originally came from Yezidi leaders themselves, who first approached Zeki Pasha with their request in early 1892. Whatever the motives behind this move, it was the Hamidian administration itself that rejected the proposal for the reasons indicated above. Cf. Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 50–1.
30. See Gölbaşı, 'Heretik' Aşiretler ve II. Abdülhamid Rejimi', 101–2.
31. For popular reactions to conscription in the Ottoman and Egyptian contexts, see, for instance, Erik J. Zürcher, 'The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918' in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775–1925*, ed. Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999), 79–94; and Khalid Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, his Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76–111.

32. See Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 217, 238, 299–300.
33. For the committee's task, members and affairs, see B.O.A., Y.MTV. 50/21 (19 May 1891); Y.MTV. 50/51 (23 June 1891); DH.MKT 1889/75 (15 November 1891).
34. Guest, *A History of the Yezidis*, 133.
35. B.O.A., Y.MTV. 50/21 (19 May 1891); DH.MKT. 1850/65 (15 July 1891).
36. B.O.A., Y.MTV. 51/61 (25 June 1891).
37. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 1850/43 (14 July 1891).
38. B.O.A., Y.MTV. 53/73 (23 August 1891).
39. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 1973/102 (20 July 1892). The *Fırka-i Islahiye* was also examined by Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890–1908* (London: Routledge, 2006), 79–80; and Ufuk Gülsoy, 'Sıradışı Bir Dini Topluluk: Osmanlı Yezidileri', *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, no. 7 (2002): 129–62.
40. B.O.A., Y.PRK.BŞK. 26/85 (23 July 1892).
41. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 2002/56 (16 September 1892).
42. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 1981/104 (3 August 1892); DH.MKT. 1983/68 (7 August 1892); and Y.A.HUS. 263/52 (7 August 1892).
43. See Guest, *A History of the Yezidis*, 134.
44. B.O.A., İ.DAH. 1297/1310-S-53 (22 September 1892).
45. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 2002/56 (16 September 1892).
46. B.O.A., İ.DAH. 1298/1310-Ra-56 (10 October 1892); Y.A.HUS. 267/24 (27 November 1892); İ.HUS. 6/1310-Ca-18 (26 November 1892).
47. B.O.A., DH.MKT. 2114/111 (9 October 1898).
48. B.O.A., İ.DAH. 1297/1310-S-53 (22 September 1892); DH.MKT. 2012/117 (20 October 1892).
49. See Eugene L. Rogan, 'Aşiret Mektebi: Abdulhamid II's 'School for Tribes' (1892–1907)', *IJMES* 28, 1 (1996): 83–107.
50. For a list of the captured items and their fate, see Nuri Paşa, *Abede-i İblis*, 72; Guest, *A History of the Yezidis*, 136–7.
51. B.O.A., Y.MTV. 71/99 (5 December 1892); Y.EE. 87/73 (11 December 1892).
52. B.O.A., İ.HUS. 6/1310-Ca-65 (8 December 1892).
53. B.O.A., Y.PRK.ASK. 88/36 (9 February 1893).
54. B.O.A., Y.MTV. 76/136 (11 April 1893).
55. B.O.A., Y.MTV. 74/36 (5 February 1893).
56. B.O.A., Y.PRK.BŞK. 54/112 (17 November 1897); Y.PRK.ASK. 154/20 (18 August 1899); and Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran, *Hatıralar*, ed. Faruk Ilıkan, 2nd ed (Istanbul: Pera Yayıncılık, 1998), 477.

57. At the time when he was the commander of the *Fırka-i Islahiye*, Ömer Vehbi's military rank was *ferik* (general), and the Yezidis have always remembered him as Ferik Pasha. Hence, the song is known as 'Ferik Pasha'.
58. Christine Allison perfectly analyses the Yezidi oral culture and tradition in Christine Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001).
59. The other two songs are *Dawude Dawud*, a song of heroism, and *Derweşe Evdi*, which tells a love story.
60. Yet, several Yezidi communities that fell outside the provinces of Mosul and Diyarbekir, where the Yezidis were able to better maintain their communal identity, were more directly affected by the state policies. The fact that some small Yezidi communities referred to themselves as 'Muslim Yezidis' (*Yezidi-i Müslim*) in the aforementioned application regarding the Ottoman identity cards suggests that the influence of state policies went beyond the individual conversion cases. Nonetheless, as the contradiction embodied in the odd term 'Muslim Yezidi' reflects, it was still important for them to identify themselves as Yezidi.
61. Cf. Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

PART III

HOW LOCAL IS POLITICS, HOW CENTRAL IS THE STATE?

CHAPTER 7

PERIPHERY'S CENTRE: REFORM, INTERMEDIATION, AND LOCAL NOTABLES IN DIYARBEKIR, 1845–55

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After centuries in which the Kurdish emirs and Nestorian tribes enjoyed a notable autonomy from the Ottoman state, the early years of the *Tanzimat* (1839–76) brought about a rupture in the regional order. This chapter investigates the early years of the *Tanzimat* in one of the periphery's centers, Diyarbekir, and articulates the change in local intermediation networks. The change was set in motion – but not entirely dictated – by the central state. On the contrary, after the change of intermediary networks, oppressed Armenians and other non-Muslims, local notables within the city walls, tribes and their emirates were mostly concerned with their own interests, much to the dismay of the Ottoman Empire. Within this context, the present study will examine the notion of intermediation as it played out among the local notables of Diyarbekir in the 1840s, with the aim of attributing agency to those who were supposed to transmit the reforms in the periphery's peripheries.[1] This chapter focuses on the local councils that had resulted by default from the *Tanzimat* reforms, and demonstrates that they were not extensions of the central state. Instead, the councils were places of co-optation through which people in cities or districts manipulated the reforms to the greatest possible extent. Here we will pay particular attention to co-optation by means of tax-farm contracts, which led to the intermingling of politics and economics.

In the Ottoman context, few studies underline the role of intermediation in the nineteenth century and even fewer studies focus on a centre of periphery in the Ottoman East.[2] The notion of the periphery's centre is meant not only to challenge the straightforward elaboration of the centre-periphery paradigm, but to do so by multiplying the centres and peripheries of the empire with all their particularities.[3] The contingency between the features attributed to centre and periphery should be understood in a reciprocal manner that neither overemphasizes the power of the state in the centre nor underemphasizes the forces held by the intermediaries in the periphery.[4] Diyarbekir was thus the capital of the centre's periphery from the perspective of the Porte, while it was also the periphery's centre for the province of Kurdistan throughout the *Tanzimat* era.

Multiple centres and peripheries also allow us to expand beyond the fragmented discourse of state/centre and people/periphery. In this context, the early years of the *Tanzimat* era in Diyarbekir were not marked by a straightforward process confined either to a centralizing state laden with centralizing reforms or local notables resisting reforms at all costs. Dwelling upon the overlapping zone between informal social ties and formal structures of statecraft, Jeffrey suggests the term 'fixers' for those who 'straddle or blur the boundary between 'state' and 'society'' while seeming to a certain extent reflexive about their socio-political projects.[5] Their unique capability 'to improvise, circumvent rules, and blend the status of enemy and friend in ways more sovereign powers cannot' provided the local notables in the peripheries greater opportunities to challenge the state. However, their ability to challenge constantly fluctuated, due to their precarious situation between illegality and the law.[6]

In the same vein, 'fixers', compared to other terms such as brokers or intermediaries, reflects the multiple facets of connections and networks such figures establish.[7] In Diyarbekir, the term makes it easier to observe the contingency between the formal and informal, the pre-modern and the modern. While the relations the fixers established were not supposed to be formal in the crude sense (i.e. relations stemming from their service as council members), neither were they the results of an emergent hierarchical central state. These relations preceded the rise of the hierarchical modern state; however they underwent a gradual change in the nineteenth century such that non-compliance with the hierarchy would impair further relations. Still, intermediaries between centres and peripheries played an essential role in the centralization of states.

The Fall of the Emirates and the *Tanzimat* in Diyarbekir

Unlike most provinces of the empire, the *Tanzimat*, or the state's centralization attempt, started in Diyarbekir with the promulgation of the Gülhane Edict, a reform package promising equality of Ottoman subjects and a centralized administration, in 1839.[8] After centuries of autonomy, the inhabitants of the periphery – Kurds, Armenians and Nestorians in particular – witnessed, in the early years of the nineteenth century, a tightening of the Ottoman hold over the peripheral regions.[9] The tightening owed much to both increased Russian and British influence over the region, and to Iranian interests with respect to future boundaries.[10] Responding to these foreign pressures, the centralization attempts of Istanbul did not accord with the political and economic interests of the semi-autonomous emirates in Kurdistan. Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1809–38) assigned Reşid Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Sivas, to bring the Ottoman Kurdish territories under direct Ottoman control. In 1835, the Pasha – joined by İnce Bayraktar Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Mosul, and Ali Rıza Pasha, the governor of Baghdad – eliminated the forces of Muhammad 'Kör' Pasha of Rawanduz, the emir of Soran, who until then had controlled most of southern Kurdistan.[11] The Bahdinan Principality, which had been invaded by the Soran emirate, attempted to regain its power, but to no avail. Trying to preserve his post in Amadiya, İsmail Pasha soon attracted the wrath of the governor of Mosul, and was defeated and captured by Ottoman forces.[12] In the words of a contemporary Ottoman statesman, southern Kurdistan was reconquered following the assaults on the two major emirates.[13]

The fall of the Kurdish emirates marked a new era with regards to the Ottoman administration of the periphery. Kurdish rule in the region was still not at an end, however. After the conquest of southern Kurdistan, the last Kurdish emirate, Buhtan, rose to power. This late emirate and other minor ones, such as those of Nurullah Beg of Hakkari and Khan Mahmud, the emir of Müküs, owed much of their success to the power vacuum created in southern Kurdistan. Furthermore, they benefited from being incorporated into the bureaucracy of the empire, which allowed them to retain their offices.[14] Even though the suppression of Kurdish emirates in southern Kurdistan subsided in the middle of the 1830s, their elimination was far from complete. It would not be completed until 1847, with the fall of the Buhtan emirate. The result was chaos, since the emirates had played a significant role in maintaining the balance between cores and peripheries – i.e. Istanbul and Diyarbekir, the urban and the countryside. The chaos created by the demise of the emirates would soon be filled with the increasing activities of tribes and sheikhs.[15] Van Bruinessen, referring to the fall of Buhtan, argues that in its aftermath the Ottoman state did not gain the power to impose law and order in Kurdistan.[16] Instead, intermediaries would enact the state's will in the region.

The intermediation-*cum*-incorporation was not new, but rather became more essential in the face of the void. Despite usurpation of most of the administrative and military posts in the provinces by means of purchase of posts or tax-farming contracts, the intermediation of the local notables in the eighteenth century, what McGowan calls 'the age of *âyâns*', followed a less likely trajectory of incorporation and allegiance to the state. The rise of local notables was, however, a mutual process by means of which both the state and powerful local elites made each other, resulting in the localization of state hegemony by provincial elites.[17] Salzmann argues that in the eighteenth century the fiscal network of *mâlikâne* (long-term tax-farm contracts) arrangements knit the centre and periphery together and laid the social foundation for centralization policies implemented from 1812 onward.[18] The *mâlikâne* network necessitated intermediaries, such as the tax-farming gentry, rural producers, the *ulema* (religious scholars), state-appointed officials and – most important for earlier centuries – the *voyvoda*, a provincial administrator of an aggregation of tax farms. While in the eighteenth century the governance of Diyarbekir had relied on a blending of central state and local agents, during the nineteenth century, with emirs no longer ruling the countryside, there was a greater need for the state to maintain local administrations.[19] In short, the various strata of local notables were not to come to an abrupt halt in Diyarbekir in the early 1840s.[20]

Tanzimat, a concept too many, was not to shake these foundations. In addition to several reforms, extending from taxation, conscription and administrative reformation to legal codification, education and public health, the ultimate point of the project was reorganizing the provincial administration and rebalancing the equilibrium of power in the peripheries.[21] Though, in principle, the reorganization was incompatible with the use of intermediaries, in fact the very same persons would occupy the local administrative posts, albeit with increased state control.[22] At the heart of the reorganization were the local councils, which combined the duties of an executive and a decision-making organ and were entitled to settle matters concerning tax assessment, supervision of taxation, maintenance of public order, conscription,

land surveys and dispute resolution.[23] Provincial councils had existed in the previous century and were presided over by governors or judges (*kadı*) and local notables, but the *Tanzimat* councils were vested with more extensive authority.[24] The fiscal and political reforms did not differ across provinces; however their implementation was gradual and piece meal in Ottoman Kurdistan. In 1845, a few years after the Gülhane Edict, the province of Kurdistan was established with the hope of bringing the region within the scope of *Tanzimat* policies.[25] Conceding its limited authority in advance, the Sublime Porte would be backed and at times thwarted by the local notables, who not only constituted the provincial council in Diyarbekir (as they did in all the provinces) but also cooperated to realize the reforms on behalf of the central state.

It was in March 1845 that a local council, the establishment of which was the sole *Tanzimat* reform by default, was established in Diyarbekir in addition to those in Harput and Arapkir.[26] While most of the council members had a say in the political affairs of the province, the politics of intermediation was not confined to the office of the council. That is, Gevranlızâde Ömer Efendi and Yusuf Necib Efendi were among the notables who were involved with the political and economic agenda of the city and its environs.[29] Following the establishment of the local council, an impasse was reached with regards to the maintenance of the direct tax collection system, for which the Porte announced a meeting to be held in Istanbul in 1845.[30] The concern of the central government was stressing the importance of 'acquiring appropriate knowledge about the situations of each region and the conditions of prosperity and taking necessary action according to it'.[31]

Table 7.1 Members of the first Diyarbekir council[27]

Name	Title
Mustafa Pasha	Governor
İzzet Mehmed Efendi	Head Scribe
Mustafa Hakkı Efendi	Deputy Judge
Sıbgatıllah Efendi	Member and Honored Scholar
Mufti Efendi	
Hafız Mustafa Efendi	Member and Honored Scholar
Cercis (?) Ağa	Member and *Hayriye Tüccârı**
Yusuf Ağa	Member and *Ser-bevvâbîn-i Dergâh-ı'Âli***
Şerif Bey	Member and *Dergâh-ı'Âli Kapucubaşı***
Mehmed Mes'ud Efendi	Member and Honored Scholar
Kara [...] zâde Kasım Ağa	Member
Hoca Bedros****	Non-Muslim Deputy
Hoca Epremush****	Non-Muslim Deputy

Source: B.O.A., C.DH. 75/3705 (15 April 1845).

* An Ottoman designation for Muslim merchants operating in the Empire.

** Literally, Head of the Palace Doorkeepers. An Ottoman administrative rank.

*** The term 'hoca' in Armenian refers to established merchants of the community while it designates Armenian merchants in addition to wealthy individuals in general.[28]

Public works and tax reforms emerged as the immediate problems following the meeting, in which the participants presented reports on the current local situation.[32] The cooperation between Istanbul and the peripheries was thereafter to become more solid, with a series of

decrees from the Porte that culminated in the establishment of ‘public works committees’. Gevranlızâde Ömer Efendi and the mufti, Derviş Efendi, were summoned to the Sublime Porte to discuss the improvements in property and the conditions of subjects.[33] However, Hafız Mustafa Efendi replaced Ömer Efendi thanks to his command of agricultural affairs.[34] These notables were to alter – and sometimes derail – the reforms imposed by the centre for the sake of their own interests in the periphery, while keeping their precarious balance with respect to the state and society.

Local Notables and Intermediation

The aforementioned report compiled by the members of the council indicated the existing irregularities attributed to the notables of the city. According to the report, rice lands in the districts of Diyarbekir – Mihrani, Hazro, and Miafarikîn – were not included in imperial registers for some time. While Reşid Pasha, after the campaign against the southern Kurdish emirates in 1835, had ensured the cultivation of the lands for some years, Hafız Pasha subsequently undertook the cultivation and assigned the tax-farm contracts to Şeyhoğlu Mehmed Bey and Gevranlızâde Ömer Bey in return for a certain amount of rice in the 1830s.[35]

When Mehmed Vecihi Pasha became the governor of Diyarbekir in 1841, he assigned the tax farm of the rice lands to Yusuf Efendi, an influential local notable and one of the tax farmers (*mültezim*) of the city.[36] Even though his origins are not known, it appears that Yusuf Efendi had stepped forward among other tax farmers thanks to the services he had offered the governors of the city. He had served as the council scribe for Said Pasha and as the chamberlain for the governor (*kâ'immakam*) Bahri Pasha.[37] Vecihi Pasha transferred the administration of the lands to Yusuf Efendi, saying ‘You cultivate the land and I will cover the expenses.’[38] The pasha's later dismissal from the office prior to the harvest led the next governor, İsmail Pasha, to appropriate the harvest in 1843. The ‘privatized’ administration of the lands continued when İsmail Pasha did not cultivate the lands but granted them to Yusuf Efendi in a tax-farming contract for the year 1844.[39] As a continuation of the practice of granting lands generating lucrative returns to governors, the rice lands seem to have been granted to the appointed governors of Diyarbekir. More importantly, the tax-farming contracts do not only bear a financial aspect of the intermediation between the centre and periphery, but they give insights into the political facet of relations that the appointed governors of Diyarbekir established with the local notables of the city. The tax-farming contracts, therefore, should not be taken at face value, but should be considered in light of the possible political benefits this kind of cooperation entailed.

In 1842 and 1843, respectively, Yusuf Efendi assumed the tax-farm contracts of the districts of Rıdvan and Garzan from İsmail Pasha, the district governor of Diyarbekir, and appointed Mele Hüseyin for revenue collection and policing of the districts. Soon Mahmud Agha, the district governor's man, began to harass the mullah, claiming that he had not collected the current year's revenues, but taxes in arrears. This was presumably related to tax farming, since Mele Hüseyin was one of Yusuf Efendi's men in the Diyarbekir countryside.[40] Having

confiscated his and his wife's entire property, the governor imprisoned Mele Hüseyin, who subsequently died in prison.[41] Hüseyin's wife petitioned the Sublime Porte concerning her husband's death, and the subsequent investigation showed that the governor had also harassed and imprisoned Yusuf Efendi, appropriating 500 *kese*s from him.[42] On the other hand, a certain Emin, who was probably a local official charged with reports, accused Yusuf Efendi of receiving bribes in addition to over-taxing peasants by intimidation.[43]

In the web of brokerages extending from the periphery's centre to its own peripheries, as well as to the lands of the emirates, conflicts originating from land possession or tax farming were not restricted to the local notables. Hafız Mustafa Efendi, a member of the council, was preoccupied with increasing his sphere of influence by means of land appropriation. Emin wrote in May 1844 that Hafız Mustafa, like Yusuf Efendi, had been an ordinary person not so long ago, under Reşid and Hafız pashas; he was dismayed at their rapid ascent, which he attributed to the services they had offered to subsequent governors. Apparently, the services Hafız Mustafa and Yusuf offered to the governors of Diyarbekir were not unrequited. Hafız Mustafa Efendi, Emin noted, had obtained official licences for one or two villages by means of *mâlikâne*. Furthermore, he had unlawfully occupied some villages and their surrounding pastures that had been left idle by the Kurds, claiming that the village lands were within his *mâlikâne*.[44] Furthermore, his appropriation of the villages in the districts of Silvan, Hazro, Mihrani and Beşiri was not a personal venture. According to a decree dated to July 1849, it appears that the villages had been possessed and tithed without deeds by Hafız Mustafa Efendi, his brother Mehmed Naim Efendi, Hacı Emin Ağa of Diyarbekir and his brother Ahmed Feyzi Efendi between 1837 and 1846.[45] The *mâlikânization* process, to borrow from Salzmann, albeit in its decline, still knitted centre and periphery together while sustaining state power in the countryside.[46] In addition to the network created by *mâlikânization*, the relations between appointed governors and local notables serve further to observe the delicate interests exchanged between the different chains of the local intermediation networks.

Some ‘fixers’, however, opted for a more moderate approach vis-à-vis the Sublime Porte. As a member of the house of Gevranlızâde, Ömer Bey was involved with tax-farm contracts like the rest of his fellow notables.[47] Subcontracting his tax farms to his trusted man Hacı Keleş, Gevranlızâde Ömer Bey received praise from the central government for his success in tax collection. In a collective effort initiated by the Ottoman government for the collection of tax revenues in arrears for the year 1845, a military expedition was waged against the villages of the district of Sasun and Ömer Bey participated in command of 1,000 irregulars with the title of chieftain.[48] Members of the Supreme Council were pleased with the completion of tax collection in a few days from the villages of Sasun[49] because both Muslims and non-Muslims of some villages had not been paying taxes, including the tithe and poll tax, for 80 or even 100 years.[50] It did not take long, however, for the non-Muslims of Sasun to petition the Supreme Council over the harassment conducted by Ömer Bey and his man Hacı Keleş – the governor (*müdîr*) of the district of Garzan.[51] The assault, according to the petition, took place following two chieftains' return from the recent campaign waged against the Kurdish tribes.[52] The result was the appropriation of goods and property amounting to 1,200 *kese*s in addition to the killing

of 11 persons, including two abbots and one abbess.[53] While Ömer Bey was a fixer who managed to get along well with the central government, Hayatoğlu Hacı Keleş, another fixer living in the countryside, was not as lucky as Ömer Bey, due to his lower rank in the vertical brokerage. In the judicial proceedings, it appeared that Hacı Keleş was not simply an aide serving Ömer Bey but rather an *agha* with considerable wealth.[54] In December 1848, the Supreme Council sent Hacı Keleş and his family into exile and confiscated his property.[55]

In this way, the preliminary tenets of the *Tanzimat* era were put into practice simultaneously with the urgent resort to military options. In addition to matters of taxation, local notables got involved with local politics. While paramilitary units rampaged through the countryside around Diyarbekir, other city inhabitants pursued their own interests, most often contrary to those of the Sublime Porte.[56] A report of the Supreme Council on the new taxation policy in the province of Diyarbekir and the subsequent administrative reorganizations further demonstrates the different strata in the vertical brokerage networks. As the report makes clear, the council members were disgruntled over the acts of the district governor of Mush and the abbot (*karabaş*) of the Saint Karapet Monastery. They were believed to disapprove of the inclusion of the district of Garzan (which included Sasun and its villages), claiming that most non-Muslims of the district were closer to the environs of the Monastery than to Garzan.[57] As the governor and the priest's attitudes were clearly a result of decreasing, if not disappearing, tax revenues, the council members were well aware that their opposition was simply a matter of preserving their own interests.[58] The manipulation by means of vertical and horizontal brokerages was an attempt to maintain their former prerogatives with respect to the state or the local groups.

The Limits of Intermediation

Horizontal relations of cooperation and vertical relations of patronage also expanded into more hazardous areas, in which siding with a certain party could ultimately doom the supporter. In other words, mediating between the centralizing Porte and a rebellious emirate could seal one's fate once and for all. Appropriating land without any legal ground was a lesser evil than advocating for a rebellious emir. While occasional harassment of the peasantry was tolerated to a certain extent, the fact that Yusuf Efendi was a supporter of Bedir Khan, the emir of Buhtan, was a grave matter.[59] Emin, who had drafted a local report, noted that Yusuf Efendi extracted a lot of money even from districts under the control of Bedir Khan. Moreover, not content with overtaxing the peasantry, Yusuf Efendi appropriated 24 Yezidi children from the district of Rıdvan.[60] Three of the children were kept in Yusuf Efendi's house, four in Mele Hüseyin's, and one in the house of Hacı Şerif Agha of Diyarbekir; the remaining 16 children were delivered to Bedir Khan.[61]

The assault on Yezidis in particular and Assyrians in general was one of the developments that led the Porte to sign the emir's death warrant.[62] In the meantime, however, negotiations were still being carried out between the Porte and the emir to secure his peaceful surrender. This process provided opportunities for the emir's supporters. Yusuf Efendi, who was already

in disrepute with the Ottoman government, was first admonished by Agâh Efendi, the treasurer of the Anatolian Imperial Army, then approached by government officials, to whom he proposed that he would undertake Bedir Khan's capture himself provided he was given notable men to assist him.[63] Yusuf Efendi, through a servant who was in Istanbul at the time, let Reşid Pasha know that he would soothe Bedir Khan, if the emir was given a period of 40 or 50 days' respite, and that he would work to alienate the emir's retinue, in case he failed to surrender. The fixing of the political order, in this context, was multi-faceted. While trying to find a middle ground for the khan, Yusuf Efendi, by means of his relative Hasan Efendi, resorted to Reis Pasha, with whom Yusuf Efendi had been acquainted in the past.[64] It was evident that Yusuf Efendi was stalling for time for his emir, and he was not alone in his covert struggle. Hasan Efendi and Mustafa Efendi were local notables who were believed to have committed misdeeds following a visit they paid to Bedir Khan.[65] Their intermediation was, however, of no avail. Once Bedir Khan was eliminated, it would not be long before the intermediaries shared the same fate. Yusuf Efendi was exiled to Van and Hasan Efendi to Imadia; Mustafa Efendi, aware of his misdeeds, had already fled to Damascus.[66]

In July 1848, petitions signed by the relatives of the three men reached the Porte. While the council in Diyarbekir was disposed to pardon them and permit them to return to their homelands, the governor-general (*müşîr*) of Kurdistan did not deem one year to have been enough for their rehabilitation.[67] In the final decision, the central government proved unwilling to grant such an early return to explicit supporters of the khan and thus ruled out any possibility of pardon.[68] Hafız Mustafa Efendi was exiled and died in August 1848. A later investigation revealed the illicit acts on the lands he had appropriated and possessed between the years 1837–38 and 1846. Hafız Mustafa Efendi had first appropriated the lands thanks to the opportunities brought about by his good relations with the governors of the city. With the aid of his brother Mehmed Naim, Ahmed Feyzi Efendi and Hacı Emin Agha of Diyarbekir, Hafız Mustafa managed to retain possession of the lands nearly until his death. What was even more striking took place in the aftermath of his death. Following a retrospective investigation into the revenues he had received from his unlawful possessions, 85,763 piasters out of a total of 210,764 piasters were allocated to his heirs instead of to the treasury.[69] The question was not, however, the illicit appropriation of lands by a council member, but rather was the settlement of finances with regards to the past loss of the Treasury due to the appropriation.

Another local notable, Ömer Bey, not only avoided any kind of banishment similar to the exiles of the two former council members, one mufti, and other aides, but also maintained his prestige in the eyes of the Sublime Porte, and was even awarded a promotion in 1859.[70] Evidently, the tolerance he received from the Ottoman state was a product of the intermediary relations the Gevranlızâdes had established with the government in Istanbul in the previous century. Therefore, rising in the periphery's centre was a direct product of maintaining a very fragile balance between personal interests and the interests of the central state. Having become a pasha in the 1850s, Ömer Pasha was removed from the governorship of Dersim in October 1853. Not long after this discouraging halt, in March 1859, Ömer Pasha was decorated with a fourth-degree Mecidiye medal. And a few months later, the governor of Kurdistan wrote a

report recommending the pasha's appointment to a vacant governorship.[71] Ömer Pasha, despite the harsh acts he committed in the name of tax collection, to say nothing of his military intervention in the environs of Sasun, succeeded in becoming a pasha probably thanks to the way he handled his relationship with the Porte, in addition to the deeds his household had accomplished in the eighteenth century.

Once pardoned from his exile, Yusuf Efendi, on the other hand, resumed his primary occupation, tax farming. In August 1852, Yusuf Efendi asked for the deduction of his debt after he had returned the harvest as a result of the tax-farm contract in Beşiri for the year 1842–43.[72] Even though it is not clear whether he was allowed to return to Diyarbekir, the document in question indicates an affirmative recognition from the Porte even in the aftermath of his open support for Bedir Khan, an enemy of the state, not very long before. However, Yusuf Efendi seemed to confine himself only to economic affairs, having to a great extent lost his political efficacy. As a tax farmer, Yusuf Efendi also carried on his economic activities within the city walls of Diyarbekir. Thanks to a misapplication of taxation procedures, Yusuf Efendi appears to have assumed the tax-farm contracts of the leatherworkers and tanners' guild in Diyarbekir.[73] In addition to the district of Beşiri, Yusuf Efendi undertook the tax-farm contract of Diyarbekir Warehouses (*Emti'a Müdürlüğü*) in 1852. His economic relations with the Porte were now reduced to economic affairs and were confined to the countryside of Diyarbekir.[74]

The opportunity of mediation was not a free card the local notables had enjoyed indefinitely. Karen Barkey's crucial differentiation between bandits of the sixteenth century and *âyân* of the seventeenth, namely the possibility of co-optation in the case of the former versus the absence of direct allegiance of the latter to the state with accumulated wealth and armies, is very important here.[75] This distinction established the limits of intermediation in the early *Tanzimat* years in Diyarbekir, at the early onset of increasing state intervention. Offences which would otherwise be punished more severely were tolerated on the part of local notables like Ömer Bey. Once the thin line between loyalty and revolt against Ottoman legitimacy was crossed, however, the prospect of having a say in local affairs was lost for good. His support for Bedir Khan cost Yusuf Efendi his chance of rising further in the echelons of Ottoman administration. Despite being granted an imperial pardon, Yusuf Efendi never succeeded in retrieving the political privileges he had enjoyed with respect to the Porte following the demise of the Buhtan Emirate. Of course, the relations associated with fiscal affairs of the Empire were to persist, but without any political yields whatsoever.

Conclusion

Most local notables found ways to manipulate the reforms dictated by the Sublime Porte for their own interests, but the urgent need on the side of the Porte to execute these reforms invited the notables right back into the state mechanisms. It was these ‘fixers’ who complicated the local politics in a way that a simple bifurcation of centre and periphery cannot explain. The process of negotiation for reforms, on the side of the Porte, in return for benefits to be reaped by intermediaries is key to understanding local politics in the Ottoman peripheries.[76] Ottoman

Kurdistan was not an exception. In this extending network, in which allegiances and loyalties were not necessarily supposed to address the Ottoman government in Istanbul, the connections were constantly being established, broken, reestablished and solidified. Despite the ever-changing character of these connections, local notables were quite valuable for the intermediation service they could offer in the peripheries' centres. Positioned as they were in the middle of a chain extending from the nineteenth-century offices of the Porte to the resources to be extracted from the vast countryside, local notables were well-placed to get rewards for their valuable service. Different levels of the intermediation network brought different rewards. Those in the city, thanks to the relations they established with appointed governors, had the chance to bypass the legal domain for the realization of their interests. Nevertheless, local notables in Diyarbekir were very reliant on the relationships they established with Ottoman officials.

The benefits to be reaped by intermediaries were at times in open contradiction with the goals of *Tanzimat* policy. As part of the reward of the mediation, the kind of misdeeds narrated in this chapter were overlooked for the sake of the reforms. The inclusion of local notables in the state administration with the intention of fixing provincial affairs was a remedy for the Ottoman state as it implemented the reforms; however, the roles the local notables of Diyarbekir played started to be shaped increasingly by the reform language of the centralizing state. As much as local notables were tolerated in the intermediation network, the outer limits of toleration were not infinite. They were expected to show ultimate allegiance and loyalty to Ottoman sovereignty. Once allegiance to the Leviathan was questioned, the intermediation was terminated definitively. For the Ottoman state, which had coped with the rise of the *âyân*s in the eighteenth century, loyalty without question was a delicate matter.

Yet, in the first years of *Tanzimat* in Diyarbekir, what was at stake was no longer mere loyalty. The centralization of the government in Istanbul struck the first blow against the provincial configurations. It was the *Tanzimat*, along with the rupture it brought about, that knitted a more nuanced hierarchical relationship between the central state and the intermediaries in the periphery. Relegating intermediation to a transitory phase in the establishment of a central administration, the Ottoman State negotiated the terms of incorporation of these enclaves into the Ottoman realm. The same was true for the local notables in Diyarbekir. Once the cooperation among the lower levels of the intermediation network, i.e. notables in the countryside and the city, became a challenge to the Ottoman administration, it became a harbinger of their destruction by Ottoman forces. The door for negotiation would be kept open for the rest of the nineteenth century, but increasingly favouring the interests of the centre.

Notes

1. Local councils have thus far been studied with respect to the origins of parliamentary democracy. See Stanford J. Shaw, ‘The Origins of Representative Government in the Ottoman Empire: An Introduction to the Provincial Councils, 1839–1876’, in *Studies in Ottoman and Turkish History: Life with the Ottomans* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), 183–

231; İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî İdareleri (1840–1880)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000); Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Türkiye Ülke Yönetimi* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2007). For a recent article with major corrections on local councils, see Jun Akiba, 'The Local Councils as the Origin of the Parliamentary System in the Ottoman Empire', in *Development of Parliamentarism in the Modern Islamic World*, ed. Tsugitaka Sato (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 2009).

2. The only exceptions are Ariel Salzmann, 'An Ancien Régime Revisited: Privatization and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire', *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993); Yonca Köksal, 'Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization: A Comparison of the Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Ankara and Edirne (1839–1878)' (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2002); Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, 'Ruling the Periphery, Governing the Land: The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in Kurdistan, 1840–70', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no. 1 (2014): 160–75.
3. Şerif Mardin, 'Center–Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?' *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973): 169–90.
4. Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 24–5.
5. Craig Jeffrey et al., 'Fixers in Motion. *A Conversation*,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 3 (July 2011): 695.
6. Ibid., 694.
7. Referring to his studies in Jordan, Shryock underlines this, stating that 'fixing is called *wasta*, which means connection. Good fixers connect you to people who can solve your problem, and they jump over all kinds of institutional boundaries to do it.' Ibid., 695.
8. For the historical background of Ottoman Kurdistan, see David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 38–47.
9. On the suppression of the Kurdish emirates, see Wadie Jwaideh, *Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 54–74; Michael Eppel, 'The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates: The Impact of Ottoman Reforms and International Relations on Kurdistan during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008).
10. For the creation of the Ottoman eastern border(land)s, see Sabri Ateş, 'Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman–Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843–1881' (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2006).
11. The campaign was not confined to the Soran emirate, as Reşid Mehmed Pasha also eliminated the Zirki *bey*s in Tercil, Atak, and Silvan in the periphery of Diyarbekir. Jwaideh, *Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, 54–5.
12. Ibid.
13. B.O.A., HAT. 449/22340-B (11 July 1837). The term conquest (*fütuhât*), with variations, was employed in Ottoman army and administration circles for almost a decade. *Takvim-i*

Vekâyi, the official newspaper of the Empire, for instance, designated the fall of Bedir Khan in 1847 as the 'reconquest of Kurdistan'. Yener Koç, 'Bedirxan Pashazades: Power Relations and Nationalism (1876–1914)' (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2012), 16.

14. The fact that Bedir Khan had borne the title *mütesellim* (deputy governor) was very telling about the incorporation of even autonomous administrations into the Ottoman administration. Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 59.
15. Eppel, 'The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates', 256.
16. Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books Ltd, 1992), 181.
17. Dina Rizk Khoury, 'The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power-Holders: An Analysis of the Historiography', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 136.
18. Salzmann, 'An Ancien Régime Revisited', 395.
19. Ariel C. Salzmann, 'Measures of Empire: Tax Farmers and the Ottoman Ancien Régime, 1695–1807' (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1995), 212.
20. The local notables, though no longer called *âyân* during the reign of Mahmud II, continued to occupy a key position in local politics during the *Tanzimat*. Ercüment Kuran, 'Âyanlığın Kaldırılmasından Sonra Anadolu'da Sosyal ve Ekonomik Durum (1840–1871)', in *V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Kongresi, Tebliğler* (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1990).
21. Despite the title, Kırlı's article sheds light on many novelties introduced by the *Tanzimat* era. Cengiz Kırlı, 'Yolsuzluğun İcadı: 1840 Ceza Kanunu, İktidar ve Bürokrasi', *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 4 (2006).
22. Yonca Köksal, 'Tanzimat ve Tarih Yazımı', *Doğu Batı* Osmanlılar I, no. 51 (2010): 200.
23. Akiba, 'The Local Councils', 179.
24. Akiba notes that the difference between the *Tanzimat* councils and their predecessors was the former's continuity as an official institution and the official participation of non-Muslims. Ibid.
25. Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, 59–68.
26. B.O.A., C.DH. 75/3705 (15 April 1845).
27. Ibid. Yusuf Agha was probably Yusuf Necip Efendi, for both bore the title *dergâh-ı âli kapucubaşı*. Since the matter has not been clarified, this study assumes that Yusuf Necib Efendi was a different person than the council member Yusuf Agha.
28. For a brief account on the term, see Hagop L. Barsoumian, *The Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul* (Yerevan: American University of Armenia, 2007), 17–33.
29. The house of Gevranlı was quite prominent prior to the *Tanzimat* era. For instance, the tax farm of *voyvodalık* of Diyarbekir Gevranlızâde Mehmed Pasha, who was a former

beylerbeyi (provincial commander) of Diyarbekir province, was transferred to a certain Ömer Lütfi Efendi after the former's death. B.O.A., C. DH. 530/21995 (23 September 1824). In addition to holding the *vali* office, Mehmed Pasha and the *âyân* of Gevranlı were influential in the city administration, having become *mütesellim*, *voyvoda*, and *şehir kethüdası* in the course of the eighteenth century. İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır (1790–1840)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), 216; Salzmann, 'Measures of Empire', 268.

30. For the direct tax collection system, *muhasıllık*, see Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanli Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi* (Istanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1986), 281–301; Uğur Bahadır Bayraktar, 'Maliyenin Maliyeti: Tırhala'da Muhassıllık Düzeni, 1840–1842', *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 15 (Fall 2012).
31. Quoted in Akiba, 'The Local Councils', 196–7.
32. Ibid., 197. The report (*layiha*) on the local situation of the province of Diyarbekir brought to light the following matters: rice lands and state-owned property and lands which had been mediated by anyone (*rast gelene mü'ekkel olub*), misadministration of governors, transportation possibilities on the river Euphrates, and settlement of tax arrears. B.O.A., A.MKT. 29/3 (12 October 1845).
33. The increased interest in public works is another consequence of modernization, mankind's accelerated challenge against nature. For the Ottoman Empire, Mikhail claims rightfully that the renewal of land and water by public works and the rebirth and revitalization of agriculture, etc. marked an end for the imperially-coordinated system of hyperlocalism for natural resources. Mikhail, *Nature and Empire*, 291ff.
34. B.O.A., A.MKT. 25/40 (5 July 1845); B.O.A., A.MKT. 32/41 (29 December 1845).
35. B.O.A., A.MKT. 29/3 (12 October 1845).
36. According to a letter he sent to Bedir Khan, it appears that Vecihi Pasha was the governor of Diyarbekir in December 1842. Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, 71.
37. B.O.A., A.MKT. 12/62 (23 May 1844).
38. B.O.A., A.M.K.T. 29/3 (12 October 1845).
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid. Despite the mullah's death, he or another mullah with the same name appears on the side of Yusuf Efendi a few years later.
42. 1 *kese* equals approximately 40,000 *gurush*.
43. B.O.A., A.M.K.T. 12/62 (23 May 1844).
44. Hafız Mustafa Efendi possessed the lands since 1836–37. B.O.A., A.MKT. 12/62 (23 May 1844).
45. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 15/40 (4 July 1849).
46. Salzmann underlines the inseparability of changing forms of privatised revenue collection from struggles within the state itself and between the central state and provincial society.

It was this privatized revenue collection system that enabled various social actors to take places in the political and economic affairs of the central state in the early Tanzimat era. Salzmann, 'An Ancien Régime Revisited', 399.

47. Along with such gentry families as the Şeyhzade, the Müftizade, the Kadızade and the Çınarzade in the seventeenth and the Çötelizade in the eighteenth century, the Gevranlızade formed a pool of candidates for a variety of offices including the deputy governor (*mütesellim*), the *voyvoda*, the *nakibüleşrâf*, and the *şehir kethüdası*. Salzmann, 'Measures of Empire', 268.
48. B.O.A., A.MKT. 105/19 (1 October 1847).
49. B.O.A., A.MKT. MVL. 4/34 (6 January 1847).
50. B.O.A., A.MKT. 105/19 (1 October 1847).
51. Contrary to the petitions, the governor of the province of Kurdistan argued that the inhabitants of Sasun had been known for their banditry and rebellious acts (*şekâvet ve isyân ile melûf*) and were pacified by a military campaign with two battalions led jointly by İzzet Pasha, the governor of Diyarbekir, and Rüstem Pasha, the governor of the Anatolian Army, in addition to irregulars commanded by Ömer Bey and Hacı Keleş. After the surrender of the inhabitants, the Kurdistan governor noted, the two battalions were withdrawn and the inhabitants of Sasun assaulted the irregular troops. The killings, according to the governor, took place while the two chieftains sought refuge in the town church. B.O.A., A.MKT. 119/13 (6 April 1848). See also, Mehmet Polatel, 'The Complete Ruin of a District: The Sasun Massacre of 1894' in this volume.
52. B.O.A., MVL. 11/9 (22 February 1847).
53. The document in question was a reinforcement of the previous verdict. B.O.A., A.DVN. 35/9 (22 March 1848). 1 *kese* or purse was equal to 500 piasters. Kemal Karpat, 'Ottoman Urbanism: The Crimean Emigration to Dobruca and the Founding of Mecidiye, 1856–1878', in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 211.
54. Following the demand of the peasants of villages surrounding Sasun for compensation for what Ömer Bey and Hacı Keleş had appropriated and the subsequent proceedings, a survey of Hacı Keleş's wealth was carried out. In addition to luxury clothes and items and a serious number of weapons, including 80 rifles and 60 swords, he possessed 30 irrigated (*sulak*) fields (*tarla*), 80 non-irrigated (*susuz*) fields, and eight vineyards. What the petitioners demanded in repayment amounted to 263,000 *gurush* from the two. B.O.A., MVL. 30/16 (17 January 1849).
55. Ibid. The petitions, along with the harassment of Ömer Bey and Hacı Keleş, persisted after the verdict of the Supreme Council. See, B.O.A., A.DVN. 57/90 (12 March 1850).
56. For the gradually increasing paramilitary institutions, see Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Nadir Özbek, 'The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question' During the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908', *Comparative Studies in Society*

and History 54, no. 4 (2012).

57. B.O.A., A.MKT.MVL. 6/63 (7 January 1847).
58. Ibid.
59. Fatih Gencer, ‘Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler Bağlamında Bedirhan Bey Olayı’ (PhD Dissertation, Ankara University, 2010), 77ff.
60. B.O.A., A.MKT. 12/62 (23 May 1844).
61. B.O.A., MVL. 1/17 (10 July 1844). In the decree dispatched to the governor (*müşîr*) of Diyarbekir, restitution was ordered for Yezidi children who were captured and sold in the districts of Jazirah and Mosul. B.O.A., A.MKT.MVL. 1/43 (18 July 1844). The hostility against the Yezidis started with Bedir Khan's atrocity in 1843 against the Assyrians or Nestorians. For details of the massacre, albeit in a work marred by bias and weak knowledge of the Ottomans and the Kurdish emirates, see Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 196–212.
62. The state of the empire's non-Muslims was closely observed by the Great Powers in the nineteenth century. The Porte's decisive act against the offenders is therefore related to European pressure, which Deringil brilliantly characterizes as ‘avoiding the imperial headache’. Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 28–66.
63. B.O.A., İ.MSM. 50/1262 (1 May 1847); B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM 2/60 (24 April 1847).
64. B.O.A., İ.MSM. 50/1256 (4 April 1847).
65. B.O.A., A.MKT. 83/26 (29 May 1847). Even though there is no clear indication, it is not wrong to assume that Mustafa Efendi was ‘Hafız’ Mustafa Efendi, former council member.
66. The end of intermediation also earned Yusuf Efendi a demotion. B.O.A., İ.MSM. 51/1308 (13 October 1847). See also Gencer, ‘Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler’, 199.
67. B.O.A., A.MKT. 135/10 (17 June 1848).
68. B.O.A., A.MKT. 160/66, n.d.
69. The settlement of past debts, considering amounts receivable and payable both for the central treasury and the unlawful possessors of the lands, was indeed an enigmatic matter. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 40/24 (24 November 1851); B.O.A., A.MKT. 61/36 (1 April 1853).
70. There is no clear information regarding his promotion to the title of pasha. Presumably, it was concomitant with the rank promotion granting him a fourth-degree *Mecidiye* medal (*nişân*). B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 154/61 (24 March 1859).
71. B.O.A., A.MKT.NZD. 94/21 (8 October 1853), B.O.A., A.DVN.MHM. 27/64 (March 1859), B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 154/61 (24 March 1859), B.O.A., MVL. 586/29 (22 May 1859).
72. B.O.A., A. MKT.UM. 104/31 (11 August 1852).

73. The problem originated from a change in the taxation periods. While the stamp tax (*damga harcı*) was collected once a year by law, the period of the tax in a year had been increased by the treasurer Necib Efendi. As this practice was ruled out, Yusuf Efendi, as a *mültezim*, asked for a reduction in the amount stated in the tax-farm contract, since he was not willing to cover the deficit emanating from the then-abolished amount. B.O.A., A.MKT.MVL. 82/41 (12 October 1856).
74. For his tax-farm contracts and debt settlements with local bankers, see B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM 57/1 (18 July 1853), B.O.A., A.MKT.NZD. 90/3 (11 September 1853), B.O.A., MVL. 341/3 (16 April 1854), B.O.A., A.MKT.DV (12 December 1857).
75. Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 228.
76. Local notables, Akiba argues, were not directly opposed to the reforms, but by means of local councils they embody the initiative from below and the adaptation of local societies in the course of the negotiation between the centre and the provinces. Akiba, 'The Local Councils', 200.

CHAPTER 8

THE COMPLETE RUIN OF A DISTRICT: THE SASUN MASSACRE OF 1894[1]

Mehmet Polatel

The Sasun Massacre of 1894 was the first case of organized mass violence against Armenians in the late Ottoman period that brought about the complete ruin of a region and its inhabitants. There are several academic works on Sasun which present valuable analysis regarding the course of events in 1894,[2] the workings of the investigation commission[3] and the drastic demographic change brought about the massacre.[4] While these works provide important insights regarding the Sasun Massacre, academic attention to this much-publicized and 'known' event has been limited. Ottoman sources on this matter, which are valuable for understanding the characteristics of the event, its context and historical background, the role of the centre in the use of extraordinary violence against Sasun Armenians, and the roles of local officials and Kurdish tribes have been utilized in a selective way by some academics.[5] This chapter aims to present an analysis of the Sasun Massacre through an amalgamation of British and Ottoman sources and to scrutinize the historical background of the conflict between local Armenians and nomadic Kurdish tribes who, together with soldiers, were the perpetrators of mass violence in 1894. It also examines the approach and orders of the Porte, practices of civilian and military Ottoman officials on the ground – which expanded the scale of violence – and the workings of the Commission of Inquiry. This chapter shows that although the use of 'extraordinary terror' (*dehşet-i fevkalade*) against Armenian 'insurgents' was ordered directly by the Porte, violence on the ground exceeded the expectations of the centre, as all men eligible for combat in 17 Armenian villages – approximately 3,000 individuals – were seen as 'insurgents' by military officials in charge at the local level.

The Sasun Massacre of 1894 was a very important turning point in the radicalization of violence against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, as it was the first case of mass violence in the series of 1894–97 massacres. Before going through the details of the Sasun Massacre and its particularities, it is necessary to elaborate on the historical and political context in which these massacres took place. As elegantly analysed by Selim Deringil, three critical issues provide background for the 1894–97 massacres. These are international politics, the rise of Ottoman/Turkish nationalism – referring to the notion of 'us' and 'them' based on religion rather than ethnicity – and the increasing perception on the part of Abdülhamid II, the

bureaucracy and the local elites that Armenian revolutionary committees posed a ‘real threat’ to the Ottoman state.[6]

The Ottoman East gained particular importance in the aftermath of the 1878 Congress of Berlin, which stipulated the establishment of a reform scheme in the Six Provinces, where the Armenians constituted a significant element of the local population.[7] The positivity of British public opinion toward the Ottoman government, which had been nurtured by the alliance of the two countries during the Crimean War, had taken a new turn after the bloody suppression of uprisings in Bosnia and Bulgaria. Besides the change in the British approach to the Ottoman Empire, Russia was pushing for the implementation of reforms stipulated at the Berlin Conference. The emergence of a Russian sphere of influence in the Ottoman East could damage the balance of power in international politics. Thus, the region was a point of great concern for the Great Powers, which pressured the Ottoman government for reforms.[8]

Another crucial matter were the Armenian revolutionary organizations, which were perceived a threat by the Porte, Ottoman bureaucrats and Muslim elites. The emergence of new Armenian political organizations in the late 1880s was the main reason for this anxiety. Socialist Armenians formed the Social Democrat Hnchakian Party in 1887 and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnaktsutiun*), which advocated for Armenian national unity, was established in 1889.[9] While their organizational capacity and support varied regionally, it can be said that some of their demonstrations had an important symbolic impact. During the Kumkapı demonstration organized by the Hnchaks in 1890, Christians had dared to resist soldiers in Istanbul ‘for the first occasion since the conquest of Constantinople’, according to Sir W. White from the British consulate.[10] In the beginning of the 1890s, the Ottoman state's increased perception of threat began to be reflected in the policies of the government against Armenians in several places. Thousands of Armenians, including politicians, clergymen and business people, were arrested on accusations of separatism and there were several cases of violence against Armenians which went unpunished. Thus, by 1894, the sultan, bureaucrats and the Turkish and Kurdish elites of interior Anatolia and the Ottoman East were gravely concerned about the possibility of an Armenian uprising. It was in this context that the Porte ordered the use of extraordinary terror against ‘rebels’ in Sasun in 1894.

The Location of Sasun and the Historical Background

The sub-district of Sasun was located to the south of Mush. The starting point of mass violence in 1894 was the Talori district of Bitlis, but as Armenians from Şenik, Semal and Geligüzan were also involved, the incident was named with reference to Sasun. The settled inhabitants of Talori were Armenians, while nomadic Kurds annually came to the region for summer pasture. Geographically isolated, state authority in this region was particularly limited. The Armenians in the region had never paid taxes to the central government. Instead, they used to pay protection money to neighbouring Hıyan tribes. This protection money was called *hafir*.[11]

In the late nineteenth century, the central authority was trying to strengthen its grasp in previously autonomous regions of the Empire. The centralization of taxation was an important

part of this policy, which met with resistance in several regions.[12] In many areas, double taxation increased the burden on the local population, which had to pay separate taxes – one to the government and another to the tribes who 'protected' them. Talori Armenians insisted on not paying taxes to the central government unless their safety was guaranteed and the pressure for *hafir* by the neighbouring Kurdish tribes was removed. This was troublesome for the central authority, but since the state lacked the capacity and intent to control the local situation and eliminate the historical position of Kurdish tribes as protectors and tax collectors, the Armenians were not labeled as 'rebels' before 1893. The situation was more or less tolerated by the central authority.

Another issue that is important for understanding the historical background of the Sasun Massacre of 1894 is the conflict between local Armenian villagers and nomadic Kurds. The Bekranlı tribe, which came to the region annually for summer pasture, was causing troubles in the region. The issue was taken to the governors of Bitlis and Mush, and around 1879, 'Bekranlı were prohibited from coming to Talori and its environs'.[13] However, Bekranlı continued to spend summers in the environs of Talori and clashes took place between them and the Armenian villagers. The report of the Chief of General Staff of the Seventh Infantry Division reveals that Ottoman officials were aware that this was not an equal fight, and the Ottoman government annually sent troops to the region to restore order; as he states, 'every year either a battalion or two divisions of soldiers were deployed to Talori to protect Armenians from Bekranlı' since the mid-1880s.[14]

As it was a mountainous region, Sasun was also frequented by Armenian revolutionaries including the Hnchak party members, Mihran Damadian and Hampartsum Boyadjian. Hampartsum Boyadjian was an important figure among the Hnchaks and gained a reputation in the Ottoman East as Murad – a nickname he used undercover during his travels in the Ottoman East and Caucasus.[15] Mihran Damadian, who worked as a school teacher in Mush between 1884 and 1888, had participated in the Hnchakist demonstration in Kumkapı, Istanbul, in 1890 together with Boyadjian.[16] Damadian came to the region in the early 1890s and was soon followed by Boyadjian. In 1892, the Hnchaks established a committee in the area, which consisted of seven revolutionaries. They were certainly harboured by some local Armenians, but the extent of their organizational and political success is difficult to determine because the resistance of Sasun Armenians predates their arrival in the region. In the spring of 1893, Damadian was arrested in the region, while Boyadjian was in the Caucasus raising funds.[17]

Talori and Andok Mountain witnessed a series of bloody events in the summer of 1893. As the Bekranlı had again come to the region for the summer, clashes took place between the two sides. According to Ottoman authorities, both suffered casualties; four Kurds and five Armenians were killed.[18] During these clashes, Armenians fled to Andok Mountain for refuge. The timing of their resettlement in their villages is not certain,[19] and it is understood that the Ottoman authorities had great difficulty in persuading the Armenians to return.[20] According to the governor of Bitlis, the number of Armenians who were involved in these 'mutually deadly conflicts' (*harekât-ı kıtaliye*) was around 500.[21] The matter was closed by Ottoman local authorities, who were ordered to do so by the Porte. The Porte's involvement underlined the

sensitivity of the period: the Ankara trials were about to begin.[22] Hundreds of Armenians arrested in different cities of interior Anatolia were sent to Ankara for trial on charges of political activities against the Porte. For example, in Kayseri, it was claimed that three churches were attacked by a Muslim mob which carried out acts of pillage and robbery and for at least four weeks there was a state of lawlessness. After this, around 500 Armenians were arrested. In correspondence among the British officials, it is stated that in Yozgat there was 'not a single man in the Armenian or Protestant communities of any note for wealth or intelligence outside the prisons'.[23] According to the Armenian patriarch, the arrests in Kayseri were far from having any real basis. He claimed that one of the Armenians who had fled to Athens when accused of sedition had returned to the country and was arrested in possession of a list of 120 persons from whom he had collected money, ostensibly for charitable purposes. All persons on the list were arrested and sent to Ankara.[24] These trials received considerable attention from the Great Powers, especially Britain. It seems that in 1893 these trials were more important for the Porte than the Sasun events.

Even if some Armenians were initially arrested in Talori and its environs in 1893, none of them were taken into custody.[25] The governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Bey, went to the region in person and persuaded the Kurdish tribes to withdraw.[26] There were neither massacres nor trials regarding the events. The case was closed.

The 1894 Sasun Massacre

In the spring of 1893, Armenians in Talori and its environs were settled, but the tension was far from low. Hampartsum Boyadjian had returned at the news of the 1893 events. In June 1894, an official was sent to Talori with the task of collecting taxes – which the Armenians refused to pay until they were protected from Kurdish exactions.[27] According to British consul Mr Graves, the Armenians not only refused to pay taxes, but also severely beat the district governor and drove him from the district together with the gendarmes accompanying him. The beating of the district governor, together with the refusal of several Armenians to visit the governor of Bitlis upon his request,[28] increased the tension even more.

In this atmosphere, nomadic Kurdish tribes were once again allowed to use the region for summer pasture. As might be expected, clashes soon erupted between local Armenians and nomadic Kurdish tribes and the bulk of the Armenian population fled to Andok Mountain once again. In 1894 events developed much as they had in the summer of 1893, until the scope of violence radically accelerated with the involvement of Ottoman authorities on the side of the nomadic Kurdish tribes. In 1894, Armenians in Talori and its environs would be declared 'rebels' and troops which were annually deployed to keep the situation under control would be ordered to capture any Armenian brigands dead or alive with the use of 'extraordinary terror'.[29]

On 1 August 1894, the governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Bey, informed the Interior Ministry that the Armenians had established a troop of 120 brigands, were killing and torturing the Muslim population, and planned to murder the district governor of Sasun and to attack Ottoman troops

in Şenik. Tahsin Bey claimed that the crew was expanding and there was also a British citizen among them.[30] At the end of August, the number of brigands was said to reach 3,000.[31]

For 28 days, clashes continued between the Armenians and Bekranlı and Badikanlı tribes together with two troops of soldiers from the 32nd Regiment.[32] After the arrival of reinforcement troops around 26 August, the Armenian resistance was broken. Telegrams sent to the Porte by the district governor of Mush, Celal Bey, provide important insights regarding the approach of the governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Bey, to the issue during this first period and the developments in August. On 7 August, Celal Bey had sent a telegram to Tahsin Bey asking what to do with those who might surrender. The following day, he was informed that the commander of troops in the region would be in charge regarding these cases. According to Celal Bey, the issue of surrender and the treatment those who surrendered would receive should have been seen as a political matter. Thus, the decisions regarding this matter should have been taken by civilian authorities. Celal Bey argued that if the governor had taken upon himself the important responsibility of deciding what to do with those who surrendered – rather than ceding this responsibility to the commander of troops on the ground, acts which could harm the will of the Porte would not have been possible.[33] The complaint of the district governor of Mush regarding Tahsin Bey's handling of the issue of surrender indicates that he had heard the rumours that a group of Armenians who surrendered under the leadership of Father Ohannes were killed by regular Ottoman troops. Celal Bey also complained that his questions to Governor Tahsin Bey regarding what would be done with the properties of Şenik, Semal and Talori Armenians, which included 4,000 sheep and 400 oxen distributed among Badikanlı and Bekranlı tribes, went unanswered. He warned that there were rumours that some tribes planned to loot the properties of Armenians around Talori on 8 September.[34] In another telegram, Celal Bey warned that the troops under the command of Colonel Tevfik Bey might have been involved in acts against the will of the Porte.[35]

The reinforcements, which included regular troops and half a division from the Hamidian regiments, arrived in the region on 26 August. The centre had initially stated that it was not necessary for Field Marshal Zeki Pasha, General Commander of the Fourth Army Corps, to go to the region in person. On 28 August, however, the situation was seen to be worsening and Zeki Pasha was ordered to the region.[36]

The formulation of the orders indicates the significance the Porte attached to the issue. In several orders there were references to the incidents at Otluk Village and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which took place in 1876. These were, respectively, Bulgarian and Serbian uprisings enflamed by the increase of taxes. The brutal suppression of these uprisings had paved the way for the escalation of international pressure on the Ottoman Empire. In correspondence among Ottoman officials regarding Sasun, the incidents at Otluk Village and Bosnia-Herzegovina were mentioned as examples of political and military mismanagement which paved the way for foreign intervention and the expansion of insurgence. The late involvement of regular troops deployed to the Sasun region was related to this understanding. It was stated that an attack carried out before the arrival of reinforcements might risk defeat of the Ottoman forces, and it was feared that this would give courage to the insurgents and expand the scale of the

problem.[37]

Statements that the number of brigands had reached 3,000 frustrated the Porte, which sought to find out who was accountable for this. As the brigands were said to have come to Andok Mountain from different places, the district governor of Mush was questioned as to how he failed to foresee their mobilization.[38] However, the investigation in late August had convinced the Porte that this number was not accurate.[39] Upon hearing of the Porte's frustration, the governor of Bitlis clarified that the number of brigands had been 120, but due to the prolonged banishment process – for which he blamed Zeki Pasha, who had decided to decrease the number of forces deployed to the region in the beginning of the summer – their number had increased to 1,000 with the involvement of Armenian villagers from around the region.[40]

On 28 August, the Porte had ordered the Commander-in-Chief (*Serasker*) to 'suppress and destroy the brigands in a way that such a thing absolutely cannot be repeated in the future'.[41] The troops were ordered to lay siege to the brigands to prevent their dispersal to the villages. They were not to hesitate to use force, even if there were foreign citizens among the insurgents. The capture of the British citizen who was thought to be among the brigands was mentioned separately and the troops were ordered to obtain this person dead or alive, but to make an effort to catch him alive.[42]

The Porte ordered Zeki Pasha to suppress and destroy the insurgents in a total manner and using 'extraordinary terror'.[43] The language of this particular order was notably harsh. Zeki Pasha's understanding of it, however, was even harsher. In his reply, Zeki Pasha presented a summary of the order as he understood it. He claimed this order meant preventing the withdrawal of brigands, firing on them using extraordinary terror in such a way that 'even a single individual could not survive' ('*ferd u ahad kurtulamayacak surette üzerlerine şiddetle ateş edilerek*').[44] Upon receiving this telegram, the Porte would feel the need to warn Zeki Pasha to be careful regarding the lives of non-brigands.[45] The complete annihilation of the Armenian population would certainly put the Porte in a difficult position. Thus, when Zeki Pasha showed himself capable of doing exactly that, he was directed to moderate his understanding of the centre's orders.

The correspondence among Ottoman officials during August and September indicates that they were aware of a significant disproportion between the losses of Armenians and Kurds, even before the arrival of reinforcement troops. On 3 September, the district governor of Mush reported that while the number of Armenian losses could not be determined for certain, more than half of the 'insurgents' had been killed by the attacking Kurdish tribes.[46] On 8 September, Zeki Pasha informed the Porte that the number of 'insurgents' killed on the ground was around 1,000, and another thousand who had been injured in battles were expected to die.[47] The losses on the part of the Kurdish tribes were estimated to be around ten people, and 15 Kurds were stated to have been injured by 8 September.[48] According to the report of the Commission of Inquiry, throughout the summer and autumn of 1894, the number of Kurds killed by the Armenians was 20; 14 soldiers were killed and 18 were injured.[49] As in other massacres which were presented as rebellions or mutual fights by Ottoman authorities,[50] there was a great

disparity between the losses of the different parties involved in the Sasun Massacre – and this was clearly known by the Porte from the start.

The correspondence between local authorities and the centre also sheds light on the issue of *hafir*, which had provided some kind of protection to Armenians in the region prior to 1894. According to Tahsin Bey, those 'ignorant Kurdish tribes' used to protect the Armenians to some extent and freed them from the burden of general tax.[51] The Colonel also described the protection granted to the Armenians by Sasun and Hıyan tribes in detail and stated that Armenians used to seek refuge in areas under the control of Sasun and Hıyan tribes when they were attacked by nomadic Kurdish tribes and if those tribes were to attack Armenians under their protection, local Kurdish tribes in Sasun and Hıyan would take up arms to defend them.[52] This protection granted to Armenians by Kurdish tribes in Sasun and Hıyan in exchange for sums collected (*hafir*) was not enough in 1894. Several Armenians had fled to Hıyan, Sasun, Garzan and Cebel in 1894,[53] but as the Ottoman authorities' approach to the conflict between Badikanlıs and Bekranlıs and Armenians had changed radically and the Ottoman authorities became directly involved in the matter in 1894, the protection granted to Armenians by the tribes they paid *hafir* to was rescinded. The Armenians who had fled to Hıyan were captured by Ömer Ağa, a leading member of the Hıyan tribes, and handed over to the commander of the battalion in the area.[54] The testimony Serko, son of Osse, of Geligüzan, presented to the Commission of Inquiry shows the pressure felt by neighbouring Kurdish tribes under the new Ottoman approach. According to his testimony, Serko had fled from the region upon receiving the news that the village was surrounded by troops. He had arrived in Kharzan and spent a night there. The next day, an *agha* of Sasun named Yusuf had offered to shelter his family, as he was their 'protector'. However, Yusuf Agha was not able to stand by his word, as two other Kurds from his village warned him that harbouring the Armenians 'would stamp them as '*fermanlı*' (rebels) like the Armenians'.[55]

The Investigation Commission

The Sasun Massacre received considerable international attention from the start. As the tension in the region increased, rumours were spreading to nearby localities, including Erzurum, where foreign powers had consuls. It was in this context that R.W. Graves, British consul in Erzurum, requested authorization for his vice consul, Mr Hallward, to visit Bitlis and Mush and gather information about the rumoured oppression meted out by Tahsin Pasha, the governor of Bitlis. In 31 July this journey was authorized. Thus, there was a British consular official near Sasun in the autumn of 1894. It was for this reason that the events in Sasun, a very remote and isolated geographic location, could not easily be covered up.

Britain became involved in the Sasun Massacre from the very beginning. The British consulate had warned the Ottoman government that the deployment of irregular Hamidian regiments, including Haydaranlı Hüseyin Pasha, to the region would escalate the situation. The Ottoman government had initially received this warning positively and ordered the deployment of only regular troops to the region and the replacement of their current posts by Hamidian

regiments. On the other hand, Hamidian regiments were later ordered to move to the region as reinforcements.

The activities of Vice Consul Hallward in Mush and Bitlis included gathering information about rumours concerning the Bitlis governor Tahsin Bey from the local population and civil servants. During his visits, Hallward met with Armenians who had been complaining about Tahsin Bey, whom they accused of extortion, for some time. Hallward also tried to gather information about the recent events in Sasun. Tahsin Bey was particularly irritated by these activities and in November he directly accused Hallward and his interpreter of provoking local Armenians to revolt.[56] Tahsin Bey argued that Hallward was collecting documents against the Ottoman government and provoking the Armenians into escalating insurgencies. These accusations were taken seriously by the Porte, and led to a brief diplomatic crisis between Britain and the Ottoman Empire. As these were very serious accusations against British diplomatic personnel, Britain requested to send an official to the region to investigate the crimes allegedly committed by the vice consul. The Porte withdrew its accusations in less than a week.

British pressure was also at work in the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry by the Ottoman government. Although it is portrayed as a 'joint' or 'international' commission by some academics,[57] this was an Ottoman commission. Foreign consuls attached to the commission were only authorized to observe its work.

Ottoman documents show that the Commission of Inquiry was not established to 'inquire' into what happened in Sasun, but to close the issue in a way that would not further harm the reputation of the Ottoman government. On 31 March 1895, the Grand Vizier and the Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a telegram to the Commission ordering it to cover up the past atrocities. They claimed that investigating the events of September 1893 would require the investigation of even earlier events. The Porte was probably anxious that such an investigation would reveal that the clashes between Armenians and the Bekranlı and Badikanlı tribes and the retreat of Armenians to Andok Mountain were, in fact, an annual occurrence, and that only in 1894 had the Ottoman government chosen to treat the matter as a full-fledged Armenian rebellion. The commission was also instructed that, if it proved impossible to block the investigation of the 1893 events, the commissioners should prevent foreign officials from asking questions regarding these previous events.[58]

The Commission of Inquiry reached Sasun on 24 January 1895 and completed its report six months later. The French, British and Russian consuls who were attached to the commission experienced many difficulties during this process, as their efforts were constantly hindered. In the memorandum he wrote separately from other foreign consuls, H.S. Shipley claimed that the method of inquiry adopted by the commission gave the result of 'effectively preventing the full and true facts of the case from being arrived at'.[59] Foreign consuls also criticized the selection of witnesses through the intermediacy of local officials and underlined that most of them told the same narrative in identical words.[60] For example, Shipley claimed that Archimandrite Yeghishe applied to the commission to retract certain evidence that he had previously given against Armenians, but decided to leave Mush without doing so after a closed interview with

the commissioners.[61] This case illuminates the pressure on witnesses during the investigation.

While stating that 20 Kurds and 14 soldiers were killed by Armenians, the members of the Commission of Inquiry refrained from stating any numbers regarding the Armenians' losses. The death toll claimed by some Armenian circles and the foreign press, which was enormous compared to the estimates of foreign consuls who visited the area, was not mentioned in the report. Although in earlier correspondence between Ottoman officials around 1,500 Armenians were estimated to have been killed, the commission decided that the number of Armenian deaths was not possible to determine. The disproportion between the losses of the parties was also not mentioned in the report of the Commission of Inquiry. As Ottoman authorities had deemed all the Armenian men from 17 villages brigands, only the women and children were seen as civilians in the commission's report. Atrocities against them were claimed to be nonsense, as the Armenians were said to have evacuated the villages that were burnt down and transferred the non-combatants to the mountains before the start of the battle. In their own report, the foreign consuls also stated that the number of Armenian deaths could not be absolutely determined. On the other hand, they were clear about the disproportion of violence inflicted by the parties and stated that, 'Armenians – men, women and children – were during the events the object of repeated pursuit on the part of soldiers, Kurds and gendarmes, who wounded or killed, without distinction of age and sex, all who fell into their hands'.[62]

During the commission hearings, some witnesses mentioned two trenches full of human bones. The commission decided that these were rather old and probably were the remains of Muslims killed by Armenians, who then placed their bones in the trenches on purpose.[63] The bodies of all Muslims were accounted for and no missing persons were mentioned by Kurds or Ottoman officials, but according to foreign observers, the commission was able to arrive at this conclusion even without going to the region and examining the trenches.[64]

The murder of those who surrendered with the above-mentioned Father Ohannes was one of the gravest accusations.[65] The commission refused to hear several Armenian eyewitnesses to these murders. Foreign consuls had 'noticed the most repugnance on the part of the Commission to elucidate this question'.[66] However, from the accounts of the witnesses produced by the commission it was clear that some Armenians had surrendered to troops, who then separated them into two groups. Men, whose number was stated to be around 40, were killed, while women were subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

According to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, what happened in Sasun in 1894 was a clear rebellion led by Hampartsum Boyadjian, who had fabricated the *hafir* issue to avoid accusations regarding his revolutionary activities.[67] It was stated that 'such a thing as *hafir* was unheard of since 1890' and the source of conflict between the Armenians and nomadic Kurds was the insistence of Armenians on not paying rent for lands belonging to the Bekranlı. The fact that the Ottoman authorities had themselves denied the Bekranlı entry to the lands mentioned and had assured the rights of Armenians was not raised. In line with the Porte's order to cover up the historical background of the conflict – which would have made clear that the actions of the Armenians in 1894 were not new, nor had they been considered rebellious by Ottoman authorities in the past – the foreign consuls were obstructed when they sought to

examine the events of 1893.[68]

The final report of the Commission of Inquiry claimed that the events were limited to the suppression of an Armenian rebellion. The foreign consuls who were present at the hearings of the commission had a different opinion on the matter. In the memorandum he individually wrote, British Consul Shipley stated that he was convinced that, 'It was not so much the capture of the agitator Murad, or the suppression of a pseudo-revolt, which was desired by Turkish authorities, as the extermination, pure and simple, of the Geligüzan and Talori districts'.[69] Correspondence among Ottoman authorities reveals that foreign consuls were not alone in seeing the activities of the Armenians as a pseudo-revolt. The only member of the commission with a military background, Major General Tevfik Pasha, signed the report along with the others. There was, however, a difference of opinion between him and the other members, which emerged after the submission of the commission's report. According to Tevfik Pasha, there were mutual killings between Armenians and Kurds, and Armenians had ideas of rebellion. However, the Armenians were not able to realize their ideas and the claims regarding Armenian rebellion were not based on solid evidence ('*ihtilalin ermeniler tarafından vukuu sabit olmadığına*'). He also stated that Armenians shot at soldiers when they attacked together with Kurds, but did not target soldiers alone.[70] Thus, their actions were confined to mutually deadly fights with Kurds, rather than rebellion against Ottoman authority.

Concluding Remarks

In the literature regarding the Sasun Massacre, the approach of the Porte to the matter is either explained by panic or as a deliberate action to punish Armenians. Duguid discards the panic argument and claims that the Porte wanted to make an example by resorting to full-fledged suppression of the insurgents.[71] In light of the correspondences among the Porte, local authorities and military officials, it can be said that the Porte was indeed very anxious to contain the insurgency. The alleged involvement of British citizens among the brigands and the high numbers earlier reported by local authorities contributed to the gravity of these concerns. On the other hand, at the end of August, it was clear to the Porte that the alleged insurgents were not all revolutionaries, but simply the local population. In the report he wrote in December 1894, the Colonel would argue that the insurgents were inhabitants of 17 villages in the region, and the number of 3,000 referred to those who could use guns. It was understood that the number of revolutionaries among the Armenian population was confined to Hampartsum Boyadjian and a couple of his comrades from Tiflis.[72] While the factor of panic is not easy to discard, the orders of the Porte also show that the Sasun case was seen as an opportunity to teach the Armenians a lesson and to establish central authority in the region. This can be seen in the Porte's order to the Commander-in-Chief, which authorizes him to take the necessary steps to assure 'such a thing absolutely cannot be repeated in the future'.[73] Ottoman forces at the local level ensured this by destroying the region. Heavy gunfire by troops under the command of Zeki Pasha destroyed several villages.[74] Animals, tools and other properties were ransacked. For the most part, the region was no longer habitable. In describing his observations in the region, Shipley said, '[…] seeing as I did, in company with my

colleagues, the entire ruin of a whole district, not a house being left standing, the fields even having been wantonly devastated […]'.[75] Thousands of Armenians sought refuge in nearby towns, which were far from ready to deal with the problems posed by their influx.[76]

Existing documentation in Ottoman and British sources does not present any information which would hint that the destruction of Talori and its environs and the massacre of hundreds of Armenians in the region was planned by the Porte beforehand. The panic and confusion among Ottoman officials at the initial phase point in the opposite direction. However, there is evidence to argue that the Ottoman government took the conflict between Armenian villagers in Sasun and Talori and nomadic Kurdish tribes as an opportunity to establish its rule in the region and to teach the Armenians a lesson. While the conflict between Armenian villagers and nomadic Kurds was a matter to be settled locally in 1893, the same course of events was labelled a rebellion in 1894. This change stemmed, I believe, from the emergence of a new approach to the Armenian Question on the part of the Porte. This new approach, which brought the radicalization of violence against Armenians in interior Anatolia and the Ottoman East, was intended to 'cow, decimate and humble'[77] the Armenians through the violence exerted by Hamidian regiments and local Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds.

The Sasun Massacre was a turning point. The desperate condition of the Sasun refugees in nearby regions served as a reminder of what would happen if the centre were to suspect disobedience from Armenians in the Ottoman East.[78] However, it was not only desperate refugees who transmitted this lesson to various localities. The Badikanlı and Bekranlı tribes who took part in the Sasun Massacre were also carrying this message around. Their atrocities did not come to an end with Sasun. A telegram sent by the governor of Diyarbekir, Sırrı Bey, on 16 September 1894 shows the extent of the effects of the Sasun Massacre throughout the Ottoman East. The governor was worried because Badikanlıs and Bekranlıs were going around saying that 'an order was given to murder Armenians and we killed this many Armenians' while they tried to sell the goods they had seized during the massacres.[79] During their passage from Sasun to Silvan, they had attacked several other places and seized a quantity of livestock. It was rumoured that they would attack Armenians again. According to the governor, 'the official recruitment of these Kurdish tribes – which already had the habit of brigandage – to suppress other brigands had given fatal results'.[80] The governor argued that serious measures should be taken to prevent them from disrupting the order in Silvan and all of Kurdistan. He could not have been more prescient, as Kurdistan, together with other parts of the Ottoman East and interior Anatolia, would become the stage for a series of massacres and atrocities in the days to come.

Notes

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2. Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Routledge, 1990), 137–45; François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid* (Istanbul: Homer, 2006), 329–33; Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 114–19.
3. Rebecca Morris, 'A Critical Examination of the Sassoun Commission of Inquiry Report', *Armenian Review* 47, no. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2001): 79–112.
4. Raymond H. Kévorkian, 'The Armenian Population of Sassoun and the Demographic Consequences of the 1894 Massacres', *Armenian Review* 47, no. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2001): 41–53.
5. Ertuğrul Zekâi Ökte, ed., *Osmanlı Arşivi, Yıldız Tasnifi, Ermeni Meselesi* (Istanbul: TTT Vakfı Yayınları, 1989). Several important Ottoman documents that will be examined in this paper were not included in Ökte's compilation, which portrays the event as the lawful suppression of a wide-scale rebellion.
6. Selim Deringil, '"The Armenian Question is Finally Closed": Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatolia during the Hamidian Massacres of 1895–1897', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 2 (2009): 346–8.
7. The Six Provinces are Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Mamüretülaziz, Sivas and Van.
8. For the British policy, see: Roy Douglas, 'Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894–7', *The Historical Journal*, 19, no. 1 (1976): 113–33.
9. For detailed information about the Armenian revolutionary organizations, see: Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*: *The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
10. Sir W. White to the Marquis of Salisbury, 1 August 1890, in *Turkey, no. 1 (1890–91), Correspondence Respecting the Condition of the Populations in Asiatic Turkey and the Proceedings in the Case of Moussa Bey* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1891), 62.
11. For *hafir*, see: Stephan H. Astourian, 'The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power', in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, eds Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Muge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 60.
12. For detailed information about the taxation policies during the nineteenth century, see: Nadir Özbek, 'The Politics of Taxation and 'the Armenian Question' during the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1908)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 770–97.
13. B.O.A., Y.EE. 159/94 (15 December 1894), report prepared by Chief of General Staff of Seventh Infantry Division [Yedinci Fırka Erkân-ı Harbiye Reisi].
14. Ibid.
15. Walker, *Armenia*, 139.

16. Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 118–20.
17. Walker, *Armenia*, 139.
18. B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (27 March 1895), the Commission of Inquiry to Yıldız Palace.
19. British documents indicate that their return was not completed until winter, after the withdrawal of the Ottoman troops which came to the region with the governor of Genc, Mustafa Pasha. See: Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie, 'Memorandum by Consul Graves', in *Turkey, no. 1, Correspondence Relating to the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey, Part 1: Events at Sassoon and Commission of Inquiry at Moush* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1895), 71.
20. B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (23 May 1894), Yıldız Palace to the Foreign Ministry; B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (27 May 1894), cipher telegram from the Province of Bitlis to Yıldız Palace.
21. B.O.A., Y.A.HUS. 277/112 (9 July 1893), from the Province of Bitlis to Yıldız Palace.
22. B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (31 March 1895), the order by Grand Vizier and Minister of Foreign Affairs; B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (23 May 1894), Yıldız Palace to the Foreign Ministry.
23. 'Memorandum' enclosed in Mr Thompson to Sir Clare Ford, 13 March 1893, in *Turkey, no. 3, Correspondence Relating to the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey 1892–1893* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1896), 68.
24. 'Precis of Events at Marsovan' enclosed in Sir Clare Ford to the Earl of Rosebery, 10 April 1893, in *Turkey*, no. 3 (1896), 81.
25. B.O.A., Y.A.HUS. 277/112 (9 July 1893), from the Province of Bitlis to Yıldız Palace; 'Memorandum by Consul Graves', *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 70; B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (23 May 1894), Yıldız Palace to the Foreign Ministry.
26. B.O.A., Y.A.HUS. 277/112 (9 July 1893), from the Province of Bitlis to Yıldız Palace.
27. According to Graves, this official was the district governor of Kulp. On the other hand, the governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Bey, refers to an assassination plan regarding the district governor of Sasun together with the gendarmes who accompanied him. Thus, there are different indications regarding the identity of the official. Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie, 'Memorandum by Consul Graves', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 71.
28. Walker, *Armenia*, 140.
29. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/38 (26 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
30. B.O.A., Y.EE. 151/2 (1 August 1894), cipher telegram from Province of Bitlis to Ministry of Interior.
31. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/38 (26 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps; B.O.A., Y.EE 153/57 (26 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to district governorship of Mush.
32. B.O.A., Y.EE. 159/94 (15 December 1894), report prepared by Chief of General Staff of

Seventh Infantry Division [Yedinci Fırka Erkân-ı Harbiye Reisi].

33. B.O.A., Y.EE. 156/72 (8 September 1894), district governorship of Mush to Yıldız Palace.
34. Ibid.
35. Celal Bey's efforts to prompt an investigation into these acts – 'which would have internally and externally bad results' – did not come to fruition, as his claims were found to be irrelevant by Ferik Edhem Pasha. B.O.A., Y.EE. 156/29 (25 August 1894), Commander of Sixth Cavalry Division, Ferik Edhem Pasha, to Yıldız Palace.
36. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/118 (28 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
37. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/38 (26 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
38. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/57 (26 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to district-governor of Mush. This number of 3,000 brigands can be seen in a number of studies, for instance, Tülay Duran, 'Talori Olayları Belgeleri', in *Osmanlı Arşivi*, ed. Ökte, 351–61.
39. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/61 (27 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
40. B.O.A., Y.EE. 156/13 (3 September 1894), Province of Bitlis to Yıldız Palace.
41. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/94 (28 August 1894), from Yıldız Palace to Commander-in-Chief.
42. B.O.A., Y.EE. 157/36 (16 September 1894), General Command of Fourth Army Corps to Commander-in-Chief.
43. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/38 (26 August 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
44. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/102 (28 August 1894), General Command of Fourth Army Corps to Yıldız Palace.
45. B.O.A., Y.EE. 157/94 (1 September 1894), Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
46. B.O.A., Y.EE. 156/29 (3 September 1894), cipher telegram from *mutasarrıf* of Muş, Celal Bey, to Yıldız Palace.
47. B.O.A., Y.EE. 158/17 (8 September 1894), General Command of Fourth Army Corps to Yıldız Palace.
48. B.O.A., Y.EE. 156/72 (8 September 1894), district governorship of Mush to Yıldız Palace.
49. B.O.A., Y.EE. 66/10 (22 July 1895), The General Report on the Findings of Inquiry, by the Commission of Inquiry.
50. For a detailed analysis regarding this disparity, see: Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
51. B.O.A., Y.EE. 151/2 (1 August 1894), cipher telegram from province of Bitlis to Ministry

of Interior.

52. B.O.A., Y.EE. 159/94 (15 December 1894), report prepared by Chief of General Staff of Seventh Infantry Division.
53. B.O.A., Y.EE. 156/94 (10 September 1894), cipher telegram from Province of Bitlis to Yıldız Palace.
54. The documents under study in this chapter do not offer any clues regarding the number and faiths of those Armenians who were handed over by Ömer Ağa to the commander of the battalion in the region.
55. 'Proces-verbal No. 25 – Sitting of February 22, 1895', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 228.
56. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 750/13 (3 November 1894), telegram from the Governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Bey, to Sublime Porte Receiver's Office.
57. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 204.
58. 'tahkikatinin geçiştirilmesine itinâ olunması ve mümkün olamaz ise işbu eski vukuât hakkında ecnebî memûrlarının suâl-i îrâd etmelerine muvâfakat olunmaması'; B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (31 March 1895), the order by Grand Vizier and Minister of Foreign Affairs.
59. 'Memorandum on the Joint Report of the Consular Delegates to the Sasun Commission of July 20, 1895', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 204.
60. 'Report of the Consular Delegates attached to the Commision appointed to inquire into the Events at Sasun', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 173.
61. 'Memorandum', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 208.
62. 'Report', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 171.
63. B.O.A., Y.EE. 66/10 (22 July 1895), The General Report on the Findings of Inquiry by the Commission of Inquiry.
64. 'Report', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 172.
65. This might be the 'incident against the will of the Porte' regarding those who surrendered which was reported by the district governor of Mush, Celal Bey.
66. 'Report', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 172.
67. B.O.A., Y.EE. 66/10 (22 July 1895), report of the Commission of Inquiry.
68. B.O.A., Y.PRK.A. 10/4 (27 March 1895), the Commission of Inquiry to Yıldız Palace.
69. 'Memorandum', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 206.
70. B.O.A., Y.PRK.MYD. 17/1 (14 September 1895), cipher telegram from Yıldız Palace to General Command of Fourth Army Corps.
71. Stephen Duguid, 'Centralization and Localism, Aspects of Ottoman Policy in Eastern Anatolia 1878–1908' (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1970).
72. B.O.A., Y.EE. 159/94 (15 December 1894), report prepared by Chief of General Staff of Seventh Infantry Division.

73. B.O.A., Y.EE. 153/94 (28 August 1894), from Yıldız Palace to Commander-in-Chief.
74. For example, the homes in the villages of Ahyuva and Dink were allegedly transformed into fortifications and were put under gunfire by Ottoman troops in clashes with the Armenians. The destructive effect of this gunfire is indicated by his comment that *minuscule remains* of those who were hiding in these fortified houses were collected. B.O.A., Y.EE. 157/26 (16 September 1894), General Command of Fourth Army Corps to Sublime Porte.
75. 'Memorandum', in *Turkey*, no. 1 (1895), 206.
76. According to Avedis Nakashian, a doctor involved in the relief efforts, they could be settled only in caves in the vicinity of Urfa. See: Avedis Nakashian, *A Man Who Found a Country* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1941), 136.
77. Deringil, 'The Armenian Question', 368.
78. Nakashian, *A Man Who Found a Country*, 134–6.
79. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 750/15 (16 September 1894), Governor of Diyarbekir Sırrı Bey to Sublime Porte.
80. Ibid.

CHAPTER 9

OTTOMAN ARMENIANS IN THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD: EXPECTATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Ohannes Kılıçdağı

With the Revolution[1] of 1908 the various ethno-religious groups of the Ottoman Empire experienced a renewal of hope that equality and peaceful cohabitation might be possible within the empire. After 33 years of Hamidian despotism (1876–1908), the masses perceived the revolution as the beginning of a new era and a new regime: people from various ethno-religious groups celebrated in the streets together, shouting 'Equality, Liberty, Fraternity!'

The new era was expected to be a time of freedom of speech and of the press. Everyone would be free to talk, discuss and participate in politics and public life. The number of newspapers, clubs, and associations – indicators of a vibrant public life – skyrocketed immediately after the Revolution. Interest in politics increased markedly and opinion pieces on the political future of the country became frequent in the press. Tarık Zafer Tunaya argues that during the second constitutional period, people began for the first time to think that state affairs and their own destinies were closely related. Accordingly, they regarded criticizing and discussing political matters to be their duty. Governing should not be a task restricted to the sultan or cabinet; every citizen might and should have a voice in governance.[2]

The Ottoman Armenian community was no exception to this. As a community that had been tortured by the Hamidian regime, they welcomed the Revolution very enthusiastically. One can say that Armenians, along with other non-Muslims, were the happiest of all, because the revolution promised them not only the end of oppression and massacres, but also promotion to the level of first-class, equal citizens. Especially but not exclusively in the eastern provinces, they were expecting relief. This chapter intends to reveal the post-revolutionary hopes, expectations, anxieties and reservations of a particular segment of Ottoman Armenians. The Armenians considered in this article belong to the educated, urban middle classes – professionals like newspaper editors, writers, teachers, college students, lawyers, politicians and merchants. When the word 'Armenians' is used in this chapter, it refers mainly to this social stratum. This segment of the Armenian population was surely far from being monolithic or homogeneous; on the contrary, they disagreed with each other on certain issues, such as the place of religion and clergy in social and political life, or their evaluation of the Committee of

Union and Progress (CUP), the ruling party of the time.[3] Despite these differences, this article shows that their initial reaction to the revolution and their immediate expectations from it converged.

The major platform where the opinions, ideas and emotions of these Armenians were reflected was the press. Therefore, this chapter utilizes periodicals from different cities and circles, such as political parties, colleges, and civil society organizations, as well as non-partisan individuals. More specifically, the present work is based on material taken from five periodicals, all published in different cities: *Haradj* from Erzurum/Karin, *Andranik* from Sivas/Sebastia, *Iris* from Tokat/Yevdokia, *Yeprat* from Harput/Kharberd, and *Biudanya* from Izmit. All were in the Armenian language, so their audience was mainly the Ottoman Armenian community. None of these periodicals declared an official or institutional connection with any political party on their pages. However, *Haradj*, published by the Association of Armenian Youth of Erzurum, was acting as the semi-official organ of the Erzurum branch of the local ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation). It was clearly a pro-ARF newspaper, as it frequently published the official declarations of the party and pieces written by party officials, and accordingly it had leftist/socialist tendencies. The others presented themselves as non-partisan or neutral organizations with moderate political stances. *Andranik* and *Biudanya* were individual efforts, under the editorship of Haik A. Vardanian and Hagop Sargisian, respectively. *Iris* was published by the Armenian Progressive Club of Tokat, with Petros Pondatsi as editor; and *Yeprat* was the eponymous publication of an American college in Harput, where almost 90 per cent of students and faculty were Armenian. The journal consisted largely of their writings and the editor, Karapet Soghikyan, was also a professor at the college.

First Reactions

The immediate reaction among the Armenian middle class after the revolution was to compare it with the Hamidian regime, which had been a hard time for them, and express their hopes through this comparison. An Armenian commentator, seemingly with no party connection, in the Sivas newspaper, *Andranik*, exemplifies this attitude just after the revolution, writing that the *ancien régime* was a despotic hell which was brought to an end by Enver and Niyazi[4] and other officers in cooperation with Armenian revolutionaries. He adds that now, a new period of freedom has begun in which ‘the brains that had forgotten how to think would think again, the mouths that had forgotten how to speak would speak again, and the hands that had forgotten how to work would work again […] The Armenian and the Turk will create miracles hand in hand’.[5]

Major Armenian political parties, namely the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, otherwise referred to as the Dashnaks, and the Hnchak parties also declared their support for the new regime. The Dashnaks had already presented themselves as the most important partner of the Committee of Union and Progress in bringing the revolution.[6] The Hnchaks also, as a positive gesture, changed their party name from Revolutionary Hnchak Party to Social Democratic Hnchak Party at their Sixth Congress in 1909.[7] Moreover, the Sivas branch of the

Hnchak Party declared the party's position with an announcement almost six months after the revolution. They printed the announcement in Turkish and posted it on the walls of the city to make their stance known to everyone, especially Muslims:

Ottoman Compatriots,

After the proclamation of the constitution in our beloved fatherland, the Hnchak Party has ended its revolutionary activities and become a political party. It has chosen the legal and peaceful parliamentary system to realize its aim, which is the economic and moral development of the country. It will express its complaints and demands through legal and parliamentary methods. The Hnchak Party declares that it rejects any separatist aim against *constitutional* Turkey. It will stand shoulder to shoulder with Turkish[8] freedom-loving brothers against internal enemies of the constitution, as well as the assaults of foreigners. It will fight under the Ottoman flag against all enemies that aim to disturb the peace of our country or shatter us into pieces. In the wars we will fight as one soul and the foreigners will see our solidarity and the Ottoman flag will be glorified under the sun.

Dear compatriots,

We are all the children of the Ottoman fatherland; the solidarity between us will turn our country into heaven […] We, Turks and Armenians, will resist shoulder to shoulder against all encroachments coming from abroad. In order to *democratize the constitution* and make it perennial we will stand hand in hand.

Hnchak Party of Sivas[9]

After the revolution another Armenian party, the Constitutional Ramkavar Party, was established as a result of cooperation between the Armenakan Party (originally founded in Van in 1885) and a group split from the Hnchak Party under the name of Verakazmyal [Reformed] Hnchak Party. This party was closer to the religious and conservative circles of the Armenian community and its relations with the Armenian Patriarchate were rather cooperative. They were closer to the right wing of the political continuum compared to the Dashnaks and Hnchaks. However, their first reaction to the revolution was not that different. Ramkavar's 1908 programme mentions that a new period of happiness and development has opened after the toppling of despotism and the birth of the constitutional regime. Their programme says that there had been valid reasons to have secret revolutionary organizations during the despotic regime, but now, when civil rights are provided and everyone is free to express ideas about the progress of the country, there is no reason to keep such organizations. Hereafter, open and constitutional organizations would be founded. Accordingly, Ramkavar aimed at modifying the Ottoman Constitution to democratize it and claimed that decentralization and the improvement of communal rights on the regional level would guarantee the territorial unity of the Ottoman Empire.[10]

Shock: The 31 March Incidents and the Adana Massacres

This general atmosphere of optimism was disrupted by a shock. On 13 April 1909 (31 March in the old calendar) a mutiny broke out among some soldiers stationed in Istanbul, which overwhelmed the capital for ten days. Although it could not be elucidated exactly how or why the mutiny broke out, apparently the mutineers and their supporters, mainly men of religion, were discontent with the new regime and demanded a return to 'sharia'. They forced a change of cabinet and the suspension of the parliament, and attacked those parties – mainly the Committee of Union and Progress – and newspapers which they saw as the builders and supporters of the new regime. The mutiny was suppressed within ten days, after a short firefight, by the Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) coming from Rumeli, the 'heart' of the revolution, which was supported by volunteers from different ethnic groups. At the end, a large group of people were hanged, including Dervish Vahdeti, the apparent leader of the uprising.

Although the connection has never been absolutely established, at this time of unrest in Istanbul, bloody events broke out in Adana and its environs, where tens of thousands of Armenians were massacred by mobs and soldiers. The Adana massacres shocked the public, and particularly the Armenians. In the words of an anonymous Armenian commentator writing in *Izmirli*, a non-partisan periodical published in Izmir, the massacres disturbed the optimistic atmosphere and made the Armenian community restless and worried.[11] However, it seems that generally speaking the Armenian community did not give up all their hopes for the new regime, as most of the Armenians under study here – especially but not exclusively in Dashnak circles – evaluated the Adana massacres as 'Abdülhamid's last intrigue'.[12] According to this perception, under Abdülhamid's leadership, religious-reactionary forces and internal enemies of the constitution had organized the Adana massacres and thus tried to negate the revolution by abolishing the constitution and parliament once again. However, the Armenian community also complained of the government and the CUP's having tolerated the actions of the mob during the massacres and subsequently not treated the case seriously on legal and political grounds.

On the first anniversary of the constitution – almost three months after the Adana massacres – a non-partisan Armenian commentator in the Sivas newspaper, *Andranik*, points to the psychology of Armenians. He says that during the *ancien régime* it had been easier to bear all the difficulties and catastrophes because Armenians had hope for a bright future. However, after the revolution, which was expected to mark the beginning of that bright future, and after seeing that there was no difference between the old and new regimes, it had become harder to cope with the feelings of disappointment, since nothing more could be expected from the future. Nevertheless, he adds, he is not hopeless about the future of the country; on the contrary, he sees reason for hope, unless doubt and mutual mistrust among the communities prevail. Turks, in particular, should overcome their doubts about non-Muslim communities. If they take one step forward towards enhancing their fraternity, Armenians will take three steps more. He concludes that chauvinist attitudes are harmful for everyone and every community.[13]

Despite the disenchantment that the Adana massacres raised, the violent events did not completely terminate the hopes pinned on the revolution by Armenians, since the incident was

largely regarded as a counter-revolutionary and reactionary movement (although the responsibility of the CUP was not ignored). On the contrary, the suppression of the violence was interpreted as an achievement of the revolutionary forces. Another author in *Andranik*, a certain Gr. Ter Abrahamian, interprets the 31 March incidents and the Adana massacres as a plot to hinder cooperation between Armenians and 'their brothers', the Turks. Despite this, according to the author, the 'new Turkey'[14] showed signs that it would punish severely those who were responsible for massacring the Armenians. For the first time, gallows were set up in Turkey for people guilty of killing Armenians. However, he adds, nobody could blame the Armenians for being sceptical. What this author advises, like others, is to be patient and calm for a little longer.[15]

After the Adana massacres, the official organ of the ARF, *Droshak*, advised Armenians to be temperate and avoid any act that could be perceived as revenge:

In these heavy days the responsibility of [Armenian] leading circles and youth is enormous. It requires an endless discretion and utmost circumspection […] Be careful toward the unreasoning masses that are ready to perceive each of your gestures wrongly and interpret them contrary to your sincere intent. We have to give even simple cultural and humane messages with utmost caution. The word 'revenge' should never come out of our mouths – especially those of active youngsters.[16]

Not only Dashnaks but also other Ottoman Armenian intellectuals and leaders *chose* to insist on believing in the constitutional regime, presumably because they could envision no other possibilities than trusting 'the Turks' and the government. An anonymous commentator says that Turks are not natural-born killers but the 33-year Hamidian regime drove them to kill Armenians; now the constitutional regime may educate them to live with others peacefully. But the author emphasizes that the new regime has no magic wand; improvement would come gradually.[17]

All these show that the opinion leaders of the Armenian community made a conscious effort to be optimistic after Adana and transmit this sanguine view to the Ottoman Armenian community. They tried to offset the negative effect of the massacres and keep the people's hopes and morale high. For example, the publication of the Yeprat American College of Harput writes:

First and foremost, we expect the establishment of harmony and fraternity on a stable and strong basis. These are not impossible, but time is required. Let's wait until the parliament makes its program and the government works to realize the expected reforms. Let's not be impatient. The damage caused over the years cannot be cured in one day.[18]

We are one and a half year old babies who are walking forward day by day. Our hopes have been extinguished many times in the past. Now we are hopeful again. We hope that this country will recover from its illnesses and that the communities, in harmony, will show the foreigners that they are the master of their own country and have the right to remain so. We still hope that the officials of the government will gradually become better, and that Turkish parties will not

attempt to take the constitution back from our hands. On the contrary, we expect them to improve it. Our hope is still strong.[19]

The individuals and institutions referred to here were from different parties, circles, classes, and ideologies. Some of them were not affiliated with any party. They were divided and even severely opposed each other on various political and social matters. However, it seems that their initial reaction to the re-proclamation of the constitution and to the new regime was quite similar. One can say that although they had very serious doubts about the future *they consciously chose to be optimistic*.

Expectations and Sensitivities to Assimilation

While the political parties and individual writers discussed in this chapter were trying to keep the hopes of the Armenians high, they also articulated their demands and expectations from the new regime which, they presumed, would be a political order where citizens would participate in decision-making processes and have a say about what was good for them and what was not. This was expected not only for macro or abstract political problems but also for concrete daily issues. An editorial comment from the Tokat/Yevdokia journal, *Iris*, says that if there was to be any difference between the old (Hamidian) and new (Young Turk) regimes, it would be the freedom of speech and the press. The editorial emphasizes that although progress was slow, they (Armenians) felt freer to write and speak, articulate their feelings and pains, criticize bad treatment, and demand their rights.

Despite our restricted situation we should not be silent and sit idle even if we are not party members. Our age-old problems and deep wounds are not to be healed through silence but through repeating our demands till our voice is heard and finds a response. We need a platform for this, and the only one is the press, which should be the mirror of society with all its colors and phenomena.[20]

With these motives, writers in the Armenian press wrote on subjects which they regarded as critical. Assimilation was one of these sensitive subjects, as the Armenians discussed here were worried about losing their cultural/national identity. For example, after the Adana massacres one of the top officials of the ARF, Yervand Tamarian (Yeghishe Topchian), wrote a series of articles under the headline, ‘What Do Armenians Want?’ in *Haradj*, the semi-official organ of the ARF's Erzurum branch, in July–August 1909. In these articles, he explains what the Armenians had done under Hamidian rule and what they expected from the new regime. He underlines that the Armenians had resisted many invasions throughout history; whenever armies from the west or east demolished their fatherland they rebuilt it, and survived till today. Yervand Tamarian reflects an understanding that imagined the Armenian identity as something preserved through centuries with heavy sacrifices by the Armenian people. Therefore, they did not want to give up such a ‘precious’ possession of theirs, and according to him, ‘This was neither a crime nor contrary to the benefit of the state’. In accordance with their tradition of resistance, he comments, Armenians had struggled against the Hamidian regime to protect their

existence. The Hamidian regime, however, had propagated the notion that the Armenians wanted their own kingdom and had armed themselves for this purpose. By doing so, the state had legitimized its bloody acts and provoked the Muslims against the Armenians. He goes on to say that, even if Armenians had wanted to secede as the Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians had done, no one could have blamed them, since they were living dishonourable and voiceless lives during the despotic regime. Tamarian accepts that there were revolutionary Armenian parties, but their target had been Hamidian rule, not the Ottoman fatherland. He claims that although a significant majority of the Armenians did not want to secede, the state officials refused to believe this and continued to remain suspicious of their actions. Tamarian claims that whenever the Armenians armed themselves, it was for self-defence. Moreover, since the Kurds, Circassians, and Turks were armed, it should not have been a crime for Armenians to be armed as well. In addition, the Armenians were aware that living in a large country was politically and economically better than having a small sovereign one. Tamarian points to the willingness of Armenians to enter military service as a proof of their eagerness to serve the fatherland 'more than anyone else'. In sum, Tamarian states that '[l]iving as Armenians under the Ottoman flag and seeing the light of real equality and freedom on all regions and nations of the indivisible fatherland […] That is what Armenians want'.[21]

The CUP's assimilationist policies, especially in the realm of education and language, exacerbated Armenian worries, as the party developed a militant attitude toward making Turkish the dominant language of education and administration, although Turkish had already been specified as the official language in the 1876 Constitution. This language policy created discontent among Armenians, just as it did among the Greek, Arab, and Albanian communities.[22] A certain K. H. Sinanian from Erzurum notes that these policies incited mutual doubts among communities, which presented a barrier to peaceful cohabitation. The principles of liberty, fraternity, equality and justice still stood as mere words; they could not be applied in practice because each nation of Turkey had its own doubts. For example, many people still doubted the Armenians and regarded them as a separatist group. He objects to this attitude and says that it had been very understandable in the days of the old regime that the Armenians, who had been oppressed and plundered, should work for a revolution. But they sincerely greeted the constitution and expected much from it. Unfortunately, however, one year later the constitutional regime had given almost nothing concrete to Armenians or other Christians. He contends that Turks, full of doubts against Armenians and other Christians, wanted to enjoy the constitution only for their own benefit. One important point of mistrust between the Turks and Christians was the 'privileges'[23] enjoyed by the Christians. Turks wanted to eliminate these privileges, whose guarantor was Europe. According to Sinanian, the Christians of Turkey would not want to abandon these privileges, since they did not have any trust in the state and in Muslims. He claims that the massacres in Cilicia/Adana had strengthened the mistrust of Armenians since, besides being murdered, they were also forced to convert to Islam. Therefore, he concludes, these 'privileges' should not be abolished, because they guaranteed the preservation of religious difference. He regards the efforts to make Turkish dominant over other languages as an attempt to end these privileges. He points to the examples of Russia, Austria, and Germany, which sought to assimilate the people living within their states, but

brought about only bloodshed:

Is it not natural that Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians and others love their [mother] tongue as much as Turks love theirs? All nations give their life but not their language; they do not want to lose their existence. This must be recognized.

Is it possible to hinder the development of a nation that has life and energy? Bury a seed in the soil and put a rock on it. The life in the seed will bypass the rock and burgeon; a rock cannot prevent the seed from growing. Germany, Austria, Russia put rocks on other nations but people keep moving on, improving, and preserving their existence despite this. The same will happen to the nations of Turkey.[24]

Another critical issue that caused mistrust and anger in the Armenian press was the Law of Associations, which was debated and accepted in the parliament in July–August 1909. This law was seen as another attempt at forcing assimilation and curbing liberties. Besides putting societies and political parties under strict control of the government, the law formally prohibited the foundation of associations and political parties on the basis of ethnic or religious identities. This law faced strong opposition from Armenian, Greek, Arab and Albanian deputies in the parliament. For example, Hristo Dalchef said that this article would cause conflict because it aimed to Turkify the other ethno-religious elements. Also, Nazaret Taghavarian, a deputy from Sivas, claimed that this article would encourage people to establish secret organizations just as they had under the Hamidian regime, since they would be prevented from expressing themselves freely.[25] Similarly, the editor in chief of *Haradj* qualifies this decision as ominous, narrow-minded and callow because if it were carried out, Armenian, Albanian, Arab, and Kurdish associations would be prosecuted by the government. He adds that even during the most despicable days of his tyranny, Abdülhamid II could not have ended these parties by force. Banning national parties would force them to underground activities. He also contends that this decision meant that only those parties that were happy with the status quo would continue to exist, while others would be closed down – but such an outcome should be impossible, because these parties had existed for years, and were a natural result of social conditions. He claimed that no order, no law would be able to wipe out the natural articulations of life. Prohibition and persecution of the free expression of ideas and restriction of politics were the ways of the old regime; constitutional Turkey should not follow them.[26] Despite all this opposition, the law was passed and the government had the opportunity to close all associations and parties that it did not like.

Shields against Assimilation: Communal and Regional Autonomy

As a protection against assimilation, the leading figures of the Armenian community emphasized regional and communal autonomy. Although it is not the subject of this chapter, to provide the broader context a brief description of the internal organization of the Armenian community will be useful. Beginning in 1863, the year when the Armenian constitution came

into being, Ottoman Armenians, like other non-Muslims, started to develop an internal organization based on legal documents, regulations and administrative bodies, even an assembly elected by popular vote, all approved by the Ottoman state. Although during the Hamidian regime this administrative body had been suspended for a long time and its efficiency, especially in the provinces, was highly questionable, the Ottoman Armenian community had been governing its religious, educational, and civil affairs with relative autonomy through this administrative structure, which was bureaucratically quite complicated and had many special councils and committees. After the re-promulgation of the Ottoman constitution in 1908, in line with the general rise of a democratic and libertarian atmosphere, the institutions and practices of this Armenian communal administration gained importance and became revitalized. It should be underlined that in the sources examined for this study *nobody, be it cleric, partisan or from any other social stratum, claimed that the right to run communal affairs with a certain level of autonomy had to be renounced for the sake of becoming equal Ottoman citizens*. They did not question it. On the contrary, they accepted communal autonomy in education, religious and civil affairs as a given measure against assimilation. Preservation of this internal organization was seen as vital to the protection of Armenian identity.

In addition to communal autonomy, administrative decentralization was, according to many Armenian intellectuals, also important in preventing assimilation and providing a peaceful and democratic government. They claimed that the participation of the people in local and national decision-making processes would benefit not only Armenians, but all the peoples of the empire. After the revolution but before the opening of the parliament, for instance, the ARF declared that it recognized the integrity of the empire since it was to be a liberal constitutional regime. However, decentralization should have become the main administrative principle. It would have been preferable for the central government to look after general affairs like foreign relations, the military, currency, customs, railroads, and the postal service while leaving local functions to the provinces.[27] The Armenian press of eastern Anatolia adopted a more or less similar stance supporting decentralization. One can find comments in the provincial newspapers encouraging people to take the initiative in the solution of their own problems instead of frequently applying to central institutions such as the Ottoman government, the parliament or even the Armenian Patriarchate.[28]

In order to make governance more participatory and democratic, some Armenian intellectuals suggested combining decentralization with provincial plebiscites on certain issues. Since contemporary constitutional states were so populous, it was not often possible for the citizens to come together physically and decide the rules collectively; they therefore elected representatives and deputies. The people governed their affairs not directly, but through elected representatives. However, in 'Turkey'[29] the election system was based on secondary electors; the people first elected the delegates, who later elected the deputies of the parliament. Even if the delegates had good intentions, commentators claimed, they would not mirror the preferences of the people. So the election system in effect widened the gap between the people and their representatives. Moreover, since decisions were made according to majority rule in the parliament in the capital, the voices of the minority in general and

especially of those in the distant provinces were not usually listened to or even heard.

An editorial in *Haradj*, written by an author called Sano – probably a pseudonym – exemplifies this approach by emphasizing the importance of decentralization and political participation in democracy:

In a country like Turkey which contains different nations, different languages and religions, even different climates, a law promulgated by the center might be useful for this or that province or nations, but harmful for others.

Just one example: according to the constitution the official language is Turkish. This law is good for the Turks because the official language is their mother tongue, but not for others since they cannot utilize the facilities of the official language […]

Decentralized administration might in part meet these diverse needs […]

But it is not enough. It is essential that every citizen should be able to participate directly in the solution of important issues [like declaring war, custom laws, etc.] […]

Asking all citizens, this is the principle of plebiscite […] In a decentralized administration every province largely should be able to decide on vital issues in this manner.

The author of these lines then mentions Switzerland and the USA as countries in which this system works properly. It is not surprising, he writes, to see that in those countries there are different, even contradictory, laws about the same issues in different cantons or provinces. He underlines that these laws do not conflict with each other; on the contrary, this diversification produces maximum benefit for all.[30]

Demand for the Rule of Law

Besides the CUP's mentality of governance, another thing that made Armenians suspicious about the future of the constitutional regime was the lack of rule of law and justice, a suspicion crystallized by the treatment they faced from both local despots and government officials. Although these were problems inherited from the previous regime, almost nothing changed after the revolution. One can observe through the pages of the Armenian press that the number of news reports of assaults on Armenians' life and property increased again almost one year after the revolution. Attackers seem to have hesitated and paused for a while after the revolution, but upon seeing that nothing much changed in the way the government handled such cases, they resumed their assaults and extortion. As an alternative explanation, one might claim that the Armenian press may have chosen not to report such cases during the initial months of the revolution so as not to disturb the positive atmosphere. Either way, these assaults remained a problem after the revolution.

The comments made by one attacker in such an incident in Erzincan are revealing, because they show how some Muslims perceived the constitution. In the Armenian neighbourhood of the town, a group of drunken Muslim ‘villains’ fired their weapons into the air and taunted an

Armenian man on the street. When the man tried to resist, one of the harassers, Kel Salih, wounded him. The others prevented him from causing more harm. Salih then shouted, 'I am going to kill him to make an example of him [*ibret-i alem için*]', and *insulted the constitution*.[31] This anecdote impels one to ask such questions as: what was the relation of the constitution to such an 'ordinary' street fight? Why did that man make reference to the constitution? He did so, I believe, because the constitution, some Muslims thought, threatened their advantageous social status over non-Muslims/Armenians by raising them to the level of equal citizens. By the same token, the newspaper felt it necessary to mention that the attacker had insulted the constitution, because it had become the platform for conflict between Muslims and Armenians about their respective social positioning. Thus, even a seemingly mundane street fight between Muslim and Armenian individuals might become a matter of politics. As this event suggests, the constitution did not produce only feelings of fraternity, but also engendered envy and enmity among some Muslims against Christians.

Reading the Armenian press, it becomes clear that illegal acts against the Armenians were facilitated by state officials like governors, sub-governors, police chiefs, etc., who were either collaborating with the perpetrators or at least overlooking them. Such acts made Armenians question the difference between old and new and ask, 'What is the difference if everything is to continue like this?' In July 1909 an Armenian, describing the situation in Bulanık, Erzurum, says that nothing changed after the constitution: the same cruelties, murders, and injustice continued as before. 'The same reactionary people' continued to rule. The sub-governor of Bulanık, who was 80 years old, had actually handed over the administration to the police chief who, in alliance with Kurdish *agha*s, was repressing the working people, especially Armenians. The reporter contends that these officials were acting against the constitutional principle of equality. The Armenians sent a telegram to Mush complaining to higher officials but they did not receive any reply. As a result of this attitude by the local government, he says, eight more Armenians were killed even after the constitution was enacted.[32]

Another comment from Tokat/Yevdokia in April 1912 sarcastically states that the constitution did not stop the assaults of Kurds and *derebey*s, while Istanbul was still forming inspection commissions to understand whether 'sweet-tempered and modest Ottomans like Kurds kill people, steal property, kidnap girls and women'.[33] For example, in a single issue of the non-partisan *Iris* newspaper of June 1911, four different incidents from Harput, Siirt, and Tokat are reported in which Armenians are robbed, beaten, or even in some instances killed. These assaults make the newspaper ask whether there will ever be an end to the agony and 'martyrdom' of poor Armenians, especially of those living in the inner towns of the eastern provinces.[34] A letter sent by the Prelate of Mush (Taron), Bishop Nerses Kharakhanian, to Edjmiatzin, the centre of the highest office of the Armenian Church, on 12 October 1912 summarizes the situation succinctly. He complains about the oppression and exploitation by tax farmers (*multezim*s) and officials and he says:

If one dares to complain to the government he faces heavier punishments. Prosecutor, judge, officer are all *multezim*s' relatives or friends. Aside from this fact, if there is a Christian plaintiff against a Muslim the result is obvious […] they demand threefold or fourfold tax […]

They even demand tax from deaths […] The Turkish gendarmerie is not a lesser evil for peasants than bandits. They beat, torture, exploit, take their horses' food for free. They especially get angry when they come to collect soldiers and see that they are not ready […] When an inspector comes upon complaints they always acquit the gendarmes who, after this encouragement, continue their oppressions in an even harsher manner.

Before the constitution they, in order to legitimize persecution and plunder, showed the Armenians as suspicious. It seems that also today the Turks try to follow the same way [even] when the Armenians are the most loyal subjects and perform military duty for the protection of the fatherland.[35]

It seems that shortly after the revolution business went back to usual, especially in the eastern provinces. Therefore, as a result of the CUP's mentality of governance and the daily pressure on their life and property, despair and disappointment among Ottoman Armenians expanded and deepened towards the end of 1912.

Expectations of Complete Equality

As stated above, one of the principles of the revolution was equality. Armenians, too, desired and demanded that this principle be applied as soon as possible. Some of them were also very sensitive about those articulations and deeds they regarded as contradictory to equality. The expectations of equality from the new regime were so high that one can come across comments in the Armenian press of the time that evaluated every single event from this perspective. The open letter that an Armenian merchant in Sivas, S. Tumadjian, wrote to the governor of Sivas, Nazım Pasha, typifies this position. Tumadjian complains about Halid Bey, who was the general director of official documents (*evrak müdürü*) and the owner of the Turkish newspaper *Vicdan* (*Conscience*). Tumadjian claims that Halid Bey, through his speech and writings, had provoked the Muslims against the Christians, which was unacceptable and openly against the constitution. Therefore, he should be punished by the governor. Tumadjian says that

There is no discrimination, nationalism, patronage among the constitutive communities of the Ottoman Empire any longer. All government officials have to treat Kirakos and Nikol exactly as they treat Mehmed. We today recognize only one Ottoman nation constituted by the peoples of Turkey as a complete entity […] We only recognize the principle of Ottomanness.[36]

Although it did not take place in the eastern provinces, there is an interesting example that reflects how Armenians were alert to any discourse in the public domain that was contrary to equality. In 1911 when Italy invaded Tripoli, which was then an Ottoman land – at least formally – the Ottoman state declared jihad, Islamic holy war, to mobilize people. Some of the Izmit Armenians, even though they participated in the rally to protest Italian aggression, were upset when they heard that jihad had been proclaimed against Italy because they thought that the use of this Islamic concept discriminated against Ottoman non-Muslims, including Armenians. If equality had been the basis of the relationship between the state and its citizens, the establishment of this relation through exclusive Islamic concepts would have been

unacceptable because it privileged Islam and Muslims over others. In the face of such objections and uneasiness Sırrı Bey, the sub-governor of Izmit, tried to convince the Armenians gathered at the Protestant church of the city that jihad was indeed not a religious war, but a sacred war for the fatherland, and the reason for declaring jihad was to gain the support of other Muslim communities abroad. However, it seems that they were not persuaded by this argument.[37] Similarly, when an official member of *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası* (The Party of Liberal Entente) described the constituent peoples of the empire in a metaphor where the Turks were the head, the Arabs the right hand, the Albanians the left hand, the Greeks the left leg, and the Armenians the right leg, some Armenians objected to this description, saying it implied inequality because, they contended, there could not be equality between head and arms and legs: the head orders, the others obey. This metaphor was unacceptable because it reflected a governing mentality in which one group subordinated others.[38] These examples demonstrate that there was a general intolerance among Armenians of the period against any act or discourse which they regarded as contrary to full political equality. They reacted immediately to such deeds, articulations, and even metaphors.

The unjust composition of the parliament was another issue criticized as contrary to equality and justice. The representatives of the Armenian educated middle class complained that the parliament did not reflect the composition of the society in either ethnic or class terms. If the parliament were to genuinely represent the people, its majority should have been composed largely of deputies of the working classes, including the peasantry. Instead, almost half of the actual parliament was constituted by landowners, referred to in one Armenian newspaper as the ‘exploiting class’ and they were followed by Islamic clergy (*hoca/hodja*) as the second largest group in the parliament. Some Armenians thought that such a parliament could not act for the benefit of the working people.[39] As a matter of fact, in 1908, 1912, and 1914 the percentages of *ulema*, landlords, and notables (*eshraf*) in aggregate were 53.8, 40.3 and 42.3, respectively.[40] This shows that those groups that can be qualified as conservative, in the sense of being against the fundamental changes in the government style, constituted a remarkable portion of the parliament.

The parliament was not representative in terms of the communities, either. Of the approximately 30 million subjects comprising the population of the Ottoman Empire, only a quarter, namely 7–8 million subjects, were of Turkish origin. Yet almost half of the parliament (135 deputies) was Turkish; the non-Turkish subjects, who constituted three-quarters of the empire's population, had slightly more than half (140) of the deputies. In the opinion of some Armenians, this was a negation of the principle of equality.[41] According to one foreign observer, Armenians were aware that they were not treated justly in the 1908 elections but since they saw the constitution as their best chance they decided not to ‘grumble’.[42]

Summary

In sum, the Revolution of 1908 in the Ottoman Empire offered hope and a chance to ease the pressure on the Armenian community. In the perception of many Armenians, especially the

intellectuals and middle classes, the new regime represented a clean break from the previous despotic Hamidian regime. The Adana massacres of April 1909, an unexpected blow, suddenly hit the Armenian community and slackened their excitement. Nevertheless, despite all the horror the Adana massacres caused, the Armenian opinion leaders writing in the press tried not to lose their hope for a better future, since they had invested so much in constitutional Turkey, both politically and emotionally. Thus, Armenian intellectuals advised their people to be patient. Within this general frame of mind and psychology there were some more solid expectations and demands. One of them was to preserve Armenian cultural identity. In other words, Armenian activists were highly sensitive to any moves toward assimilation by the state. They proposed cultural and regional autonomy as measures to reduce the risk of assimilation. Secondly, they also demanded the full implementation of equality, not only in word but also in deed. Therefore, they vehemently objected to any action or statement, even metaphors that they regarded as contrary to equality. Thirdly, there was a demand for the termination of the assaults on Armenian life and property that had become routine since the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in the eastern provinces. Although during the initial months after the revolution assaults and extortion did decrease, the revolution also failed to solve this problem once and for all.

Notes

1. It is a matter of debate whether the movement was a revolution or not. Each party has its own arguments and claims. For discussion, see Sina Akşin et al., *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010). For another work that describes 1908 as a revolution, see: Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997). For an opposing view, which claims, based on contemporary press accounts, that the participation of the masses came later, see Kudret Emiroğlu, *Anadolu'da Devrim Günleri* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999). Although it is not one of the concerns of this chapter, I use the term ‘revolution’ since it was a radical change compared to the previous regime in the eyes of contemporaries discussed here.
2. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Hürriyet'in İlanı* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 20.
3. For a discussion of the internal divisions and conflicts of the Ottoman Armenian community in the Second Constitutional Period, see Ohannes Kılıçdağı, ‘Socio-Political Reflections and Expectations of the Ottoman Armenians after the 1908 Revolution: Between Hope and Despair’ (PhD Dissertation, Boğaziçi University, 2014). Chapter III specifically focuses on this matter.
4. These were the low-ranking officers who organized and lead the military upheaval that brought about the revolution. Enver became the Minister of War in 1914.
5. Y. M. Polsetsian, ‘Haradjadimutiun’ [‘Progress’], *Andranik*, no. 1 (24 January 1909): 1, 2.

6. For a description of the relations between the CUP and the ARF after the revolution, see D.M. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule 1908–1914* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2009).
7. Arsen Avagyan and Gaidz F Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* (Istanbul: Aras, 2005), 40.
8. Here they use the word 'Turk' in the original text.
9. *Andranik*, no. 2 (31 January 1909): 3, 4. Italics are mine.
10. Avagyan and Minassyan, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, 44–7.
11. H., 'Ankerparan vijag' ['Inconvenient Situation'], *Izmirli*, no. 9 (4 December 1909): 65.
12. As a matter of fact, an anonymous Armenian booklet was published after the March 31 incident with this title: *Abdiul-Hamidi verdjin khaghy* (K. Polis: Tpagrich-Hratarakich O. Arzuman, 1909).
13. K. Metzaturian, 'Ketstse Osmanian Sahmanadrutiun! Getstse Azatutiun! Getstse Hamerashkhutiun!' ['Long Live Ottoman Constitution! Long Live Freedom! Long Live Solidarity'], *Andranik*, no. 27–28 (11 July 1909): 1.
14. It is telling that the Armenian authors in these sources usually prefer the term 'Turkey' to name the country they were living in, rather than something like 'the Ottoman Empire'.
15. Kr. Ter Abrahamian, 'Hakirj noter' ['Short Notes'], *Andranik*, no. 59 (3 April 1910): 1.
16. Quoted in *Haradj*, no. 6 (19 June 1909): 2.
17. *Andranik*, no. 50 (12 December 1909): 2.
18. Editorial, *Yeprat*, no. 5 (1 January 1910): 71.
19. Editorial, *Yeprat*, no. 6 (15 January 1910): 103.
20. Editorial, 'Gavari tertin dery' ['The role of the provincial newspaper'], *Iris*, no. 2 (11 December 1910): 1, 2.
21. Yervand, 'Inch Kuzen Hayery II' ['What do Armenians want? II'], *Haradj*, no. 17 (28 July 1909): 1; Yervand, 'Inch kuzen Hayere IV' ['What do Armenians want? IV'], *Haradj*, no. 19 (4 August 1909): 1.
22. For the reaction in these communities, see Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 91; Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15, 16; Vangelis Kechriotis, 'The Modernisation of the Empire and the 'Community Privileges': Greek Responses to the Young Turk Policies', in *The State and the Subaltern Modernisation, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 62, 63.
23. Sinanian himself uses this word in quotation marks, which shows that he views them not as privileges but rights.
24. G. H. H. Sinanian, 'Anhim kaskatzner' ['Unfounded Doubts'], *Haradj*, no. 13 (14 July

1909): 2.

25. Baran Hocaoğlu, *II. Meşrutiyette İktidar Muhalefet İlişkileri 1908–1913* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2010), 149, 150.
26. Yervand, 'Argelq te azatutiun' ['Prohibition or Freedom'], *Haradj*, no. 14 (17 July 1909): 1; Yervand, 'Chorord hodvatzy' ['Fourth Article'], *Haradj*, no. 15 (21 July 1909): 1.
27. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule 1908–1914*, 17.
28. Aror, *Haradj*, no. 2 (9 January 1910): 2.
29. As the authors in these periodicals preferred to call the country they were living in.
30. Sano, 'Zhoghovurdy piti lini ir tan tery' ['People will be the master of its own house'], *Haradj*, no. 45 (3 November 1909): 2, 3.
31. *Haradj*, no. 12 (12 February 1910): 4.
32. M. Pet, 'Bulanykhi drutiunu' ['The state in Bulanık'], *Haradj*, no. 17 (28 July 1909): 2, 3.
33. M. Varzhapetian, 'Tughti vra […] gohatsum' ['On Paper […] Satisfaction'], *Iris*, no. 1 (15 April 1912): 9.
34. *Iris*, no. 6 (1 June 1911): 7–9.
35. Levon Chormisian, *Hamapatker arevmtahayots mek daru patmutian*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Impr. K. Tonikian, 1972), 131.
36. S. Tumadjian, 'Bats namak Kusakal Vsem. Nazym Pashayin' ['Open Letter to the Governor Nazım Pasha'], *Andranik*, no. 43 (24 October 1909): 1.
37. *Biudanya*, no. 26 (12 November 1911): 513.
38. Ditak, 'Itilafakan mtaynutiuny' ['The Itilaf mentality'], *Biudanya*, no. 9 (10 March 1912): 569.
39. Yervand, 'Inch arets khorhrdarany II' ['What did the parliament do? II'], *Haradj*, no. 27 (1 September 1909): 1.
40. Fevzi Demir, 'Bir Siyaset Okulu Olarak Meclis-i Mebusan', in *II. Meşrutiyet'i Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 247.
41. Yervand, 'Inch arets khorhrdarany III' ['What did the parliament do? III'], *Haradj*, no. 28 (4 September 1909): 1.
42. Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (New York, London: C. Scribner's sons; T. F. Unwin, 1909), 193.

PART IV

SOCIAL HISTORY OF SPACE: LAND, CULTURE, PEOPLE

CHAPTER 10

ABANDONED VILLAGES IN DIYARBEKIR PROVINCE AT THE END OF THE ‘LITTLE ICE AGE’, 1800–50[1]

Zozan Pehlivan

Grains and produce became names without faces
The village and fields fell apart and the houses are in ruin
The dispossessed poured into the city and many became beggars.[2]

In early October of 1803, Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Diyarbekir, wrote this stanza – an expression of his desperation in the face of the crisis – in a dispatch addressed to the governor of Baghdad. He requested a special shipment of grain for his province, which was experiencing a period of severe food scarcity. As he wrote, many starving inhabitants of the surrounding area abandoned their villages and fled to the city in search of aid.

Throughout the nineteenth century one can see numerous documents that mention the scarcity of food due to crop failures and drought. Particularly around the middle of the nineteenth century, an acute agricultural crisis reigned in the region stretching from Diyarbekir to Erzurum, Kayseri, Ankara, Aleppo, Damascus and Mosul, where people and their animals starved. Thousands of peasants and nomads fled while others ate roots of plants or fodder. Those who were lucky enough would go to city centres to find a cup of soup. This chapter argues that climate changes associated with the end of the ‘Little Ice Age’ (circa 1200–1850) brought important disruptions to the environment, resulting in failed crops and dying herd animals, that a combination of drought and limited means of redistribution affected the changing demography of the region. Based on Ottoman and British archival materials, this study specifically explores the environmental factors that contributed to the process of abandonment in the province of Diyarbekir in the 1840s.

This study seeks to expand the current literature on the environmental history of the Ottoman Empire into the region of Kurdistan. It is particularly concerned with documenting the changing conditions in agriculture in the province of Diyarbekir. Hence this chapter is primarily a contribution to the environmental history of the region, which is an understudied aspect of Middle Eastern history. Following in the footsteps of the global environmental historiography

that challenges the dominant narratives in world history,[3] historians of the Ottoman Empire have only very recently turned their attention to environment as a focus of historical inquiry. Bringing environment and climate to the historiography of the Ottoman Empire, Faruk Tabak's pioneering work, *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870: A Geohistorical Approach*, narrates the story of the 'Little Ice Age' and its implications in the Mediterranean world. Tabak argues that from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, important alterations in temperature throughout the world in general, and in the greater Mediterranean basin in particular, brought about fundamental changes in the patterns of settlement, grain production and prices.[4]

In addition to using written documentation, Tabak builds his argument on recent studies carried out on climate in Anatolia based on tree-ring studies. Although these studies are based on research carried out in southwestern Anatolia and the northwestern Black Sea region, where there is considerable regional variability, they seem to indicate that at the close of the 'Little Ice Age', important changes in climate occurred.[5] These studies indicate that the nineteenth century was a period of 'rapidly alternating wet and dry episodes and extreme values',[6] while there was also a 'notable increase in the frequency of single dry years'.[7] The findings of a recent tree-ring study in the Zagros Mountains of Iran indicate that severe dry years occurred in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century in the Near East.[8]

Soon after Tabak's inspiring analysis appeared, historians of the Ottoman Empire became increasingly interested in natural and climatic calamities such as drought, shortage of rain, severity of winter, plague, famine and animal diseases. With the exception of Tabak's work, the almost total lack of historical research on Middle Eastern environmental history is reflected in the fact that John McNeill was hardly able to locate any reference on the topic in his 2010 article on the state of the field of environmental history.[9] Around the same time that McNeill's article appeared, however, two works came out. In his book, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Sam White argues that it was the beginning of the 'Little Ice Age', when severe winters led to crop failure, that triggered the flight of thousands of peasants and the Celali Revolts in Anatolia at the end of the sixteenth century.[10] In his *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt*, Alan Mikhail explains the changes in the structure of Egyptian agricultural production through the management of water resources.[11] It was during the second stage of the 'Little Ice Age' when the autonomous government and centralized bureaucracy – rather than the Egyptian peasants – began to exercise absolute power over water use as a vital means of production. It is thanks to Tabak, White and Mikhail that nature, environment and climate have turned into historical subjects in Ottoman history in the last two decades. Central Anatolia, Egypt and Syria are the regions that have been most thoroughly studied from an environmental perspective.[12] Except for Özge Ertem's dissertation on scarcity and famine in the 1870s and 1880s in central and eastern Anatolia, the implications of environmental disasters in Ottoman Kurdistan or the province of Diyarbekir have not been studied.[13] This chapter aims to take a step towards filling the gap in the field with respect to the Ottoman East. By focusing on the long-term impacts of drought, I examine the socio-economic consequences of the environmental disasters that overwhelmed the Ottoman East at the end of the 'Little Ice Age'. It seems possible to argue that the abandonment of villages and the flight of peasants

from the countryside can be interpreted as one of the potential effects of climatic conditions.

This chapter departs from the premise that the environment is itself an historical agent. The impact of uneven precipitation and changing weather patterns that accompanied the end of the 'Little Ice Age' in the region of Diyarbekir was profound. Failed harvests and lack of verdant pasture areas and water not only resulted in rising grain prices and shortages, but also in the death of thousands of sheep, cows, and draft animals. While environmental and other non-human historical factors may be interpreted and mediated through political, cultural and economic relationships and, as such, are to some degree 'socially constructed', historians now recognize that certain environmental conditions in the past, particularly long-term cycles of climate change, must be regarded as an independent variable. Thus, I argue that rather than viewing the abandoned villages of Diyarbekir province in this period as a symptom of government inattention or lack of capacity, one must redirect our attention towards examining, concretely, how changing environmental conditions affected the ability of peasants and tribes to survive within their habitats. Moreover, Ottoman documents demonstrate that local officials did not ignore these crises. In fact, they were very concerned about these conditions.

The Province of Diyarbekir in the Ottoman Administrative System

Before going into an analysis of the changing settlement patterns in Diyarbekir, it is necessary to give some background information on the structure of the province. The city of Diyarbekir or Amid was one of the linchpins of the Ottoman system in the east, providing food, manpower and other supplies, including copper to military campaigns against Iran in earlier centuries. It was also situated at the intersection of major trade routes linking the Black Sea with the Persian Gulf, and Iran and Iraq with Syria and Anatolia. It was the main station between Constantinople and Baghdad where Indian goods flowed. Moreover, the city attracted labourers and immigrants from various regions throughout the Empire. The region was the site of seasonal migrations of the Arab, Turcoman, Nestorian, and Kurdish tribes travelling between their northern pastures and southern plains. Both province and city were thus major crossroads of population and commodity flows.

From its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire in 1514 the administrative boundaries of Diyarbekir changed many times.[14] By the nineteenth century, Diyarbekir reached northward as far as the province of Erzurum; the provinces of Bitlis and Van lay in the northeast; it was bordered by the province of Mosul in the southeast, Aleppo, in the south and Malatya, in the west.[15] Viewed on the modern map of Turkey, the province of Diyarbekir in 1846 would roughly coincide with the present-day provinces of Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt, Bingöl, Batman and parts of Şırnak.

As for climate and physical geography, Diyarbekir embraced different types of habitats. The central and southern portions of the province are flat, with an open plateau while the northeastern reaches of the province are hilly and even mountainous. It is the small springs in the northern mountains that feed the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers that provide irrigation for

the otherwise dry southern plains.[16] The differences in the provinces geography made some regions more vulnerable to changing precipitation patterns. In the mountainous northeast, around Çapakçur/Bingöl, Kulp and Lice, where winters tended to be extremely cold, with temperature often falling below freezing, heavy snowfalls blanketed the region's valleys and mountain slopes. Winter snow fostered the growth of highly nutritious grasses that sustained large herds of sheep, goats, cattle and mules in the summer.[17] By contrast, the middle plateau surrounding the city of Diyarbekir, saw hot summers and cold winters, albeit with less precipitation.[18] Further south, the climate resembles desert conditions: summer was hot with temperatures rising at times above 40 degrees Celsius in July and August.[19]

The population of Diyarbekir witnessed important fluctuations over the Ottoman period. In the 1750s, a decade of unseasonable temperatures, especially very cold winters, triggered a crisis in food supply and agricultural production. Famine was widespread leading to dislocation of thousands of peasants; 1760s drought and other conditions also affected settlement patterns. Censuses of revenue villages given to military officers and officials (*tımar*s) in the areas surrounding Diyarbekir listed as being ‘ruined’, meaning that peasants had abandoned over the this period.[20]

By the nineteenth century, when the first land and population surveys were carried out in 1846, one learns that the province was made up of two *liva*s (sub-province), 33 dependent *kaza*s (districts), and six *nahiye*s (counties). The number of villages totaled 2,467 while there were 26 *mezraa*s (communal fields) listed.[21]

As one sees in Table 10.1, the province's population, according to the survey, was recorded as 48,229 households. The ethnic and religious composition of the province was quite diverse, including Armenians, Jacobites, Syrians, Chaldeans, Greeks, Kurds, Turks, Arabs, Jews, Yezidis and Muslim Gypsies (*Kiptiyan-ı Müslim*). With its 8,354 households, the city of Diyarbekir and its suburbs were the most populous area in the province. Other districts (*kaza*) of highly concentrated settlement were Bohtan and Midyat (3,175 and 2,590 households respectively). There was a great deal of variation through the province. For example, the number of residents in one of the province's smaller villages such as Hüseynik, in the district Lice, was as low as five Muslim households (eight male subjects) and as high as the village of Bali in the district of Midyat, in which 165 Armenian and 153 Jacobite households lived.[22]

Table 10.1 The distribution of population in the Diyarbekir Province

Administrative Units	Number of households	Number of *mezras*	Number of villages	Number of abandoned villages	Abandoned villages in percentages
Nefsi Diyarbekir	8354	4	251	46	18%
Nahiye-i Kiki	714	1	56	14	25%
Nahiye-i Turkman	1031	1	33	16	48%
Nahiye-i Abgor	148	0	7	0	0
Kaza-i Beşiri	2446	0	75	32	43%
Nahiye-i Bahmis	413	0	23	0	0
Kaza-i Hoydan	233	0	23	5	22%
Kaza-i Hani	1128	0	61	23	33%
Kaza-i Lice	2910	12	74	0	0
Kaza-i Siird	705	0	13	0	0
Kaza-i Kobenik	178	0	22	0	0
Kaza-i Karakeçi	82	0	3	0	0
Kaza-i Mahal	238	0	12	0	0
Kaza-i Hazro	1396	0	91	19	21%
Kaza-i Mihrani	340	0	39	14	36%
Kaza-i Rıdvan	1268	0	58	0	0
Kaza-i Garzan	1023	0	58	0	0
Kaza-i Savur	979	0	22	0	0
Kaza-i Kurdilan	275	0	9	0	0
Kaza-i Meneşkon(ur)	229	0	27	9	33%
Kaza-i Genç	351	0	28	4	14%
Kaza-i Zikti	270	0	50	20	40%
Kaza-i Çapakçur	1031	7	62	1	2%
Kaza-i Neckik(?)	129	0	25	10	40%
Kaza-i Şirvan	2385	1	187	0	0%
Kaza-i Midyat	2590	0	284	0	0%
Kaza-i Hani(?)	356	0	37	13	35%
Kaza-i Peçar	536	0	26	6	23%
Kaza-i Kulp	443	0	28	4	14%
Kaza-i Dirik	667	0	22	2	9%
Kaza-i Sinan	279	0	30	11	37%
Kaza-i Silvan	2320	0	138	23	17%
Kaza-i Behramki	959	0	46	3	7%
Kaza-i Badikan	95	0	8	0	0%
Liva-i Cezire Bohtan	2451	0	219	0	0%
Aşair haymenişin tabii Cezire Bohtan	616	TENT	TENT	TENT	TENT
Kaza-i Bohtan	3175	0	168	0	0%
Kaza-i Hacı Behram	505	0	39	0	0%
Kaza-i Mardin	2063	0	26	0	0%
Nahiye-i etrafşehr tabii Kaza-i Mardin	778	0	23	1	4%
Kaza-i Ömergan	1127	0	35	0	0%
Kaza-i Sürgücü	1013	0	29	0	0%
TOTAL	48229	26	2467	276	11%

Source: B.O.A., NFS.d. 3735 (1845–46).

The Environmental Crises of the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Although the eighteenth century saw major crises, the environmental conditions of the nineteenth century were more sustained and severe. Lack of sufficient rainfall and winter snows that led to recurrent droughts was a feature of the end of the 'Little Ice Age'. Drought caused crop failure and dried up pasture lands. Peasants who could not feed themselves or pay taxes, fled their villages. Already early in the century, in 1805, 1810 and 1817 documents indicate that many peasants were forced to abandon their farms due to crop failure.[23]

As one can see from the dispatch of Mehmed Pasha of Diyarbekir cited at the outset of this article, governors were aware of the problems and sought to help the affected population. Over the next decades, these requests from local officials became more frequent and urgent. In different provinces of the Empire, such as Sivas, Syria and Iraq, lack of rainfall resulting in shortages of basic foodstuffs and high prices affected both the city and the countryside. Scarcity of wheat and other grains actually caused bakers to close their ovens. The price of bread rose precipitously while peasants ate their stocks of seed. In her insightful work,

Elizabeth Thompson points out that besides many other social, political and economic problems, the drought in the mid-1840s exacerbated the political crises in urban Syria.[24] Using British documents, Charles Issawi reached similar conclusions: throughout the Middle East grain prices rose in this period due to drought.[25] Mustafa Öztürk's work shows how the prices of grain increased steadily in the 1840s.[26]

Harvests were poor in other Ottoman provinces during this decade. Kayseri, Ankara, and Erzurum were among those regions experiencing severe food shortages.[27] Even in Trabzon, an important port city on the Black Sea coast, in 1840 the local British vice consul reported that the agrarian hinterland suffered from 'deficiency in the early harvests of wheat and barley, caused by a dry spring'. He noted that the supply of other crops, such as corn and hazelnuts, decreased and that there were also serious consequences for domesticated animals because the 'pasturage [was] extremely scanty'.[28] The British consul for Erzurum, James Brant, reported that drought and the resulting 'short crops of the past and preceding years' had caused 'distress among the poorer classes'. The result was that bread was selling at six times higher than its regular prices.[29] Unseasonable warmth was recorded in Trabzon (Trebizond) in these years. But the impact on arable lands depended on other factors, too. In Mosul, which also experienced a lack of rainfall, it was the areas at lower elevation that were most affected, while villages at higher elevations managed to bring some crops to harvest.[30] As we will see in the Diyarbekir province, the majority of abandoned villages were located in lower districts.

A document dated 19 July 1841 designates the beginning of this unfortunate environmental disaster in the Ottoman East. Because of drought and scarcity that occurred in 1840 in various districts of Diyarbekir, the inhabitants needed seed to sow for the next year and draft animals to pull loads.[31] They demanded seed and draft animals, a major means of production in a pre-modern agrarian system, to plough soil for initial cultivation. Another document dated 14 September 1841 shows that the Ottoman state was not indifferent to such demands.[32] A central state order made it clear that after a local investigation in these districts, which were administratively dependent on Diyarbekir and Urfa provinces, a proper amount of seed and draft animals was to be given to those who needed them.[33] The imperial order was clear enough to provide the peasants of Diyarbekir and Urfa provinces with necessary means.

A document dated 15 November 1845 explains that cultivators lacked seeds to sow their fields.[34] According to this document, the scarcity of rain[35] had caused the failure of the majority of the harvest. This had wide-reaching effects on the provinces, particularly on some 200 villages surrounding the city of Diyarbekir. Peasants did not have enough wheat and barley seed to sow the next crop. Ottoman authorities ordered that 1,000 Diyarbekir *kile*s, equal to 117,004 kg,[36] of seed was to be distributed to the peasants. They would be responsible for repaying this loan at the time of harvest. It is unclear whether an allotment of five *kile*s of seed would be sufficient for these villages. We know that these conditions continued for two years. In response to the Porte, which had ordered the purchase of grain for the army on 19 April 1847, the governor-general (*müşir)* and chief-accountant (*defterdar*) of Diyarbekir explained the problem of getting supplies for the imperial army.[37] Wheat and barley continued to be in short supply and the population was suffering. In spite of the scarcity of crops, the governors

collected 7,500 local *kile*s of wheat and barley and a great amount of butter from various districts of Diyarbekir in order to feed the army. These districts were listed as follows: Behramki, Lice, Hazro, Hani, Kiki, Turkman, Şark, Garb, Savur, Metinan, Beşiri, Redvan and Derik.[38] Except for Redvan, Savur and Lice, there were dozens of abandoned villages in these districts.

Mapping Village Settlement in Diyarbekir

It does not seem possible to state for certain whether these climate conditions were behind government attempts to assess changing settlement patterns in the province. Nonetheless, an interesting set of documents attempts to survey the population of this region. These documents help us locate important information about the cities and villages: how many inhabitants lived there, what religious communities they belonged to, their ability to pay taxes based on their incomes from agriculture, and the number of abandoned villages. In some cases, these documents also mention whether the villages contained temporary settlers, as indicated by tribal status. These *Nüfus Defterleri* (census registers) (dated 1261–62/1845–46) are particularly interesting given the fact that Kurdish areas, along with Albania, Bosnia, Arabia, and Egypt, were still under Ottoman rule but were not included in the first demographic survey conducted in 1831.[39]

Another significant set of documents is known as *Temettuât Defterleri* (income tax registers), which collated detailed information not only about social, cultural, economic and demographic structures, but also and more strikingly about the environmental conditions and resources of the Empire.[40] Although these registers existed for nearby provinces such as Erzurum and Harput, there are none to be found for the *vilâyet* of Diyarbekir. The belated incorporation of Diyarbekir province into the *Tanzimat* administrative system was due to the ongoing military conflict with Bedir Khan. This explains both why there is no *Temettuât* for the region and why the state undertook a demographic survey in 1846.[41]

In the Ottoman Archives, a total of six extant *Nüfus Defteri* for Diyarbekir province can be found.[42] Of these, two are detailed records of the districts, which were carried out in 1846.[43] The third *defter* has the population accounts of 15 districts[44] and all the *nahiye*s, villages and *mezra*s found in them.[45] The inhabitants of *kaza-ı Midyat* and *kaza-ı Şirvan* and their *nahiye*s and villages have been recorded in the fourth one. In these registers, the name of each administrative unit, the number and religious affiliation of households and their tax-paying status are recorded. The villages and hamlets are identified according to the religious affiliation of their inhabitants. The names of abandoned villages – if known – and the places where the peasants fled to were also recorded in these registers. This information will help us to map region-based changes in the population settlement from the late eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century. The last two *defter*s are *ijmal* (compilations) that include the complete number of administrative units and their inhabitants. While the first *ijmal* is incomplete, the second one comprises population statistics for the entire province of Diyarbekir and a number of other provinces in the Ottoman East.[46] Using these *defter*s, which

provide us with the composition of settlers at the village level, along with the *ijmal* registers, I will attempt to give an overview of the population distribution which seems to have been impacted most by climatic changes.

The city of Diyarbekir, administrative and commercial capital of Ottoman Kurdistan, and its surrounding area was the most populous part of the province in 1846. Bohtan, Midyat and Cezire Bohtan were the major rural districts, where the population was highly concentrated. The district of Lice in the north and Şirvan in the east were the other major populated areas. All densely populated areas are situated either on the Tigris river, such as Bohtan and Cezire Bohtan, or in mountainous areas like Lice and Şirvan, where rich water resources can be found.

As previously stated, some villages were densely populated, while some had only a few households. By their high number of households, the villages in the area surrounding Lice were the most populated. More than 30 per cent of villages in the district of Lice were inhabited by 50 households, while 12 per cent had more than 80 households. Compared with Lice, the number of residents in Çapakçur's villages ranged between 30 and 40 households. As only Christian, Jewish and Yezidi inhabitants were registered in the population registers, it is not possible to estimate the real population density of villages in the district of Midyat. However, by looking at compilation records it can be said that the average was about ten households in Midyat. But villages like Bali, Harabe Han, Casba(?),[47] Kefirzi, Aynvert, Bakban, Kerburan, and Enil were larger than many sub-districts in the province.

The villages inhabited by ‘tribal’ populations or pastoral nomads were recorded under different categories, including *aşa'ir* (tribe) and *göçebe* (nomad).[48] Although the Ottoman state used different terminologies to identify them, one can observe that they differed from peasants due to their mode of subsistence. Perhaps they were partially pastoralists. It is interesting to note that 60 per cent of villages inhabited by tribes were situated to the north of the provincial capital. Thus 13 villages in the area surrounding Diyarbekir, ten villages of Mihrani, 20 villages of Hazro and 45 villages of Silvan (Miafarikîn) were inhabited by tribes.[49] In comparison, the number of villages inhabited by nomads was only 15. Twelve of them were in the district of Genç, while Beşiri, Mihrani and Hazro each had one. Except for Mihrani, all districts with villages inhabited by nomads were situated in the northern rather than the southern part of the country.

The *cemaat* (community) was another socio-economic category, besides *aşa'ir* and *göçebe*. Eight *cemaat*s were registered and identified by the name of their leaders: *Cemaat-i Keşiş Garo*, *Cemaat-i Keşiş Bedros*, *Cemaat-i Keşiş Stephan*, *Cemaat-i Keşiş Ohannes*, *Cemaat-i Keşiş Moso*, *Cemaat-i Keşiş İgo*, *Cemaat-i Keşiş Mıgırdiç* and *Cemaat-i Keşiş Haco*. All these Armenian *cemaat*s were located in the district of Hani.[50] Two possible speculations can be made about the socio-economic and cultural identity of these groups: they could be religious groups that gathered around a monastery, or more likely they were Armenian pastoralists under the *beys* of Hani.

A conspicuous fact revealed by systematic analysis of these population registers is that 276

out of 2,467 villages, i.e. about 11 per cent of them, were already *harabe* (totally ruined) or *hâli* (abandoned).[51] The city of Diyarbekir was the only urban area that had lost about one out of every five villages in the province. The district of Beşiri had the highest percentage of abandoned villages in the rural area: almost one in every two villages (32 out of 75) was abandoned. Zekti, Neckik, Sinan, Mihrani and Hani were the other districts where the rate of abandonment was higher than the regional average.

For the purpose of this study, rather than listing the names and numbers of deserted villages, it is analytically more promising to categorize the districts and their deserted villages based on their geographical location and features. The province of Diyarbekir can be divided into four environmental zones: the lower plateau of Diyarbekir in the middle, mountainous north, undulating east, and the plain of northern Mesopotamia in the south. The city of Diyarbekir, its dependencies, and the district of Behramki, Mihrani[52] and Sinan, situated in the middle of the province, comprise the first zone. Although this zone had less than 19 per cent of the total number of villages in the province, 40 per cent of all abandoned villages were found in the same place. Alongside the district of Mihrani and the sub-district of Kiki, all districts in this zone were located on the Tigris or in its vicinity. On account of climatic conditions and topographical properties, this zone was affected more by drought than the rest of the province.

As one moves up from the plain of Diyarbekir to the mountainous north, one can see that the picture of totally ruined villages shows a considerable change. With its rate of 19 per cent, the proportion of deserted villages in these districts was a bit higher than the average of the region and half that of the first zone. In other words, 65 out of 340 villages in the district of Çapakçur,[53] Genç,[54] Kulp, Lice, Hani, Hane/Dicle and Zekti[55] were abandoned. The former four districts had only nine ruined villages while they comprised more than 50 per cent of villages in this zone. Besides elevation, these districts have rich water resources that would be pivotal in the period of drought (Figure 10.1).

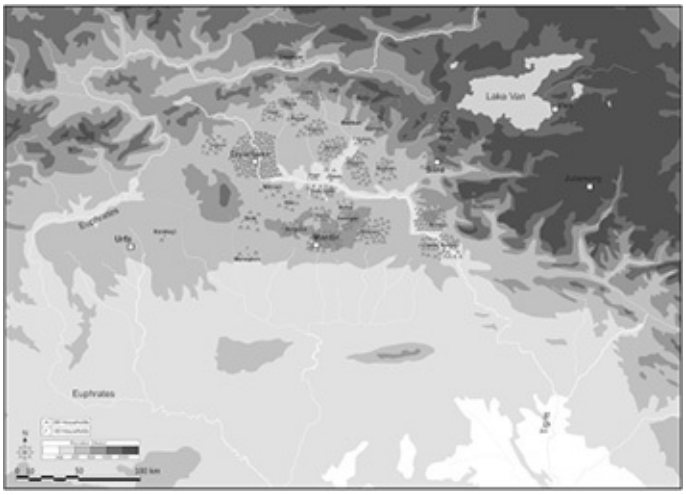

Figure 10.1 The distribution of households in the deserted villages in the Diyarbekir Province

Source: By using Geographic Information System, I added details to the original map taken from İbrahim Yilmazçelik, XIX. Yöyzillin İlk Yarisinda Diyarbakir, 1790 – 1840 (Ankara: Törk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), Appendix 4.

There were 677 villages in the third zone of the province. On account of topographical

differences, it seems useful to analyse the eastern zone in two parts. The plain of Silvan (Miafarikîn) and the districts of Hazro,[56] Badikan and Peçar constituted the western side of this zone. Except for Badikan on the north end of this zone, the other three districts, namely Silvan, Hazro and Peçar, had abandoned villages. 48 out of 263 villages were ruined. Compared to the western part of this zone, the eastern part, including Garzan, Redvan, Beşiri, Şirvan and Siirt, with many springs and few rivers, shows a more diverse picture. Although it was one of the populous areas in the province, the rate of abandonment in this part was very low: only 32 out of 414 villages were uninhabited. Beşiri was the only district that contained abandoned villages in the eastern region of Diyarbekir. Although we do not have a certain answer for why all the ruined villages were situated in Beşiri, two potential explanations can be highlighted. First, it can be argued that some partially settled tribes inhabited these villages and during the survey they were not in their place. Second, peasants had possibly fled due to Kurdish tribes who caused tensions during their seasonal migration to northern pastures.

When one looks at the southern and southeastern parts of region, one sees a completely different picture. From Derik in the west to the Kurdilan in the east, 12 villages out of 850 were abandoned. None of the villages was abandoned in the districts of Sürgücü, Savur, Mahal, Ömergan, Midyat, Bohtan, Cezire Bohtan and Kurdilan in 1846. Mardin, Derik and Meneşkon, two little districts to the west of Mardin, were the only places that had one, two and nine ruined villages, respectively.

In comparison with earlier centuries, the rate of abandonment seems to have changed. This difference is particularly striking in the districts located to the south of the Tigris. According to Ariel Salzmann's findings, only six *tımars* out of 21 were functioning in the district of Savur in 1783–84.[57] However, by 1846 none of the 22 villages in the district of Savur were abandoned. Located to the south of Savur, a large number of villages in Mardin were in miserable conditions in the late eighteenth century as well. Nonetheless, out of 23 villages, only one was abandoned in the period under consideration. As it can be seen, a remarkable shift took place in the settlement patterns from the late eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century. This shift is best reflected by a comparison of the number of abandoned villages in 1846 with that of ruined *timar*s in 1783–84. The villages that were abandoned in the 1780s were repopulated in the first half of the nineteenth century. Put differently, those who fled their homelands returned or were made to return once conditions got better. For instance, the names of four villages found in the district of Midyat have the word *harabe* (totally ruined) in their names: Harabe Reşkan, Harabe Han, Harabe Bina and Harabe. With its 114 Armenian and Jacobite households, Harabe Han was one of the largest villages in the district of Midyat. This renaming seems to suggest that these villages had been abandoned and then repopulated upon the improvement of conditions.

Although we have already mentioned the effect of drought, it is also possible to speculate that one of the reasons underlying the small number of deserted villages in the southern districts was the resettlement policy put into effect in the province. Various archival documents point to the fact that the *Tanzimat* state tried to resettle Arab and Kurdish tribes in the south and east by founding new villages. The Turcoman plain of Antioch,[58] the area surrounding Urfa and

Mardin[59] and Mosul[60] are some districts where British consuls mention admiringly the *Tanzimat* state's successful efforts to settle unruly pastoral nomadic tribes in this part of the Empire. The reason for such a policy was to lead them towards agricultural production.

Other Factors Contributing to Changing Settlement Patterns in Diyarbekir

With the exception of one specific reference, there does not seem any available data about why these villages had been abandoned. A short but very informative note that describes the situation of Harberu village, located in the district of Meneşkon, provides information concerning its abandonment. According to the official's note on the census registers, the inhabitants of Harberu had been suffering for six years before they left.[61] Thus it would seem that at least some of the villages in Diyarbekir were experiencing part of a Middle Eastern-wide pattern of drought that affected Syria and Asia Minor. One might expect the southern regions to have been more dramatically impacted; instead, it is the regions in the middle plateau and the city of Diyarbekir that were affected to a greater extent.

Drought, however, was not the only reason for village abandonment in Diyarbekir during this period. The British consul for Erzurum, James Brant, reported that scarcity was compounded by local government policies:

During the scarcity last winter, stocks, supposed to be superfluous after a reserve for seed was made, were taken by the Pasha for the use of the people, but paid for at their full value; it has since proved that enough for sowing was not left in the hands of cultivators.[62]

In Diyarbekir itself, the state ordered grain requisition despite the bottleneck. Dated 1 May 1847, the dispatch was written as a response to the order of the Porte to purchase grain and barley for the imperial army.[63] In this dispatch, it was emphasized that on account of the continuing scarcity of food for the last two years, it had been difficult to purchase grain and barley for the army. Moreover, these obligations were a burden to the local population. Although these crucial evaluations and statements were made against the imperial order, the governors collected a large amount of grain and barley from the inhabitants in the province.[64]

Taxation might explain the high rate of abandonment around Diyarbekir, as well, because of the proximity of the city and its ability to absorb migrants. For example, in the *nüfus* register for ‘foreign’ (*gureba*) residents, we find many residents from the districts of Silvan, Beşiri, Garzan, Redvan, Sason, Hazro, Hani, Çapakçur, Savur, Sürgücü, Mardin and Bohtan.[65] Most ‘foreigners’ were registered as *rençper* (farm labour) or *ırgad* (day labourer) in the city and some of them came to the town with their families, while a great number of them came to Diyarbekir on their own.[66] When one looks at the geographical distribution of deserted villages throughout the province, one can see that the proportion of foreigners changes from region to region. First of all, one can observe that the villages geographically closer to the urban centre were more often abandoned than those located further away from the city. Perhaps

the traditional Ottoman policy of feeding cities by providing grain during food shortages played a role in the peasants' exodus to the urban centre.[67] Furthermore, the existence of soup kitchens and philanthropic organizations (religious endowments) was another factor that motivated hopeless people to migrate to the city. Thus big cities like Diyarbekir, an administrative and commercial capital, were supplied with food when there was a perceived need.

But cities were not always the first places where villagers took shelter. Occasionally a neighbouring village could be a new home for these hopeless villagers. Indeed, according to the population records of Diyarbekir, the inhabitants of some deserted villages migrated to other villages, where they probably had better access to water resources. For instance, the residents of Baheşm, Bayok, and Toyan of Hazro migrated to Şikeftan village in the same district. Sometimes they moved to villages in a neighbouring district. Peasants of Mirahoran (?) and Hapik in the Hazro district went to Hüseynik of Lice.[68] However, the distance was not always short. The inhabitants of Göl in the district of Meneşkon migrated to Arzuşin in the district of Genç. The distance between these two districts was approximately 250 kilometres. Sometimes cultivators left everything behind and did something quite radical: they went to a new place, as was the case with the Armenians and Muslims in the town of Muş. After the crops of wheat and barley were all destroyed by locusts in the spring of 1840, ‘the scarcity was so pressing that the greater part of Armenians have emigrated and entire villages have been left without inhabitants’.[69] In the district of Muş, the population of Armenians was reduced by four-fifths, and the population of Kurds by half, because of drought, scarcity or famine at that time.[70]

In other cases, villagers were forcibly returned or other populations were settled in their place by local governors. One of the ways in which state involvement can be seen in this process was through returning the peasants who left their villages. A document from 29 May 1845 demonstrates that the inhabitants who had abandoned their homes (*terk-i evtan*) due to a shortage of rain later were returned to their villages (*me'va-ı kadim*). In Lice, a northern district in the *sancak* of Diyarbekir, 266 families were returned to their previous lands by an imperial order.[71] Neither the fleeing of peasants nor the state's effort to return them was a phenomenon particular to Diyarbekir. In 1846, the British vice consul in Mosul mentioned in praise of İsmail Pasha that he had ‘already succeeded in inducing many of the refugees to reoccupy their villages, and also some Arab tribes to settle upon the waste lands […]’.[72] The government realized that other tactics had to be used besides sheer force. Moreover, a new problem undercut the state's ability to respond to famine: foreign consuls sought to profit from drought and famine. Among the state's first precautions was the prohibition of the export of grain from the region. Writing from Mosul in January 1846, Christian Rassam, British Vice Consul of Mosul, complained that İsmail Pasha, who was ‘apprehensive that the increasing demand from those places might exhaust the stocks necessary for the local consumption’, had prohibited the export of grain, which had already begun to be shipped to ‘Diyarbekir, Aleppo and the towns on the Euphrates’.[73]

Nevertheless, foreign consuls were able to evade the prohibition. The same British

merchant and vice consul, Christian Rassam, wrote that he and his ‘commercial firm’ had organized ‘a caravan of about 800 camels with wheat’ from Mosul for Aleppo. His agent was instructed to sell the wheat where the price was highest. However, the shipment never made it past Urfa, where the agent sold the wheat to the Ottoman authorities. Although he had already some profit, the governor himself resold the wheat at a higher price to the local bakers.[74] On the account of the British consuls, a new factor emerged in the regional economy, whereby foreign companies began to speculate on the dearth of foodstuffs between regions of Ottoman Kurdistan and Syria. As Mike Davis has demonstrated for the south Asia of the 1870s, by abolishing traditional market regulations and grain stocks, the colonial government of India caused millions of deaths in south Asia during the ‘El Nino’ crisis.[75] By taking the world grain market under its control and regulating world grain prices through the free market economy, the British Empire believed that the market would find its way. However, market regulations caused the death of millions in south Asia and other parts of the world.

Conclusion

In the Ottoman East, as exemplified by Diyarbekir, changing environmental conditions took their toll on the inhabitants. Although the studies do not address this region specifically, analyses of oak tree rings suggest that drought was widespread in Anatolia and Syria during the first half of the nineteenth century. In particular the changes in climate – a complex, interactive system – had a ramified effect on fauna, flora and human settlement patterns. I argue that the environmental crisis in Diyarbekir should be considered part of the climatic variability that accompanied the end of the ‘Little Ice Age’. Expanding on Tabak's argument, I argue that the problem was compounded as rising prices for grain led to speculation and imperial agents tried to take advantage of scarcity.

This combination of forces yielded important changes in the map of human settlement. Governors did not stand idly by. As noted in the case of Erzurum, not only did they feed the hungry but they also set aside seed for the following year's planting. Sometimes, they wrote in defence of the region's inhabitants who were unable to pay their taxes; at other times they requested action from Istanbul itself to help with the crises they witnessed. Across a region stretching from Mosul to Diyarbekir and Aleppo, all of which experienced crop failures and collapsing populations of herd and draft animals, representatives of the *Tanzimat* state attempted to protect the tax-paying population and staunch the worst effects of the crisis. Such policies in the region included abolishing grain monopolies and putting restrictions on the export of grain from the region.

Nonetheless, although officials tried to help local populations struggling to survive, the government also undercut its own policies. Despite interdiction, grain continued to be exported from regions that experienced shortages and the army requisitioned food and animals. Taxes increased the suffering of the peasantry and herders who were already struggling with extreme loss of crops and grazing animals. In response to both financial pressure and reduced crop yields, many inhabitants of the countryside were forced into flight. They arrived in cities where urban officials then had to cope with displaced people who suffered from both food insecurity

and epidemic diseases. Thus, although environmental factors should rightly be considered an independent variable in triggering demographic change in the southeastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century, government too played a role. Famine may be caused by environmental disasters, but it is exacerbated and perpetuated by man-made policies.

Notes

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23. İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır, 1790–1840: Fizikî, İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), 111.
24. Thompson, 'Ottoman Political Reform in the Provinces'.
25. Charles Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent, 1800–1914: A Documentary Economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 458.
26. Mustafa Öztürk, 'Güney-Doğu Anadolu'da Fiyatlar', in *V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Kongresi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989), 99–121.
27. For droughts in the nineteenth century in central Anatolia, see Mehmet Yavuz Erler, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kuraklık ve Kıtlık Olayları (1800–1880)* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 137–222.

28. T.N.A., FO. 195/175 (31 December 1840), Trabzon, Henry Suter to James Brant.
29. T.N.A., FO. 195/175 (21 January 1841), no. 23, Erzurum, Brant to John Ponsonby.
30. T.N.A., FO. 195/301 (14 June 1847), no. 27, Mosul, Christian Rassam to The Earl Cowley. 'The state of this Pashalik is instantly becoming worse. The crops both of wheat and barley have generally failed. In one or two of the mountain districts alone has the harvest repaid the cultivation'.
31. B.O.A., ML.EVM. 512/16 (19 July 1841), 43.
32. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 27/449 (14 September 1841).
33. Ibid.
34. B.O.A., C.İKT. 637/13 (15 November 1845).
35. *Kıllet-i nüzul-ı baran.*
36. One local *kile* is equal to 150 *okka*, which equals 1,282 kg. See Öztürk, 'Güney-Doğu Anadolu'da Fiyatlar', 103.
37. B.O.A., İ.DH. 144/7413 (19 April 1847); B.O.A., A.MKT. 69/30 (1 May 1847).
38. B.O.A., İ.DH. 144/7413 (19 April 1847).
39. Fazila Akbal, '1831 Tarihinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İdari Taksimat ve Nüfus', *Belleten* 15, no. 60 (1951): 617–28.
40. Mübahat Kütükoğlu, 'Osmanlı Sosyal ve İktisadi Tarihi Kaynaklarından Temettü Defterleri', *Belleten* 59, no. 225 (1995): 395–413. Unlike the previous population surveys, *Temettuât*s were itemized accounts of a county, town, village, and household. Recorded between 1840 and 1845, the *Temettuât Defterleri* contain invaluable data about the number of individuals, land, varieties of agricultural products, means of production, orchards, vineyards and livestock within the empire.
41. B.O.A., MVL. 6/4 (13 March 1846).
42. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3731 (1845); 3730 (1846–47); 3732 (1845–46); 3733 (1848); 3734 (1845–46); 3745 (1845–46). The figure of *gureba* (foreigners) and their residence in the city are recorded in a separate *defter* NFS.d. 3730 (1846–47). If known, their age and place of origin were also registered. Regardless of their religious identity and social status, all foreigners were recorded in the same *defter*. Thus the numbers of high-ranking officials and their servants, traders, students, laborers and the poor seeking their fortune are all found in this *defter*.
43. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46); NFS.d. 3733 (1848).
44. Lice, Hani, Çapakçur, Neclik, Mahal, Mihrani, Hazro, Sert, Kobenik, Kurdilan, Abgor, Karakeçi, Meneşkon, Genç, Zekti.
45. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46).
46. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3735 (1845–46).
47. I use '?' with place names that were uncertain or illegible.
48. Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Aşiretleri İskan Teşebbüsü, 1691–1696*

(Istanbul: İ.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1963).

49. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3735 (1845–46), p. 1–9, 41, 37, 101.
50. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46), p. 25.
51. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3735 (1845–46).
52. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46), p. 19; Masil, Raşya, Mehindisaho(?), Hirmu(?), Haciraş, Bercuk(?), Azmine, Adzin, Çorluk, Yağtaz/Bağtaz, Canaruk, Celan, Dercil and X(?) were the 14 abandoned villages of Mihrani.
53. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46), p. 13,15. Simani was the only ruined village in Çapakçur. According to our registers the residents of Simani village migrated to Kavaşan, where they dealing with agriculture (*ziraat ederler*).
54. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46), p. 27. The names of the abandoned villages in the district of Genç were Göl, Sinberhan?, Ederik?, Şurk-u Dodeş?
55. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46), p. 27. The following villages in the district of Zekti were abandoned; Beni ziyare, Şahkulu, Sultandu, Neckinik, Kelişin, Gezigöz, Kemihasan, Borağan, Usmanan, Kalin, Mahvan, Şeyh Sinan, Salan, Karok, Kiki, Keşkivar, Merze, Germirik, Layvez and Ali Çayan.
56. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–46), pp. 19–20. Amryan, Bayok, Baheşm, Toyan, Tuyat, Boş Koy, Musp(y)at?, Hanot Hafir?, Mirahoran, Hapik, Mikon, Anybayat, Kasurat, Kurdavakal?, Karadiye, Kebik, Kahmaciyan, Cusr and [illegible] were abandoned villages in the district of Hazro.
57. Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State*, 134.
58. T.N.A., FO. 195/207 (14 June 1845), no. 17, Aleppo, Werry to Canning.
59. T.N.A., FO. 195/207 (7 June 1845), no. 16, Aleppo, Werry to Canning.
60. T.N.A., FO. 195/228 (10 August 1846), no. 32, Mosul, Rassam to Canning.
61. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845), p. 25. 'Altı seneden beri ahalisi perişan olarak hali araziden olduğu'.
62. T.N.A., FO. 195/175 (21 January 1841), no. 23, Erzurum, Brant to Ponsonby.
63. B.O.A., A.MKT. 69/30 (1 May 1847).
64. B.O.A., İ.DH. 144/7413 (19 April 1847).
65. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3730 (1846–7).
66. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3730 (1846–7); NFS.d. 3731(1845).
67. Melanie Schulze Tanielian, 'Feeding the City: The Beirut Municipality and the Politics of Food during World War I', *IJMES* 46, no. 4 (2014): 737–58.
68. B.O.A., NFS.d. 3732 (1845–6), p. 5. 'Şark'tan gelip Hüseynik nam kariyede ziraat eder'.
69. T.N.A., FO. 195/175 (21 January 1841), no. 23, Erzurum, Brant to Ponsonby. About 2,000 Armenian families immigrated to Russian territory at that time.
70. Ibid.

71. B.O.A., İ.DH. 103/5197 (24 May 1845); Erler, *Osmanlı Devletin'de Kuraklık ve Kıtlık Olayları (1800–1880)*, 141.
72. T.N.A., FO. 195/228 (24 January 1846), no. 3, Mosul, Rassam to Canning.
73. Ibid.
74. T.N.A., FO. 195/228 (19 October 1846), no. 42, Mosul, Rassam to Wellesley.
75. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nin~o Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2002).

CHAPTER 11

SUBURBANIZATION AND URBAN DUALITY IN THE HARPUT AREA

Ali Sipahi

The historiographically popular characteristics of the Ottoman East's social space include tribalism, nomadic life, state formation, zones of warfare, place-based resistance organizations, islands of cultural colonialism, and archeological remnants, but rarely, if ever, anything urban. The region has been conspicuously excluded from accounts of urban history, which have almost without exception hewed to the history of capitalist expansion in the nineteenth century.[1] The lack of a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie and commercial capital in these inner cities has made historians dismiss the different forms of urban transformations that occurred outside the nodes of capitalism. Thus, it is commonly assumed that the best theoretical tools to analyse the Ottoman East are power relations, sectarianism, internal colonization, orientalism, and resistance, but never consumption, urban beauty, bourgeois utopias, or tastes. Even today, anything beautiful in the towns of Eastern Turkey is thought to be a remnant of deep history, deeper than the nineteenth century. However, the historical records from the mid-nineteenth century reveal an unexpected image of urban life that encompasses the physical and social features of garden-cities, a phenomenon that contradicts the conventional view of the region. With this preliminary study, I endeavour to examine provincial urban life in the Ottoman world – a question awaiting analysis for the contemporary age, too –[2] and to analyse urban duality as a form of cultural segregation of space.

The nineteenth century witnessed the blossoming of a trade bourgeoisie all over the empire including the hinterland. But in some exceptional cases – most notably in the port cities – the rising bourgeoisie transformed the city space strikingly. In eighteenth-century Istanbul, the suburban kiosks and the royal gardens on both sides of the Bosphorus lost their sixteenth-century elite character and turned into public places for the new metropolitan middle classes.[3] In the second half of the nineteenth century, the collaboration of the bourgeoisie with the state – aided by the great fires – initiated extensive urban transformation in the centre of the capital.[4] In the same decades, all port cities of the empire lived through similar processes of building boom, urban regeneration and gentrification in their urban cores.[5] The inner cities, however, as less fortunate subjects of urban history, did not possess the coercive power of state institutions to back up bourgeois desires. Arguably the most interesting aspect of provincial life has been the pairing of relatively easy and fast circulation of cultural ideas with the lack of

infrastructural capacity to realize them in the same way as in the nodal cities of the trade networks. The result, I propose, is that these cities go through a typical suburbanization process, as opposed to the process of urban regeneration seen in the capital-intensive cities.[6] Moreover, I will argue that suburbanization in the small towns in the Harput area created dual towns rather than the conventional centre–suburb constellation. I will call this phenomenon urban duality and use the concept to analyse the mutuality between two separate but related entities.[7]

A counter example will best illustrate the peculiarity of urban duality: the ‘Gardens’ district of the city of Van. The extraordinary beauty of the Gardens district, as described by its nineteenth-century visitors, had exactly the same features as the garden-towns in the Harput area.[8] Nevertheless, the *relationship* between the two parts of Van was one of dense interaction rather than one of duality in proximity. Lynch observed that Gardens' relation to the city of Van was reminiscent of the West End's to London's centre, rather than that of a real suburb (perhaps like Clapham), because the former had a dense daily interaction, as a gentrified highbrow shopping neighbourhood, whereas the latter was a spatially separate entity.[9] Missionary Raynolds confirmed this when he wrote in 1871 that ‘it is here [in Gardens] that much of the people reside, the men going to the city for their business’.[10] Two decades later, in 1890, another missionary, O. P. Allen, wrote on the Gardens: ‘Most of the business is now done in the city the people going in the morning & returning at evening’.[11] In the examples below, however, spatial separation will not comprise a dense, daily come-and-go between two parts, nor will any part be the ‘centre’ vis-à-vis the other. Thus, this chapter is also a call for new research on the different *types* of spatial distinction based on suburbanization, of which one type, I will suggest, is urban duality.

The Harput province was situated at the border of the effective reach of the Ottoman state in the eastern provinces, at the border of Ottoman Kurdistan. The capital of the province, the city of Harput, lay at the summit of a hill, like many ancient cities, commanding from above a vast plain of villages and small towns. Today, Harput has become a small district of a new middle-sized city – Elazığ – that emerged in the nineteenth century, almost from scratch, on the plain just below Harput. Existing accounts of this place-change tell us a unidirectional story whereby the hill city gradually moved down, as did many medieval fortress cities in Europe, to pursue its life as a modern city. However, historical documents suggest that the move of the city neither happened continuously as an outcome of inescapable destiny, nor did the inhabitants experience the move as a transition to something predetermined. Mezre, as today's Elazığ was called in the nineteenth century, appeared as a residential unit in the 1830s, but the bulk of Harput's population did not move to this new place until the first decades of the next century. This chapter refuses to call transitory a period as long as a century, and seeks instead to understand the dual life of Harput/Mezre before Mezre-turned-Elazığ swallowed the dual city. Moreover, it will be shown that the phenomenon of duality was not specific to Harput/Mezre, but appears as a common spatio-cultural instantiation of suburbanization in some other towns of the Harput province, too. Accordingly, three cases will be demonstrated in detail: Arapkir, Malatya, and Harput/Mezre.

Arapkir: Bourgeois Suburbanization

Arapkir is an old town, perhaps around three millennia old. In the late nineteenth century, it was one of the wealthiest towns in the vicinity of Harput; its empire-wide renowned textile industry, on the one hand, and its remittance economy based on its high number of labour migrants, on the other, had turned the city into a local centre of financial capital.[12] However, this economic development which seems to belong to one single place conceals the fact that this wealthy Arapkir was a completely new town that only emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century as New Arapkir. Its old town was a fortress city in a valley, whereas the new location was on the plains 5–6km east of the valley. The Provincial Yearbooks (*Salname*) tell us that the move from the old to the new town happened around 1765 and from then on the old city was abandoned to ruin. Nevertheless, the move did not occur overnight, nor was it completed in a few decades. In the 1830s – 60 years after the alleged move, that is – half of its population was still living in the old town. Even in 1892, the Yearbooks were still talking about the decreasing population in the old place. In other words, the information which is normally interpreted as showing the decline of the old town is, in fact, conspicuously telling us that in 127 years no complete move was accomplished. Even today, the most populous three neighbourhoods of the old town contain 9 per cent of the entire population.[13] If the shift was inevitable, why did it work so sporadically? The available data can be interpreted as showing a gradual progress only if three dots in the graphic of the last 250 years are connected with one diagonal line. I rather contend that the mass movement to the new town occurred only in exceptional periods, whereas for decades the two places lived side-by-side as dual towns.

According to Nancy Munn, the physical features and aesthetic qualities of a place constitute an important pillar of ‘a place's mode of existence’ and its change in time, along with its identity and its location.[14] Karakaş and Aksın's study based on census records of Arapkir shows the contrast between the few but large neighbourhoods of the old town and the many but small and scattered neighbourhoods of the new place in the 1830s, when the population was equally shared between the two towns.[15] The density of the old town's built environment fits the classic characteristics of all old towns in Anatolia, whereas the new town's satellite form evokes Los Angeles' (sub)urban form in the modern era. More details about the physical features of the new town come from two natives of Arapkir, both of whom wrote books about their hometown in the beginning of the twentieth century. S. A. Bakhtikian's work *Arapkir and Its Surrounding Villages: A Concise Historical-Ethnographic Treatise* (1934) refers to the spatial organization in the new town: he writes that the Armenians had many schools simply because their neighbourhoods were far from each other.[16] The author frames the initial move as an outcome of the malicious behaviours of incoming Turks against Armenians so that the latter, the original inhabitants, had to resort to the area of their gardens and vineyards, where New Arapkir lies today. The new place was composed of two parts divided by a river. The dwellings were built first at the river shore and then gradually extended towards the upper parts of both hillsides, ending up resembling the steps of an amphitheatre. Turks, on the other hand, came to the new place later and built their homes at the periphery, since the centre had already been occupied by the Armenians.[17]

Another first-hand testimony from the turn of the century, Meliq Davit-Bek's *Arapkir's Dialectic*, published in Vienna in 1919, confirms these features: the author wrote in around the year 1900 that the city (new Arapkir) had 30–35,000 inhabitants, but it 'looked like' a city of 100,000 people, because all the houses were built in gardens. He further emphasized that there were very few houses that did not have a garden in their front or backyard, or at their sides. These gardens could be quite spacious. Moreover, the new town had many steep streets because it was placed in a valley, but, more notably, it had quite a few wide and straight streets, too.[18] These features conspicuously contradict the almost universal physical features of the old towns: narrow, snaking streets, stacked houses without any space in between, dense neighbourhoods, and thus, contracted urban space. Old towns always look smaller than they are, not bigger. The new place, however, was composed of gardens and vineyards, and its neighbourhoods were smaller in size, greater in number, and further from each other than those of the old town.

Apart from the physical features, the authors gave information about the 'identity' of the place, too. Who came first to Anatolia a millennium ago was a political question, but the statements about Armenians having moved first to the new city at the turn of the nineteenth century and having occupied the central parts of the city cannot be dismissed as arbitrary instantiations of myth-making. Contrary examples could also be subsumed by the same myth, quite easily. That it was Armenians who developed the gardens into a new city resonates with the lessons of economic history: Armenians were the rising element in the trade bourgeoisie at that time. Bakhtikian's account of the Armenian massacres in 1894–96 gives us further information to capture the new town's identity: in 1896, the city fell to ruin; the big mansions of the rich did not exist anymore; the brides and the daughters at home did not fill gunnysacks with gold coins anymore; all wealth was lost either to fires or to the Turks.[19] When the indices of social life are stripped of value judgments, we reach the conclusion that the identity of the new place, as it is 'integral to its inhabitants' own identities' according to Munn, consisted of relatively new social signs: monetary wealth (as opposed to land ownership) and the urban built environment as an index of richness (the mansions). The combination of these two social signs surprised Srvandztiants in the early 1880s when he was hosted in the ostentatious mansion of Simon Agha, who, Srvandztiants criticized, had spent his entire fortune on this house, to no avail.[20] Based on the material features and identity characteristics taken from contemporary sources, I conclude that the new Arapkir emerged as part of the suburbanization process, a cultural way of commanding the space by the rising bourgeoisie in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Ottoman East.

Malatya: The State Comes into Play

At the turn of the century, Malatya was the biggest town in the vicinity of Harput – so much so that in 1909–10 its townsmen struggled hard to dethrone Mezre as the provincial capital or, failing that, to have Malatya set apart as a full-fledged province unto itself.[21] The rebellion seems to have worked in the long run, as Malatya became an independent province in the Republican period (1924) and developed fast enough from the 1940s onward to disseminate

envy (which persists to this day) among the inhabitants of Mezre. This rival of Harput/Mezre, however, did not exist as an urban residence before the 1840s. According to the conventional accounts, the imperial army under the command of Hafız Pasha had moved from Mezre to the Malatya plain in the summer of 1838 and invaded the city proper in the beginning of the winter, forcing the inhabitants to stay in their summer dwellings in Aspuzu. After the Nisib defeat in the summer of 1839, the army left the city, but in a ruinous condition. The inhabitants never moved back; Aspuzu became their new residence and Malatya was left a ruin. Today, what we call Malatya is located in Aspuzu, and the Old Malatya assumed a new name, Battalgazi, in the Republican period and was eventually made a small district of greater Malatya.[22]

Not unlike the Arapkir case, however, historical details challenge this story of Malatya's supposedly overnight move. A year before the invasion of Hafız Pasha's army, on 22 August 1837, Baptistin Poujoulat wrote from Malatya that, 'The Ottomans gradually abandoned Mélitène [the ancient name of Old Malatya] to settle amidst extensive gardens two hours south of Old Malatia' (327). Even though it was known that Malatya's inhabitants used to move to the new place only in summers, Poujoulat's descriptions of the new place and the old town suggest that permanent residence in and development of the new town had already begun well before the army came. New Malatya was 'a beautiful oasis located in the middle of a huge and horrible desert' (331). All sorts of fruit trees decorated this garden town, this 'earthly paradise', with colours and freshness. The urban centre of New Malatya, too, did not 'look like a city, but rather a multitude of dispersed villas' (333); one had to pay attention and look for them in order to see the houses embedded in the forest of trees. All houses were of a single storey, each surrounded by a low wall. The old town, on the other hand, 'was completely ruined' (326); the city walls were collapsing.[23]

The beauty of the new town was confirmed by later visitors, too. When the imperial army was moved from Mezre to Malatya in 1838, the headquarters was located at once in Aspuzu. Hafız Pasha and all other high-ranking officials – as well as von Moltke – lived from the beginning in Aspuzu, in this 'extraordinarily lovely' ('*wunderlieblich*') place, which reminded von Moltke of the plains of Lombardy.[24] A few years later, Charles Texier was to visit the new town and to praise its houses as having 'une certaine élégance' among the gardens of fruit trees, which gave the place its unique look ('*un aspect des plus singuliers*').[25] The old town's filthiness, on the other hand, was described thus by William Ainsworth in 1838: 'Malatiyeh is renowned, even among the natives, for its unhealthiness'.[26] In other words, until the old town was completely abandoned, Malatya and Aspuzu lived together as the city and its summer suburb, as the ugly and handsome twins, in a certain duality. The coming of the army did not, as commonly argued, engender the duality by creating a new town, but in fact ended the duality by forcing the townsmen to choose one of the places. Therefore, the following decades witnessed certain bureaucratic problems which emerged from the cessation of this dual life. Modernity had no room for duality.

In 1848, for example, Malatya's inhabitants sent to the imperial centre a petition with 40–50 seals, complaining about the uneven tax allocations due to their virtual presence in the old town and actual residence in the new one.[27] The official status of twin towns was still vague

when, in 1852, the governor of Harput paid a visit to Malatya to look into the allegations that the imams had left Malatya for Aspuzu but were still being paid for their service from Malatya endowments. The Pasha was surprised when he encountered an abandoned city; some houses were demolished, lumber had been transported to Aspuzu, the mosques were falling down from neglect, and, of course, most people had left the town. He called Malatya 'a city in nothing but name' ('*şehir sanki ismi var cismi yok*') and decided to revive the old town, to save it from perishing. Back in Harput, the provincial council wrote to the imperial centre that Malatya's people should repair their houses and spend the winters in the old town, as they once had. The governor wrote separately that one should not allow such a town to perish without reason.[28]

These orders were never carried out; the people did not move back. The administratively ambiguous status of the dual city of Malatya seems to have continued until, at the earliest, 1864, when Harput's governor Ahmet İzzet Pasha undertook the job of creating an administrative structure in Aspuzu at the neighbourhood level (perhaps just to comply with the orders of the brand new Law of Provincial Administration). He reported that the people of Malatya were then living amidst Aspuzu's vineyards and gardens, each of which was located far from one another (similar to New Arapkir's dispersed neighbourhoods, as opposed to its old town's dense neighbourhoods). Taxes had apparently not been distributed in a just manner in this new place of residence and notables seemed to have paid less tax than they should have. As a result, the governor decided to parcel out the new town area into 14 neighbourhoods and, hence, gave it the official status of city. He also ordered the complete abandonment of the old town (*kasaba-ı metruke*).[29] In consequence, it took 25 years to give the new town an official status, but even then the old town was not abandoned overnight. Even in 1884 there were 300 households living in the old town 'among these ruins' ('*harabezar*'); in 1891, James Barton wrote in his letter from Harput that there even was a small Protestant community in old Malatya.[30] In other words, the alleged place-shift of Malatya did not occur in a few years, nor was it caused solely by the army's invasion. The new town was created well before, as a summer suburb, and the two places existed together much longer than generally assumed.

From the 1860s on, the suburb gradually turned into the centre, but it nonetheless preserved its non-traditional physical features. As a Harput missionary, Crosby H. Wheeler, wrote in the 1860s, 'Malatya differs from most oriental cities in being less compact, and nearly all its houses having, as the summer-houses had, only a single story'.[31] In the early 1880s, Srvandztiants observed, 'The city is not visible at all […] Various trees in the dense forest hide the city and its buildings from prying eyes'.[32] A few decades later, English philanthropist Helen B. Harris wrote:

Malatya is the most beautiful city I have yet visited in Asiatic Turkey. If we use the word Paradise in the old Persian sense of park and garden, this place is […] a paradise. It is a succession of beautiful gardens, planted with poplar trees and every variety of fruit trees, and watered by streams that descend out of the neighbouring mountains. Almost all the houses stand in the midst of their own gardens, and the impression of the city as one approaches it from outside is more like that of a long stretch of woods than of an inhabited place, as the houses are

almost entirely hidden away.[33]

Another traveller in Anatolia who commented on Malatya was Gertrude Bell, in 1910. She had already read von Moltke's published letters:

The gardens are no less exquisite now than they were in his time [von Moltke's time, 1838], and as we rode down the hill-side the houses were scarcely to be seen through their screen of fruit-trees. Even upon a nearer view the walnuts and mulberries are far more striking than the buildings of Malatiyah […][34]

Arshak Alpoyajian's monumental *History of Malatya's Armenians: Topographical, Historical and Ethnographical* (1961) provides further details about both the old and the new towns based on first-hand observations the author compiled from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Armenian sources, especially from the work of Karapet Penneyan. Penneyan was not very positive about the new town (neither was Srvandztiants): Armenians lived in its centre but the best places with good air were occupied by Turks. The houses were built such that walking from one neighbourhood to another was difficult because, although the streets were wide enough, the gardens surrounding the houses were attached to each other; as a result, houses were far from each other and no passages existed. Most streets were dead-end.[35] Even though Penneyan's evaluations are more nostalgic towards the old town and critical of the new, the physical features he provides are in perfect harmony with other sources. Like New Arapkir, New Malatya of the nineteenth century possessed distinctive features of suburban living and suburban culture.

A century after the official orders of Hafız Pasha to confine the residents of Malatya to the new town, the latter continued to look like a garden-city. Ekrem Yalçınkaya described the city in 1940 as fully covered by green and composed of houses with gardens juxtaposed with each other. He observed that it was apparent from its dispersed neighbourhoods that this town had not been founded as a city in the first place.[36] It was in the 1950s–70s that a construction boom changed the built environment of all of Turkey, including the eastern provinces (another such boom is happening today). New, concrete apartment buildings, one attached to another, replaced houses with gardens in all the small cities of Anatolia. This left a legacy of inelegant cities at odds with their nostalgically beautiful past – a past that generally conflates the nineteenth century with, say, the thirteenth, and invents a homogenous period of a millennium that covers anything pre-modern, namely anything not bad and not ugly. However, I suggest that the idea of urban beauty in today's standards came to be realized only in a specific historical context, roughly between the 1830s and the 1940s, thanks to special conditions of suburbanization in small Anatolian cities. The case of Harput/Mezre was a prime example of the consequent duality and suburban ideals.

Harput/Mezre: A Century of Duality

Before 1834, when Reşid Mehmed Pasha deployed the imperial army on the plain below

Harput to prepare for war against the hitherto autonomous Kurdish governments in the East, there existed only a handful of houses and the mansions of some notable families. Since the last native governor of Harput province, Çötelizade İshak Bey, and other prominent faces like Minasian Krikor Keşiş used to live there, the place was called '*ağavat mezrası*' ('hamlet of landlords') or '*mezra-ı Çötelizade*', and later, simply *mezra* (ar. *mazra'a*: arable land, hamlet) or Mezre.[37] In the 1830s, 26 Muslim and ten Armenian households in Mezre were composed of landlords and their tenants.[38] In other words, Mezre was a farming village, a place of estates in the vicinity of the city of Harput. However, a century later, in 1948, a journalist announced the death of Harput on the pages of *Cumhuriyet* (*Republic*) with the headline reading 'A City Shrunk from 8,000 to 52 Households'.[39] Instead, a city called Elazığ (of around 40,000 inhabitants in 1948) had matured on the plain below Harput, namely in the place of Mezre, and Harput had become a mere district of the new city.

The contrast is striking: an ancient city turned into a ruined neighbourhood and, in close proximity to it, a middle-sized city born almost from scratch – all in the course of a hundred years. The existing accounts without exception take the coming of the Pasha to Mezre in 1834 as the moment when Harput's decline and Elazığ's ultimate victory were sealed. One historian noted that 'the year of 1835 is the date when Harput became history and Elazığ was founded in its place',[40] whereas another wrote about the same year that 'Harput's decline started from that day on, and Mezre's star began to shine as Harput's died away'.[41] Along the same lines as the previous sections, I will focus on the dual phase of Harput/Mezre and show that *both* parts lived their golden age in this special period of duality. I contend that Harput's decline did not even start before World War I.

Reşid Mehmed Pasha stayed as a guest at the Çötelizade's mansion in Mezre, the mansion of the local ruler he himself dethroned. In his three-year rule, the Pasha treated Mezre as his brand-new command post and built a hospital, an arsenal and barracks for the soldiers.[42] İshak Pasha died a few years after he was replaced by Reşid Pasha;[43] Reşid Pasha himself died in 1836.[44] His successor Hafız Pasha bought the mansion from İshak Pasha's heirs and completed the bureaucratization of the local politics.[45] As had been the case with Malatya, Hafız Pasha was in the region for imperial battles, and he turned Mezre from a farm village to a garrison town, which he personally introduced to von Moltke and von Mühlbach in April 1838.[46] However, later in the same year the army moved to Malatya, and especially after the Nisib defeat and the dismissal of Hafız Pasha, Mezre was again left to its residents, with empty barracks. Thus, contrary to progressivist historiography's arguments, Mezre in the 1840s was more a ruin than a developing new city. When Sadullah Pasha came to Mezre in 1839, he could not help but complain about the ruinous ('*harab*') situation in this ex-garrison town.[47] Mezre continued to be the seat of provincial governors, like the governor of Diyarbekir, Sadullah Pasha, and of regional commanders, like the Marshal of the Anatolian Army, Rüstem Ebûbekir Pasha, but the scope of their authority shrank when, first, Urfa was taken out of the province (1841)[48] and then when Harput was made a district to be governed by a *mutasarrıf* (sub-provincial governor) (1845).[49] Consequently, as İsmail Pasha put it in 1844, Mezre was merely a 'village called mezra', nothing more.[50]

When Mezre's metamorphosis into Elazığ from the 1830s to the 1930s is taken in evolutionary terms, Mezre can be seen as a perfect example of a colonial town which was created by the modern state in the periphery of the empire in order to govern the eastern populations. Elazığ's status today as one of the strongholds of the far-right nationalist movement in Turkey supports this thesis, not to mention the demolition of Harput during the formative phase of nation-state building in the 1930s, to say nothing of Elazığ's having served as one of the military headquarters for the state during the deportations of Armenians in 1915 and during the Dersim massacres of Kurds in 1937–39. However, contrary to the assumptions of the last two decades' critical historiography, I argue that the imperial centre never adhered to a practice of internal colonization, but only practised internal imperialism via war-making. City-building, on the other hand, was a completely local initiative by a contingent collaboration of the rising (mostly Armenian) trade bourgeoisie and the (mostly Muslim) bureaucrats, intended not to fulfill Istanbul's desires but to create a suburban *habitus* for themselves.

In the 1840s and 50s, the central state kindly refused to fund the local projects of repairing or of building new structures, but the townsmen nevertheless improved the built environment of their town.[51] Churches were repaired, new houses and shops were built, the governor's house was first repaired and then, after the old one was burned in 1858, a completely new one was built, the barracks were repaired, and a new warehouse for grain was built.[52] At the same time, in the realm of town politics, the Çötelizade family's dynastic privileges were constantly challenged by – mostly Armenian – moneylenders and businessmen.[53] Recurrent complaints and legal cases followed upon the Çötelizades' unpaid debts, about their corrupt ways of winning bids, and about unfair competition due to their official posts.[54] Finally, in 1860, Çötelizade İshak Pasha's three sons, Osman, Cemal and Hüseyin Hüsnü Beys were dismissed from the local council (yes, all three were on the council) based on complaints about them.[55] A decade of struggle against the Çötelizade family was supported by both the Armenian bourgeoisie and the appointed governors of Harput, who would later write official reports against the family. As a result, by the end of the 1860s, the special symbiosis between local bureaucrats and the new local bourgeoisie had excluded the family from the local economy. It was during the same period that Mezre transformed from a Çötelizade farm into a real town.

In 1867, Mezre's businessmen and officials requested a brand new identity from Istanbul. Governor Ahmet İzzet Pasha wrote that a new Governor's House as well as some new shops had been built thanks to the contributions of the local people, and, accordingly, Mezre ‘became a proper town’ (‘*bir mükemmel kasaba heyetine girmiş olduğundan*’). Since Mezre was not an official name, the report continues, and since the town's development took place in His Majesty's time, they requested a new city name: Mamuret-ül-Aziz (meaning ‘Made Prosperous by Sultan Abdülaziz’, or simply ‘Built by Aziz’).[56] The contemporary name of the new city, Elazığ, is a distortion of the shorter version of this new name (El-Aziz). A new age was beginning for the town, and the travellers who visited Mezre at the time testified to the unexpected physical characteristics of the new place. In 1864, Colonel Goldsmid thought ‘Mazra has a British-Indian look about it in the distance’.[57] He later presented to the Bombay Geographical Society the view that ‘Mazra [is] a place which resembles in the distance an

Indian cantonment rather than a common Asiatic Turkish town'.[58] On 24 March 1866, Viscount Pollington took note of the following:

On arriving at the summit we looked down into a mountain-locked plain, much below the level of the lake, with several villages scattered over its surface. We descended, and rode across it, through three villages. Here civilization first stared us in the face in the shape of a common cart, like the plaustra of Persia. We had seen nothing on wheels since leaving Teheran. We passed some decent whitewashed barracks, surrounded by a wall pierced with windows, and were in Mazrah […] The streets of Mazrah betokened awakening civilisation, probably owing to the proximity of this [American missionary] station. Some of the houses had wooden arched doorways with windows on each side, evidently new, and resembling some streets in German villages. Indeed, over one shop we observed 'Pharmacie' written up in French![59]

He was wrong. Mezre's fancy look had nothing to do with the missionaries, who hardly cared about this secular town. In 1860, Herman N. Barnum confessed in his letter from Harput that there was not much to report about the Mezre outstation, although it was the closest one among 15 outstations/villages:

It is the residence of the Pasha and though but a mere village is in a certain sense the commercial center for this whole region. Those who live there are worldly minded businessmen who seem to be almost utterly regardless of their spiritual interests.[60]

It was the same time when Krikor Garabed (later, İpekciyan) from Arapkir, after visiting many factories around the world, founded his silk factory, which was to gain empire-wide renown.[61] This particular symbiosis of businessmen and officials built a rather liberal town almost from scratch, where the Pasha could openly buy a Turkish Bible, perhaps only as an exotic item to furnish his reception room along with Persian carpets and Arab swords. In the following years, the bourgeois revolution brought about the foundation of the local Chamber of Commerce (*ticaret odası*) in 1884, chaired by a member of the now-prominent Armenian merchant family, the Misakyans, without a single person from the Çötelizades, who instead headed the new Chamber of Agriculture.[62]

Nevertheless, as Srvandztiants opined during his visit in 1878, 'it [Mezre] still cannot say 'I am a city''.[63] Only in the early 1880s, with the founding of a separate municipality in Mezre, and upon the townsmen's complaints about the lack of urban functions there, did urbanization in the built environment begin.[64] On the pages of the official gazette, *Mamuretülaziz*, the deficiency in the organization and neatness of streets and buildings was criticized, and the new municipality was called upon to extend the roads, paint the buildings, and organize the shops in the market place.[65] Such a beautiful place, it was constantly written, deserved better.[66] In the following years, urban transformation started off in Mezre. From an invaluable plan of 1895 we understand that the Nail Bey neighbourhood was added next to two original neighbourhoods (Çarşı and İcadiye) in this decade.[67] Still today, the Nail Bey neighbourhood in Elazığ is easily recognizable on maps as the most structured grid-style area of the city. And

when Ferdinand Brockes entered Mezre on 22 January 1899, he also found a town with unexpected characteristics:

Mesereh resembled a small German country town. When we looked at the city from afar, it made us feel at home, but unlike other cities in the Orient, not only when we saw it from outside, but also when we actually entered the town, it felt the same. Until now, in Asiatic Turkey, I haven't seen any city with such beautiful wide streets and pleasant houses.[68]

Conclusion

As late as 1884, Harput accommodated five of every six individuals in the dual city (Harput: 12,974; Mezre: 2,674). There was no indication of mass movement, or of a desire for it, from the upper town to the lower. Moreover, contrary to what one expects from an 'official' town, Mezre was the only provincial capital apart from Van with a majority of Armenians – a substantial majority, indeed, of 79.5 per cent.[69] Until perhaps the 1930s, Harput and Mezre continued to live side by side as parts of a dual city, the duality of which was owed to a special conjuncture whereby the new trade bourgeoisie and the new provincial class of state officials worked hand-in-hand to create a separated urban space for their own everyday life. For almost a century, neither part became the periphery of the other or dominated the other; hence, duality persisted. I argue that even though Arapkir, Malatya and Harput/Mezre have completely different individual stories, their common trajectories allow us to compare, as it were, apples and oranges. All three cities moved from one place to another nearby place in the course of the nineteenth century, not before or after, and all three cities moved to a place that carried the physical features of garden-cities until they lost them when the younger twin gained the upper hand. Not only is it surprising to encounter garden-cities in a region like the Ottoman East, which has never been proud of its built environment (besides the ancient constructs), but it is also unexpected due to the seeming irrelevance of this region to the bourgeois (and urban) transformation in the nineteenth century.

In comparison to their old towns, the physical characteristics of the new towns consisted of disorganized housing plots, houses in gardens, wider streets, dispersed neighbourhoods, lower population, occupation of a larger space, and proximity to the old town. The identity of the new towns, on the other hand, pointed to richness, especially of the Armenians, and to living in countryside suburbs. The outcome was sheer surprise for almost all foreign travellers, who had first-hand knowledge of many Anatolian towns – more than most Ottoman citizens. In other words, in the middle of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman East new towns emerged as garden-cities. The available data suggests that the rising Armenian trade bourgeoisie resorted to a cultural separation of space that paralleled the suburbanization process. However, unlike in big cities, these suburbs never became a periphery of the city proper, nor were the two parts solidly integrated with one another. The particular conditions of small cities that were not nodal places for capitalist trade created a different mode of realizing the spatial separation, namely duality in proximity. Urban transformation occurred without urban growth, so the duality was preserved. In the end, the new cities attracted the population of the old cities and

transformed themselves into proper cities, losing their suburban characteristics. This was a special period in the urban history of the Ottoman East. With further studies on other primary examples of spatial separation (like Van), a more complete pattern of suburbanization will be achieved. This chapter has suggested that urban duality was a peculiar form of spatial separation.

Notes

1. The most striking examples are: Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, eds., *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Ulrike Freitag et al., eds., *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2011).
2. The Turkish word for provincial/province, *taşra* (outside/periphery), is loaded with a bundle of cultural characteristics like slowness of time. In the last decade, the subject has become popular in intellectual works in Turkey. The best examples are Nuri Bilge Ceylan's internationally awarded films and a volume edited by Tanıl Bora. Tanıl Bora, *Taşraya Bakmak* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005). Unfortunately, the essays in the latter consist of impressions rather than analysis based on systematic research.
3. Gülru Necipoğlu, 'The Suburban Landscape of Sixteenth-Century Istanbul as a Mirror of Classical Ottoman Garden Culture', in *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 32–71; Shirine Hamadeh, 'Public Spaces and the Garden Culture of Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 277–312.
4. Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 49–81.
5. For Salonica, Izmir and Beirut, see respectively Sotirios Dimitriadis, 'Transforming a Late-Ottoman Port-City: Salonica, 1876–1912', in *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History*, ed. Pascal W. Firges et al (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 207–21; Sibel Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman Izmir: The Rise of a Cosmopolitan Port, 1840–1880* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
6. Robert Fishman's classic work on the history of suburbanization shows that the bourgeoisie's spatial choices are dependent on the degree of the state's involvement in realizing the desired way of life. In Paris, as in Istanbul, the centre of the capital was rebuilt thanks to great coercive implementations by the government; however, in London, the new middle classes resorted to places outside of the city centre and set about suburbanization. Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
7. In the academic works on urban transformation, concepts like duality and separation are

mainly used as signifiers of negative judgments on what was going on in the urban space. For a recent example, see Tolga Ünlü, 'Transformation of a Mediterranean Port City into a 'City of Clutter': Dualities in the Urban Landscape – The Case of Mersin', *Cities* 30 (2013): 175–85. I prefer to use the concept of duality as an analytical tool.

8. For contemporary descriptions, see H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia, Travels and Studies*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 80–3; Armand Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, *Armenien: Ein Bild seiner Natur und seiner Bewohner* (Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1878), 100. For a scholarly article, see Anahide Ter Minassian, 'The City of Van at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2000), 171–94; see also Yektan Türkyılmaz, 'Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1915' (PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 2011), 222.
9. For suburbanization in London, see Chapters 1 and 2 in Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 18–72.
10. A.B.C.F.M., Reel 678, Mr Raynolds' letter to Rev. Clark, Harpoot (5 October 1871).
11. A.B.C.F.M., Reel 695, Rev. O. P. Allen's letter to Mr Smith, Van (20 October 1890).
12. Vural Genç, 'Mamasoğulları: An Armenian Family of Investors in the 19th Century in Arapkir' (paper presented at the 47th Annual Meeting of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA), New Orleans, LA, 10 October 2013); Arsen Yarman, ed., *Palu–Harput 1878: Çarsancak, Çemişgezek, Çapakçur, Erzincan, Hizan ve Civar Bölgeler*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Derlem Yayınları, 2010), 315.
13. The information is compiled from the following two articles: Erdal Karakaş, 'Arapkir'in Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesi', *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 1 (1996): 175–90; Ahmet Aksın and Erdal Karakaş, 'Nüfus İcmal Defterine Göre 19. Yüzyılda Arabgir', *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (OTAM)*, no. 13 (2002): 91–125.
14. Nancy D. Munn, 'The Decline and Fall of Richmond Hill: Commodification and Place-Change in Late 18th–early 19th Century New York', *Anthropological Theory* 13, no. 1–2 (2013): 137–68.
15. Aksın and Karakaş, 'Nüfus İcmal Defterine Göre 19. Yüzyılda Arabgir'.
16. It seems that Bakhtikian had taken this observation from Srvandztiants's work of 1884, see Yarman, *Palu–Harput 1878*, 311.
17. Sargis A. Bakhtikian, *Arabkir yev shrdjakay giughery: patmakan-azgagrakan hamarot tesutiun* (Beirut: Tparan Vahagn, 1934), 16–17.
18. *Meliq S. Davit-Bek, Arabkiri gavarabarbary: dzaynabanakan yev qerakanakan usumnasirutiun* (Vienna: Mkhitarian Tparan, 1919), 1–10.
19. Bakhtikian, *Arabkir yev shrdjakayi giughery*, 24–5.
20. Yarman, *Palu–Harput 1878*, vol. 2, 309.
21. Adnan Işık, *Malatya 1830–1919: Adıyaman (Hısn-i Mansur), Akçadağ, Arabkir, Besni*,

Darende, Doğanşehir, Eskimalatya (Battalgazi), Hekimhan, Kahta, Pütürge, Yeşilyurt (Istanbul: Kurtiş Matbaacılık, 1998), 660–89. The document the author refers to is: B.O.A., DH. MUİ. 64-2/4 (1909–10).

22. The same story can be found in any source about Malatya, but the best first-hand account is Helmuth von Moltke's letters from Harput and Malatya in 1838–39, which are available in German and in Turkish. Helmuth von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (Berlin: Posen und Brombert, 1841); Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke'nin Türkiye Mektupları*, trans. Hayrullah Örs, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1995).
23. M. Baptistin Poujoulat, *Voyage dans l'Asie Mineure, en Mésopotamie, à Palmyre, en Syrie, en Palestine et en Égypte* (Paris: Ducollet, 1840), 326–33.
24. von Moltke, *Briefe*, 219, 305; von Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 189, 258.
25. Charles Texier, *Küçük Asya: Coğrafyası, Tarihi ve Arkeolojisi*, trans. Ali Suat, vol. 3 (Ankara: Enformasyon ve Dökümantasyon Hizmetleri Vakfı, 2002), 144–5; Charles Texier, *Asie Mineure: Description Géographique, Historique et Archéologique des Provinces et des Villes de la Chersonnèse d'Asie* (Paris: F. Didot, 1862), 588.
26. William Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, vol. 1 (London: J. W. Parker, 1842), 297.
27. Işık, *Malatya 1830–1919*, 540–6. The document the author refers to is: B.O.A., İ.DH. 169/8909. It was also stated in the petition that the plots they cultivated among the demolished houses in the old town should be considered as *mülk* (private property), since they were in an urban space, and should not be subject to agricultural taxation.
28. Ibid., 529–34. The document the author refers to is: B.O.A., A.MKT.UM. 91/93.
29. Ibid., 569–87. The document the author refers to is: B.O.A., İ.MVL. 497/22471.
30. *Salname-i Vilayet-i Mamuretülaziz*, vol. 1 (Mamuretülaziz: Mamuretülaziz Matbaası, 1884 [1301]), 113. A.B.C.F.M., Reel 696, letter from James Barton, Harput (5 November 1891). The Armenian priest Srvandztiants's report based on his travels in Ottoman Armenia around 1880 mentions also that a few hundred Turkish households still lived in the old town and they came to the new town in the summers to look after their gardens. Srvandztiants wrote that the location and the weather of the old town were actually superior to the new one. Yarman, *Palu–Harput 1878*, vol. 2, 327. In addition, Arshak Alpoyajian's work refers to *Masis* (an Istanbul-based Armenian newspaper) in 1881 and states that there were still a few hundred Turkish and Armenian peasant families living in the old town, and Alpoyajian adds that only after that date the population of the old town decreased significantly. Arshak Alpoyajian, *Patmutiun Malatioy hayots: teghagrakan, patmakan yev azgagrakan* (Beirut: Tparan Sevan, 1961), 428.
31. Crosby Howard Wheeler, *Letters from Eden; Or, Reminiscences of Missionary Life in the East* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1868), 206–7.
32. Yarman, *Palu–Harput 1878*, vol. 2, 327.
33. J. Rendel Harris and Helen Balkwill Harris, *Letters from the Scenes of the Recent*

Massacres in Armenia (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 167.

34. Gertrude Lowthian Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1911), 336.
35. Alpoyajian, *Patmutiun Malatioy hayots*, 405. Vorberian also talked about the wide and well-organized streets of the new town, ibid., 433–4. For Paghtasar Perper-Yezikyan's account of the old town after 1838, see ibid., 426–8.
36. Ekrem Yalçınkaya, *Muhtasar Malatya Tarih ve Coğrafyası* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1940), 14, 25.
37. *Salname-i Vilayet-i Mamuretülaziz* (1884), 101–5.
38. B.O.A., NFS.d. 2675, p. 58–9; B.O.A., NFS.d. 2676, p. 123.
39. *Cumhuriyet* (18 June 1948).
40. Osman Yalçın, *Elazığ*, 2nd ed (Istanbul: Özyürek Yayınevi, 1979), 35–6.
41. İshak Sunguroğlu, *Harput Yollarında*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Elazığ Kültür ve Tanıtma Vakfı Yayınları, 1958), 203. For other works that repeat the same argument, see Ahmet Aksın, 'Harput'un Mezra'ya Taşınması Sürecinde İlk Vilayet Konağı', in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Harput Sempozyumu, Elazığ, 23–25 Mayıs 2013* (Elazığ, 2013), 101–10; İlhan Oğuz Akdemir, 'Elazığ'ın Kentleşme Sürecinin Coğrafi Analizi', in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Harput Sempozyumu, Elazığ, 23–25 Mayıs 2013* (Elazığ, 2013), 1033–54.
42. *Salname-i Vilayet-i Mamuretülaziz* (1884), 101–5.
43. Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 807.
44. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 140 (20 December 1836).
45. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 56/1081 (30 June 1844); A.MKT.UM. 221/8 (1 December 1859); A.MKT.DV. 172/68 (15 October 1860).
46. Reinhold Wagner, *Moltke und Mühlbach zusammen unter dem Halbmonde, 1837–1839* (Berlin: Verlag von Hermann Walther, 1893), 70–1.
47. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 182 (28 July 1839); B.O.A., İ.DH. 2/87 (22 September 1839).
48. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 235 (25 November 1841).
49. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 293 (8 November 1845); Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 1320.
50. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 56/1081 (30 June 1844).
51. The central state refused to fund the projects by apportioning the costs back to the province, or by simply rejecting the plans. İsmail Pasha's proposal for a new government complex, for example, was ratified by the centre, but the costs would be apportioned to the entire district as tax. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 56/1081 (30 June 1844). In fact, it was Rüstem Ebûbekir Pasha who paid for the new complex and donated it later to the state treasury. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 81/1607 (5 September 1846). In response to a demand to repair the barracks in 1847, the central government was hesitant in financial issues since 'those areas were not in sight' ('*oraları göz önü mahal olmadığından*'). B.O.A., İ.MVL.

98/2090 (16 June 1847).

52. For the correspondence about the repair of the Armenian churches, see B.O.A., İ.MVL. 225/7653 (29 November 1851). For other buildings, see Aksın, 'Harput'un Mezra'ya Taşınması Sürecinde İlk Vilayet Konağı'.
53. As a local dynasty recognized by the imperial centre, they used to get special care from the officials. B.O.A., A.MKT.UM. 197/80 (7 June 1855).
54. The family's use of their privileges began to be seen as corruption. For example, for Çötelizade Ömer Bey registering the tithe of Harput to the name of his four-year-old son Mehmed, see B.O.A., A.MKT.DV. 143/62 (27 September 1859). For Çötelizade Mustafa Bey's registering the tithe of Malatya to the name of his servant Memo, see B.O.A., A.MKT.DV. 159/92 (31 May 1860).
55. B.O.A., A.MKT.UM. 523/21 (8 December 1861); BEO.VGG.d. 170, entry no. 203 (9 December 1861); A.MKT.UM. 555/58 (17 April 1862); BEO.VGG.d. 170, entry no. 332 (18 April 1862).
56. B.O.A., A.MKT.MHM. 374/75 (20 February 1867); İ.DH. 558/389.1 (15 December 1866).
57. Frederic John Goldsmid, *Telegraph and Travel; a Narrative of the Formation and Development of Telegraphic Communication between England and India, under the Orders of Her Majesty's Government, with Incidental Notices of the Countries Traversed by the Lines* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), 442.
58. Frederic John Goldsmid, 'Report on an Overland Journey from Bagdad to Constantinople, through Turkish Arabia and Asia Minor', *The Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society* 18 (1868): 24.
59. Viscount Pollington, *Half Round the Old World. Being Some Account of a Tour in Russia, the Caucasus, Persia, and Turkey, 1865–66* (London: Edward Moxon & Co., 1867), 375–8.
60. A.B.C.F.M., Reel 676, the Fifth Annual Report for the Year Ending May 1860, Harpoot. Three years later, he wrote: 'In Mezereh, the helper being dissatisfied with his wages left the service. From year to year, the progress in this place is slow. It is the seat of Pashalic & the worldly influences there are more powerful than in the city even'. A.B.C.F.M., Reel 676, the Eighth Annual Report of 1863, Harpoot. Finally, in 1867, he wrote that Mezre's Protestants only wanted 'to satisfy the claims of an enlightened conscience by putting away some of the gross superstitions of the old church & find an easy way of salvation without the necessity of a change of heart or even any essential change of life'. A.B.C.F.M., Reel 677, H. N. Barnum's letter, Harpoot (12 March 1867).
61. *Mamuretülaziz*, no. 6 (18 November 1883).
62. *Mamuretülaziz*, no. 22 (11 March 1884); no. 56 (10 [9] November 1884).
63. Garegin Vardapet Srvandztiants, *Toros Aghbar Hayastani jambord*, vol. 2 (Constantinople: G. Paghtatlyan (Aramyan), 1884), 85–6; Yarman, *Palu–Harput 1878*, vol. 2, 415.

64. For the naming of the three municipalities as Mezre, Harput and Hüseynik, respectively, in 1888, see *Salname-i Vilayet-i Mamuretülaziz*, vol. 4 (Mamuretülaziz: Vilayet Matbaası, 1888[1305]), 37–8.
65. *Mamuretülaziz*, no. 31 (18 May 1884); no. 32 (25 May 1884); no. 33 (30 [2] May [June] 1884).
66. For example, Hayrullah Efendi, the secretary of the local administrative council, wrote: 'No conscientious and refined person can accept the chaotic and miserable situation of Mamuretülaziz, which, as a precious product of god's power of creation, has been placed on the lovely bosom of a land of prosperity that is surrounded by colorful gardens and delightful green [*hadâ'ik-i rengîn ve çimenistan-ı dil-nişin*]'. *Mamuretülaziz*, no. 34 (7 June 1884).
67. *Salname-i Vilayet-i Mamuretülaziz*, vol. 8 (Mamuretülaziz: Vilayet Matbaası, 1895[1312]).
68. Ferdinand Brockes, *Quer durch Klein-Asien; Bilder von einer Winterreise durch das armenische Notstandsgebiet* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1900), 111.
69. *Mamuretülaziz*, no. 21 (4 March 1884).

CHAPTER 12

ARMENIANS IN THE DERSIM REGION BEFORE 1915: A GLIMPSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE MIRAKIAN TRIBE

Cihangir Gündoğdu

We struck our sword to the stone
The stone was split into two
Where are you fleeing Osman Pasha?
It is the Mirakians that are before you.[1]

On 21 February 1910, Petros and Kirakos of the Armenian Mirakian tribe of the Dersim *sancak* (sub-province) submitted a petition to the governorate of Mamüretülaziz regarding the restitution of lands confiscated decades earlier. They were emboldened by the liberal atmosphere that followed the 1908 Revolution in the Ottoman Empire and by the ongoing negotiations between political organizations – particularly the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). In this petition, members of the Mirakian tribe demanded the restoration of lands – which had been theirs for generations, but had been seized by the surrounding Arilli and Karsanan tribes in Derova: a small octagonal plain in the northeastern part of Dersim (present-day Tunceli), in the sub-province of Mamüretülaziz. After the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate filed another demand for the same action, on 19 March 1910, the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior ordered a detailed official inquiry into the situation and asked the local authorities to conduct a detailed investigation concerning the owners of the land and its current situation. However, it soon became apparent to the government that restoring the confiscated Derova lands to the Armenians could lead to the alienation of the local tribes – defined in the official communications as 'obedient people' (*ahâli-i muti'adan*), since they were fulfilling their official duties (*tekâlif-i emîriye*) and were essential to maintaining an administrative hold on the region.

The micro-case of Derova provides a glimpse into the social and economic dynamics which culminated in the gradual abandonment of land in the eastern provinces: a process which began in the eighteenth century and finally reached its end with the 1915 Genocide. This chapter first and foremost seeks to provide a historical account of the Mirakian tribe of Dersim, the

underlying causes of its westward migration and the reclaiming of the lands in Derova following the 1908 Revolution. In doing so, it will briefly elaborate on the social formation of the Mirakians as a tribe and its peculiarities in the Dersim region. Then, it will examine the long-term processes of the tribe's westward movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and examine the case of land-grabbing in Derova as a final blow, which resulted in the dismemberment and dissolution of the tribe. Thus the present work seeks to contribute to and enhance our knowledge of the hitherto not-well-examined history of the Armenians of Dersim in general and the Mirakian tribe in particular.

Dersim and Its Armenian Population in the Nineteenth Century: Tribalism and Armenianness

The Dersim region, following the inauguration of the centralizing *Tanzimat* (reorganization) reform programme in 1839, and subsequent to the central government's tax and population surveys, which sought to bring the region within the grasp of central government, was eventually (1848) organized into a district (*kaza*).[2] Until 1881, it remained a district with its administrative centre in Hozat, but in that year it was officially designated a province (*vilayet)*. In 1888, the provincial status of Dersim was abolished and it was reduced to the status of a sub-province of Mamüretülaziz. The Dersim sub-province included the districts of Çarsancak, Mazgird (also Mazgirt), Kızılkilise (Nazımiye), Kuzican, Ovacık, Hozat, Pertek, Çemişgezek and Pah.

Figure 12.1 Map showing the boundaries and topography of the Dersim sub-province in the early twentieth century

Source: L. Molyneux-Seel, 'A Journey in Dersim', The Geographical Journal 44, No.1 (July 1914).

The area's rough topographical features,[3] coupled with its harsh winter climate, had a direct impact on its demography, economy and administration. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the mountainous northern and eastern parts of Dersim were mostly settled by nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralist Kızılbaş tribes and by small groups of Armenian families who

sustained themselves mainly through animal husbandry and small-scale farming.[4] Some of these tribes, especially those settled in the northern and eastern parts of Dersim, took advantage of the region's mountainous nature, which enabled them to defy government authority and control, staging raids and pillaging the surrounding villages and provinces as far as the districts of Divriği, Eğin, Kemah and Kiğı.[5]

In contrast to the mountainous parts of Dersim, the southern parts of the sub-province, an area officially designated as Çarsancak, contained considerable tracts of land for agricultural production. These lands were concentrated in the hands of local chiefs known as the *Çarsancak beys*, who were of Turkish origin. The most notable of these were İshak and Osman Beys, who controlled several villages in the Çarsancak plain.[6] These chiefs ruled a heterogeneous population of Kurdish, Armenian and Turkish villagers. While in the earlier centuries Armenians had constituted a considerable part of Dersim's population, in the nineteenth century – because of forced migrations – their number decreased in the region compared to the pastoral and semi-nomadic Kızılbaş tribes. Within the Dersim sub-province the Mirakian tribe formed an important part of the Armenian population, especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century when they began to populate the Çarsancak plain.

Our knowledge of the Armenian tribes in general and of the Mirakian tribe in particular is scanty. Although certain studies mention the existence of Armenian tribes, there are not any detailed inquiries into the peculiarities of these social formations.[7] It is mainly because Armenianness and tribalism were often viewed as two mutually exclusive and incompatible categories. This essentialist definition holds tribes to be pastoralists, nomads and Muslims. In contrast to that ideal view of tribalism, Armenianness has been imagined as implying a homogenous and monolithic settled community, irrespective of the peculiarities of the ecological and cultural system in which they lived. Though this explanation holds true to a certain degree, it nevertheless fails to grasp the complexity of the Armenian population living in the Dersim region in the nineteenth century.

The ideal typology of tribe, as Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner suggest, ‘has also failed to consider that tribes could exist in different ecological systems, that some could be nomadic and others sedentarized, and that they could even have different ethnic origins’.[8] A further problem concerning this essentializing notion of ‘tribe’ results from its definition. According to Ira M. Lapidus,

> The concept of tribe is unclear and controversial. The word is used to refer to a kinship group, an extended family, or a coalition of related families. It may refer to the elite family from whom some larger confederation gets its name, to a cultural, ethnic, or other non-familial social group, or to conquest movements of pastoral peoples without regard for the internal basis of cohesion.[9]

This essentialist perspective, which is reminiscent of state-centred official propaganda, especially in the Muslim context, as Richard Tapper notes, sees tribal society as inferior to settled society. He further explains the urban official bias against tribal communities as

follows:

Whereas the city was the source of government, order and productivity, the tribes had a natural tendency to rebellion, rapine, and destruction, a tendency that might be related to the starkness of their habitat and its remoteness from the sources of civilization as well as to the underemployment inherent in their way of life. Such a view has some justification from a government perspective but is superficial and overgeneralized.[10]

The above-described modernist bias against tribes and the tribal way of life is something that is not unfamiliar to the Armenian case, which conceives Armenianness essentially by reference to a settled and urban way of life. It is not within the scope of this chapter to propose a new definition of tribe – for which there is no agreed-upon definition in the Middle Eastern context. I seek here only to emphasize how such formations could be nuanced, could cut across ethnic and religious boundaries, and could be imitated and re-configured in different social and cultural contexts. In this regard, the terms 'tribalism' and 'tribe' in the present work are employed to identify mainly a social formation among Armenians, which represents an ideal of shared cultural, ethnic, political, economic and emotional affinity of a group of people living in the highlands of Dersim.

It is a pattern which Gevorg Yerevanian underlines for the Mirakians in his study of the region and which also extends beyond the boundaries of the Dersim sub-province.[11] In other regions of the Armenian Plateau, Hofmann and Koutcharian mention the 'hardy Armenian nomads known as *kocharner*, who lived in the South of Shatakh in Van'.[12]

In this chapter I intend to go beyond the ideal definition of tribes, which sees them as essentially nomadic/pastoralist/Muslim/Turkish and Kurdish, by providing a short account of the Mirakian tribe of Dersim. In the case of the Mirakians, what tribe or tribalism is being referred to? Though, as mentioned above, there is not a commonly-agreed definition of the tribe in the Middle East context, nonetheless some of the common criteria associated with tribes can help us to describe the Mirakians. The first and most widely accepted criterion for tribes is the existence of group feeling and solidarity, also called *asabiyah*, a term that was coined by the fourteenth-century Arab-Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406).[13] According to Ibn Khaldun's definition, *asabiyah* provides a sense of collective identity and consciousness of belonging to a group. In the case of the Mirakians, this group feeling and affiliation – as will be explained below – enabled them to mount an armed force and mobilize it in collaboration with other Kızılbaş tribes against Ottoman forces to ward off state authority in the region and to preserve group cohesion and serve defensive purposes vis-à-vis other similar formations. As is evident in the lyrics of the popular song that is the epigraph to this chapter, tribal consciousness gave the Mirakians a distinct feeling of group identity, an identity which came second only to their Armenianness. This tribal self-consciousness is evident in the words of a certain member of the Mirakian tribe, Martik, who settled in the Khozngegh (present-day Alanyazı) village and referred to himself and other Mirakians as 'Armenian-Mirak'.[14]

The second criterion is reference to a mythical founder from whom the collectivity believes

itself to have originated, and which further sustains cohesion and solidarity, allowing the group to flourish. For instance, according to the account provided by Gevorg Yerevanian, the founder and patriarch of the Mirakians was identified as a certain ‘Ter Ovannes’. It is not clear whether such a founder ever existed or not, but his and his descendants' image was further embellished with belligerency and fearlessness, which were essential to the preservation of the tribe's existence and unity. While alternative terms such as ‘clan’ could be employed to identify and explain the Mirakians' social organization in the region in the nineteenth century, such other terms fall short of grasping the Mirakian reality, since it was spatially and demographically dispersed over a wide area in the region. Furthermore, the term ‘tribe’ comprises a hierarchically organized conglomeration of clans, with familial, ethnic, emotional and confessional affinities.

Since the sources and studies on the Mirakians are scanty and need further investigation, based on preliminary research I conclude that the Mirakians and other Armenians of the Dersim region used the term ‘tribe’ to imply their group solidarity, organization and ability to mobilize their members on the one hand, and on the other to help them become part of the region's tribal network. Furthermore, contrary to the commonly held notion of the tribe as a nomadic formation, in the case of the Mirakians of the Dersim region in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the term tribe refers to a settled community of agriculturalists and animal herders.

Westward Migration of Mirakians

The case of the Mirakians' reclaiming the lands in Derova, which is cited in the introduction, represents the final instance in the Mirakian tribe's long-term westward migration, which started in earlier centuries. In the *The Contemporary History of the Armenians of Charsanjak and Dersim*, Gevorg Yerevanian, a former resident of Dersim, mentions the Mirakians and the Ter Ovanians (Ter Ovantsis)[15] among the ‘tribes’ of Dersim. Yerevanian provides the following information concerning the origins of these two groups:

According to the accounts of the nineteenth-century historians and to the Mirakian tradition, their original fatherland was the plain of Ter Ovan [Derova], which was first settled by a family made up of seven brothers. One of them was a priest named Ter Ovannes, for whom the village was named. Ter Ovan became the village's owner. Ter Ovannes was therefore the first patriarch of the Mirakians […] As they were very brave and fearless, the brothers of Ter Ovannes fought many successful battles against their neighbouring Kurdish tribes. Being people who liked and respected the brave, the Kurds gave them a princely title and called them *miro* [prince]. In this way, *miro* and *mirenk* became Mirak and then Mirakian […] The original surname of the Mirakian family was Bjients Dune [the house of Bjis] or Bjienk. They were descendants of a princely family.[16]

Local evidence in the form of topographic names and other official accounts attests the wide usage of the term ‘Mirak’ in the Dersim sub-province. The local topographic names provided

by the indigenous people of Dersim, such as Mirak Hill (Mirak tepesi),[17] Mirak Cave (Mirak mağrası),[18] and Mirak Stream (Mirak deresi),[19] confirms that people related to the Mirakian tribe had long populated the region.

Unlike the lowlands of Çarsancak plain in the south, the highlands of Dersim, which were inaccessible to the government, had provided a safe refuge where group cohesion and solidarity helped the Mirakian to ward off not only the central state's military expeditions to subdue and settle the tribes, but also the incursions of neighbouring tribes. The members of the Mirakian tribe, who claimed to number 3,000 armed men when they joined with the Kızılbaş tribes of Dersim, had in many cases successfully repulsed Ottoman military expeditions.[20] They were even hired as mercenary soldiers in inter-tribal conflicts. According to Yerevanian, during a conflict between Ismail Ağa of Seyitli (present-day Elmalık) and Necip Bey of Pağnik (present-day Kepektaşı) in the Mazgird district, Necip Bey hired Mirakians to fight against his rival. In the military expeditions following the Russo–Ottoman War (1877–78), when the central government sent an expeditionary force under the command of Fazlı Ferik and Derviş Müşir Pashas, Mirakians had collaborated with Kızılbaş tribes. And because of their quality as combatants, Yerevanian reports that they were called *tabor bozan* (battalion destroyers).

Although the Armenians – including the Mirakians – living in the mountainous sections of Dersim had in former times (in the eighteenth century) been rather numerous;[21] in the following periods the available accounts suggest that they started to migrate westward and came to populate towns and villages as far as Meşker (Mashkert), a village located northeast of Arapkir. According to the memoirs of one of the members of the Mirakians, Robert Mirak, whose remaining family members settled in the USA after the 1915 Genocide, the westward migration of some of the branches of the tribes took place as follows:

The first records of Zaven's [Robert Mirak's father's] ancestors are from 1750. In that year, according to a family tree, Zaven's predecessors left their historic home in the mountains and valleys of Dersim, a wild and untamed hinterland of the Ottoman Empire, crossed the mighty Euphrates River, and settled in the village of Mashgerd [Meşker/Meşkir].[22]

There is other evidence which verifies Robert Mirak's account: a census record dated 1831–32 of Meşker, a village of Arapkir, includes names such as Mirak Abraham, Mirak's Mirak (Mirak'ın Mirak), Mirak's Abkar and Mirak's Osib, which suggests that members of the tribe were settled in a wide geographical area as far as present-day Kemaliye (Eğin) as far back as the eighteenth century.[23] In addition to the names provided, we also learn from these records that some of these households had members living in Aleppo, Syria, and in Egypt,[24] reflecting what was at the time a common trend among the region's Armenians, who travelled to distant provinces to earn a living.[25]

It is not clear why some members of the Mirakian tribe migrated and settled in Meşker. Antranik Poladian and George Jerjian describe Meşker as a prosperous village with 600 houses,[26] which was considered almost a town in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Probably the gradual migration of Mirakians to more secure places, or a population increase,

which Martik, a member of the Mirakian tribe settled in Mazgird, also mentions, had encouraged other members of the tribe to join their fellow tribe members already settled in these regions.

According to Robert Mirak, this process of westward migration and the final dispersion of the tribe was further perpetuated in the 1880s by ‘the atrocities of the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–1878’ and ‘intensified with Armenian massacres of the 1890s’.[27] Mainly because of nomadic tribal incursions and security concerns, they had gradually abandoned the mountain villages in the east, migrating to Mazgird, Çarsancak and Çemişgezek, where Armenians constituted a considerable part of the population.[28]

In addition to the account provided by Robert Mirak, in the 1880s members of the Mirakian tribe living in the highlands of Derova and the village of Hakis (present-day Büyükyurt) faced a new challenge in the form of pastoral nomads and semi-nomads who were frequenting the highlands with their flocks, seeking summer pastures. Relatively flat topography and the availability of water and grazing lands made places like Derova attractive to such tribes. While these visits were at first temporary, members of these tribes gradually settled in the desirable lands during winter periods as well.[29] This settlement process ultimately brought members of the Mirakian tribe living in the highlands and controlling the area's pastures, land and water rights – essential resources for the people's own sustenance – into open conflict with the other tribes, a tension which Stephan H. Astourian explains with reference to niche overlap.[30]

According to Yerevanian and Britain's vice consul of Van, Molyneux Seel, the Mirakians, who were demographically weakened because of gradual migrations to the regions of Mazgird, Çemişgezek and the Çarsancak plain, and who could not endure the attacks and demographic superiority of other tribes, abandoned their lands for Mazgird and Çarsancak some time around the 1880s. In the petition mentioned in the introduction, which was submitted to the governorate of Mamüretülaziz in 1910 by the members of the Mirakian tribe, it is also attested that they migrated to the Çarsancak plain after they were ‘forced to abandon our lands [*terk-i vatan*]’ due to tribal incursions and ‘settle in Mazgird and Çarsancak’.[31]

The historical records of Vice Consul Molyneux Seel, who made a visit to Kızılkilise, the administrative centre of the *kaza* of which Derova was part, provide further information concerning the nature of this ‘oppression’ and the tensions that developed between the Mirakians and the neighbouring tribes. Seel's encounter with an Armenian ‘bread contractor’ in Kızılkilise facilitates a reconstruction of some missing parts of the puzzle. The story that was related to the vice consul concerning the evacuation of Derova runs as follows:

Forty years ago there lived in Ter Ohan [Derova] village a certain Armenian Melik [chief], very rich and influential, who had acquired such renown for his wisdom and learning that the Kurds, whenever a dispute arose among them, used to appeal to him and accept his decision thereon. One day, forty Kurds from Kuttu Deré [Kutu Dere] came to the Melik and asked his decision in the case of a dispute which had arisen among them and threatened to lead to a bloody conflict. During their stay at Ter Ohan, the Kurds one day ventured to address some

words of love to the beautiful daughter-in-law of the Melik as she was drawing water from a well. The young Armenians of the village were so incensed at this that the same night they massacred the entire Kurd deputation; then, fearing a terrible vengeance, they collected their animals and portable possessions and, abandoning their homes, took refuge in some villages around Erzingan [present-day Erzincan].[32]

A certain Armenian traveller called Antranik undertook a journey from Kiğı to Dersim in 1888 at the age of 14; his written record confirms this westward migration and evacuation of the Armenian-populated highlands in Derova, indicating that it had been more or less completed by the last decade of the nineteenth century.[33] Antranik's observation attests that members of the Mirakian tribe had come to populate densely certain villages of the Çarsancak plain, including Mazgird's Hozinkeğ (present-day Alanyazı) village:

It was midday when we arrived at [the] Armenian Hozınkeğ/Hozinkiğ village. The village was composed of 55–60 households [and] its people in general were [descended] from the lineage of Mirakians. It was a village with simple houses, on a high hill, with narrow streets. [There was] no church and school. Mazgirt's [district of Dersim sancak] priest had this village visited once or twice a year, because it was close. It was [directly to] the East of Mazgirt.[34]

A certain Martik from the Mirakian tribe, whom Antranik met in the same village, related to him a different account of the Mirakians and Derova:

Back in those days, all of the Mirakians used to live in Ter-Ovan [Derova]; but over time, as they increased, some of them settled in Mazgirt and [the] Dersim region; and those who continued to live there [Derova] had received a permit (*tezkere*) which specified that they also had the right of ownership to the land. [Of] those in Ter-Ovan in over time, with the influence of various incidents, [some] of them preserved their national traditions and language, and remained Armenian-Mirak. After many years, some of the Mirakians, who had dispersed throughout different parts of Dersim, wanted to return […] and settle in their homeland, but the natives, i.e. the Kurds, not only refuse to give an inch of land, but repudiated the papers which their ancestors had signed and sealed. For this reason, a big disagreement has arisen between the Mirakians and Kurds of Ter-Ovan. The disagreement has intensified and reached severe proportions.[35]

These accounts suggest that the Mirakians abandoned their lands for the Çarsancak plain either because of increasing tribal incursions, or scarcity of resources. Then, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the process of westward migration and settlement was almost complete; travellers noted abandoned villages that had formerly been inhabited by Armenians.[36] With the Armenians' movement out of the highlands, the region's demography, especially in the mountainous northern and eastern parts of Dersim, shifted in favour of the Kızılbaş tribal groups, which came to constitute the majority there. Only a small number of Armenian families had continued to live among these tribal groups, either through religious conversion or owing to the tribes' need for their artisanal skills: the Armenians were smiths, carpenters and

weavers.[37]

In the case of Derova, however, Yerevanian writes that a tenancy agreement existed between the Armenian landowners and the tribes. Tessa Hofmann and Gerayer Koutcharian's work suggests that similar agreements had also existed between Armenians and Kurdish tribes in other regions:

the Armenian farmers were the only Christian people in the Ottoman Empire who were forced to furnish winter shelter [*kishlak*] to the half-nomadic Kurdish tribes for four to six months of the year. In this period of Kurdish wintering, there were many encroachments on Armenian women and property in the villages; these often resulted in bloody disputes. Forms of tribute, like *kishlak*, evidently developed from former leases. For example, the Armenians of Sasun leased the summer pasturage to the Kurdish nomads in the pre-Ottoman era. Later, this leasing system may have been transformed into a common law, whereby the voluntary action of the Armenians became involuntary.[38]

Yerevanian notes that Mirakians left their land to Kurdish sharecroppers, from whom they collected payments until 1900, when the Kurdish tribes of the mountains unanimously refused to recognize their claims of ownership.[39] Thus, as time passed, these privileges were annulled and the Mirakians completely lost control of their lands in Derova.

The 1908 Constitutional Revolution and the Mirakians' Reclaiming their Land

The restoration of constitutional rule in 1908 provided the Mirakian tribe and its sub-clans – as it had groups in other eastern provinces – an opportunity to reclaim its confiscated lands in Derova. By 1908, the liberal political atmosphere and the CUP's promises to restore confiscated properties had encouraged peasants to reassert their claims to lands that had been seized either forcefully or fraudulently, a process that targetted not only the Armenian peasants but the Kurdish peasants as well.[40]

In regions like Derova, far from the direct influences of developing world trade and markets, the legal changes in land-ownership law – particularly, the promulgation of the 1858 Land Code, as Janet Klein notes – rendered land a valuable commodity over which new disputes arose.[41] Not only the change in ownership patterns, but also the scarcity of resources in such regions contributed to the tensions around usufruct rights such as water, grazing ground and lands. Stephan Astourian explains this racial and ethnic tension, which escalated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, by reference to niche overlap, whereby different ethnic groups compete for the same resource environment.[42] Given this definition it is possible that the scarcity of means of production and resources such as land, water and grazing ground often – as in the case of Derova – generated and perpetuated disputes between settled Armenian peasants and nomadic pastoralist tribal groups.

In other parts of the Dersim sub-province such as the Çarsancak plain, the ethnic tensions

embodied in the land question had a more deep-rooted history that went back to the early years of *Tanzimat* (1839),[43] when tribal chiefs – among them, İshak Bey[44] – had confiscated a large amount of property in the form of land, gardens and trees that had formerly belonged mostly to Armenian and Kurdish peasants. The Armenian Patriarchate's reports on these provincial acts of oppression include cases of land usurpation in several parts of Dersim, not in Derova alone.[45] In the Kuzican region, located in the northeastern part of Dersim, it was the district governor and chief of the Çarekanlı tribe, Şah Hüseyin Bey, who claimed ownership of lands that the Armenian peasants had once cultivated.[46] In other areas, including the provincial centre of Hozat, according to the same report, the chief of the Koç Uşağı tribe, Maksud Ağa, had seen the lands transferred to his name and had obtained a title deed (*tapu*).[47]

The re-establishment of the constitutional regime on 23 July 1908 raised hopes among Ottoman subjects, especially among the Armenian peasantry, that the seized lands would be returned to them and that injustices perpetrated during the Hamidian regime (1876–1909) would be righted.[48] In the period after the re-declaration of the constitutional regime, peasants in the Diyarbekir area, for instance, dispatched several petitions to the central government laying claim to their confiscated lands.[49] In 1909, as part of the CUP–ARF negotiations, preparations were made for a joint commission to further investigate the issue (the CUP later reneged in the face of negative reactions among deputies from the eastern provinces).[50]

Likewise, in Dersim, encouraged by CUP leaders' promises to restore the lands to their Armenian owners, the peasants of Peri, the administrative centre of the *kaza* of Çarsancak, appealed in autumn 1909 to authorities via a joint petition signed by Armenian and Muslim peasants.[51] They saw and took the opportunity to press for justice and the restoration of lands in Derova. The residents of Peri were not alone. On 21 February 1910, Petros son of Mirak, Kirakos and other members of the Mirakian tribe submitted the petition mentioned earlier to the governorate of Mamüretülaziz. This document requested a written order restoring to their original owners the Derova lands that had been confiscated by the chiefs of the Arilli and Karsanan tribes,[52] which Mirakians claimed to have possessed for many generations (*ebâen-cedd*); the document also asked that the attacks of these tribes be curtailed. Lacking a deed to support their claims – since the 1858 Land Code had not applied or been extended uniformly in all provinces – Petros and Kirakos attached a testimonial signed by the residents of surrounding villages and by tribal chiefs supporting their ownership claims.[53]

The Mirakians submitted their petition to the provincial governorate in Mamüretülaziz.[54] At the same time, a communication of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul suggests, Petros and Kirakos – or perhaps some other members of the tribe – also submitted another petition in the capital in an attempt to further their claims at the central governmental level. Probably because they did not trust the local authorities,[55] the Mirakians – thinking that it would be more effective and efficient – submitted this second petition directly to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. Then on 19 March 1910, the Armenian Patriarchate itself addressed the Ministry of the Interior demanding that the Derova lands be restored to the Mirakians.[56] The support of the patriarchate seems to have accelerated bureaucratic procedures, and on 23 March 1910, the Ministry of the Interior ordered the governorate of Mamüretülaziz to conduct a detailed inquiry

concerning the owners of the land, how and why they had left, who was currently occupying and cultivating the land and its current value.[57]

In the official narrative, Mirakian's loss of control and ownership rights was formulated as follows. In 1890–91, the lands in Derova which the Mirakians claimed had been registered as abandoned (*muattal*/*metrûk*), given that Article 72 of the 1858 Land Code stipulated that 'if the abandonment of the country takes place without valid motive, or if the inhabitants do not return within three years from the time when the legitimate reasons which forced them to quit have ceased, and if they thus leave the land uncultivated, it shall then become the right of *tapu*'.[58] Having been designated as abandoned, a categorization approved by the local district and sub-district assemblies, the lands in question, according to the communications between the central government and local authorities, were put up for auction in the Hamidian era, but were not sold because of 'special conditions'.[59] It is not clear what these conditions were. But because the Hamidian administration, here and elsewhere, depended on the policy of settling tribes and strengthening its hold on the region, we may conclude that the government assented *de facto* to the tribes' usurpation because, first, the latter were not required to pay for the land and, second and more importantly, because the government did not wish to alienate them further.[60]

Because of the long, conflict-ridden history of Derova in the Hamidian period, also underlined in Antranik's *Dersim*, the Unionist government found itself in a dilemma between high politics and local calculations. The disagreement concerning lands claimed by two parties – on the one hand, the Armenians and their political organizations and, on the other hand, the Arilli and Karsanan tribes that had moved into the area, and which were essential to the CUP's political strategy of gaining the support and loyalty of the tribes – rendered the central government's position complex.[61] The government had to move very carefully in order to avoid jeopardizing its relations with local actors and undermining its local support.

Interestingly enough, in addition to the central government's proclivity to resolve the matter in favour of the local tribes, the Mirakians did not have a definitive plan with respect to the lands in Derova. While in the first petition submitted on 21 February 1910, Petros and Kirakos demanded the restitution of the lands, another petition submitted five days later on 26 February 1910 by the members of another clan, Ohannes, Khachatur Gasparian and Karapet Mirakian, claimed that the former group – Petros and Kirakos – were planning to give up their ownership rights.[62] It is difficult to substantiate the second petition's claims. Nevertheless, these two competing petitions suggest that interests and plans in regards to the lands may have been a complex issue within the Mirakian tribe, as well. While the first group – that is, Petros and Kirakos – after having secured the restoration of the lands, might have considered selling it, the second group was planning to re-settle the lands, or else tried to make a legal case and then became part of the possible property transaction. Be that as it may, it is certain that the petitions by the two groups concerning the lands in Derova further complicated the matter.

In the investigation conducted by the district authorities of Çarsancak and Kızılkilise, where the Mirakians were living and the disputed lands were located, the claims of the clan were found groundless, since no title deeds existed to substantiate them. Furthermore, it was argued

that since the lands had been abandoned not for three years but for more than ‘a century’, they belonged to the treasury, as the land code stipulated. And the testimony provided with the first petition and signed by members of surrounding villages who supported the claims of the Mirakian family was rejected as a forgery.[63] Further, the commission argued that the Mirakians' assertions concerning ‘rebellious tribes’ could not be valid because these tribes fulfilled their obligations to the state and had contributed to military recruitment and – more important – because none of the petitioners had appealed to the courts earlier concerning the oppression that they now claimed the tribes had engaged in. The conclusion was that the Mirakians had ‘taken advantage of the positive atmosphere of freedom and had thus claimed [this] valuable land’.[64] It was decided that the most appropriate option would be either to sell the land at auction to benefit the central treasury or to settle an appropriate number of migrants there.

Given the situation, the central government had to make a decision about the lands in Derova. It could not settle the case in favour of the Mirakian tribe – resettling them there, they might have calculated, would have endangered and paralysed relations between the central government and the ‘obedient’ tribes of the *kaza*, who were already settled on the disputed lands. Instead, the commission proposed the division of the lands into small lots, with the properties either being sold at auction – in this case to members of the surrounding Arilli and Karsanan tribes – or used for the settlement of immigrants. In both cases the central government's prime concern, as the correspondence suggests, was to maintain its hold on the region.

Conclusion

In spite of the decision to divide the land in Derova into small plots and sell it, an official communication addressed to the Ministry of the Interior from Mamüretülaziz province suggests that the government's commitment to sell the land was postponed until a consensus could be reached.[65] The dispossession of the Mirakians in favour of obedient Kızılbaş tribal chiefs in Derova was *de facto* institutionalized and settled by the 1915 Genocide, when members of the Mirakian tribe living in the Çarsancak plain and in Mamüretülaziz were subjected to forced deportation.[66] In the personal memoirs of Robert Mirak it is evident that the members of the tribe living in Meşker village did not manage to escape the annihilation process.[67]

This chapter has provided a glimpse into the history of the Armenian Mirakian tribe of Dersim, about which we have little information, with a specific focus on its claim to the lands in Derova located in the Dersim sub-province in the period after the 1908 Revolution. It argues that, contrary to the modernist perspective on the concept of the tribe, which sees tribes essentially as ‘backward’, nomadic and Muslim entities in the Middle East context, tribalism as a form of social organization cut across these ethnic and religious boundaries to include Armenians. The Armenians living in Dersim sub-province, especially those settled in the highlands, were no exception to that rule. Among the Armenian population of the Dersim sub-province, the Mirakians occupy a specific role as a tribe with a distinct feeling of group cohesion and identity. Having long populated the highlands of Dersim, some members of the

tribe engaged in a westward migration due either to population increase or tribal incursions, travelling as far as Meşker village in present-day Kemaliye (Eğin). In the gradual dismemberment of the tribe, the last decades of the nineteenth century constituted an important turning point in the Mirakian tribe's history, when its members came to populate Mazgird and the Çarsancak plain. This last migration cut off their control of and connection to their ancestral lands in Derova. The 1908 Revolution, which created a wave of euphoria among various groups in the Ottoman Empire, for the Mirakians signalled a chance at the restitution of the lands over which they had lost control. By the time they submitted their petition in 1910, however, the central policies were changing to their detriment. Their claims to the land were found baseless and rejected. To the long trend of dismemberment and dissolution of the Mirakian tribe the 1915 Genocide provides one final instance.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Daniel Ohanian of Istanbul Bilgi University's History department, who kindly allowed me to use his partial translation of Gevorg Yeravanian's book. Throughout this study, all the references and quotations from Yerevanian use Ohanian's translation, unless otherwise noted. Gevorg S. Yerevanian, *Dersimi yev Charsanjaki zhamanakakits patmutiuny* (Fresno: Central Executive of the Pan-Charsanjak Compatriotic Union, 1956), 100.
2. B.O.A., İ.MSM. 51/1320 (22 January 1848).
3. The mountain ranges known as Munzur, in the northern part of Dersim, reach an altitude of 3,000–3,500 metres. Apart from the Munzur ranges, other prominent mountains of Dersim include Yılan Mountain, located in the southwest of Ovacık, Dujik/Ducik Baba Mountain, south-east of Ovacık and Sülbüs Mountain (Surb Luys) located on the Dersim–Bingöl border. The region is further divided by deep valleys and rivers that in the past hindered the transportation of humans and goods. The long winters and heavy snowfall, which lasted for months, cut off communication with outside locations, which could be accessed only via certain passes in the north from Erzincan and the south-west from Çemişgezek.
4. L. Molyneux-Seel, ‘A Journey in Dersim’, *The Geographical Journal* 44, no. 1 (1 July 1914): 49.
5. B.O.A., A.DVN. 134/52 (31 January 1878); A.MKT.MHM. 639/20 (18 July 1897); A.MKT.MHM. 638/17 (27 October 1895).
6. Arsen Yarman, ed., *Palu–Harput 1878: Çarsancak, Çemişgezek, Çapakçur, Erzincan, Hizan ve Civar Bölgeler, Raporlar*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Derlem Yayınları, 2010), 480.
7. These works do mention some of the Armenian tribes: Tessa Hofmann and Gerayer Koutcharian, ‘The History of Armenian Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire’, *Armenian Review* 39, no. 4 (1986): 1–45; Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian, *1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2013); Yerevanian, *Dersimi yev Charsanjaki zhamanakakits patmutiuny*. In

the Ottoman case there are studies by Yusuf Halaçoğlu and Cevdet Türkay, which elaborate on Ottoman tribes and clans: Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Anadolu'da Aşiretler, Cemaatler, Oymaklar, 1453–1650* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2009); Cevdet Türkay, *Başbakanlık Arşivi Belgeleri'ne Göre Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Oymak, Aşîret, ve Cemaâtlar* (Istanbul: Tercüman, 1979).

8. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, 'Introduction: Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East', in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 5.
9. Ira Lapidus, 'Tribes and State Formation in Islamic History', in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 26.
10. Ibid., 53.
11. Yerevanian, *Dersimi yev Charsanjaki zhamanakakits patmutiuny*.
12. Hofmann and Koutcharian, 'The History of Armenian Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire', 5.
13. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
14. A full translation of Martik's words is provided in the following pages.
15. The account by Yerevanian, which, on the one hand, confirms the Mirakians as among the oldest residents of the Derova hamlet (*mezra*), also, on the other hand, leaves the Ter Ovanians unexplained. It is not clear whether the two names, Mirakians and Ter Ovanians, referred to separate social entities or were both names used to designate the Armenians populating the area. Alternatively, it is possible that while the Ter Ovanians were the founders and owners of the hamlet, the name Mirak, which Yerevanian argues derived from *mir/miro* (prince), could be a title that they used to identify themselves in the colloquial usage vis-à-vis other tribes.
16. Yerevanian, *Dersimi yev Charsanjaki zhamanakakits patmutiuny*, 98–103.
17. Hüseyin Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Hacı Hıdır Ataç'ın Defteri: İlk Kez Yayımlanan Belgeler, Raporlar, Haritalar* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2012), 47.
18. Ibid., 49.
19. Ibid., 50.
20. Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler*, 385; Raymond H. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011), 421. I think one should take the number of warriors listed here with a pinch of salt; the figure might have been used rhetorically to stress the Mirakians' power.
21. In the tax records provided by Mehmed Ali Ünal for the sixteenth century, Armenians constituted a considerable part of the local population, especially in the eastern and southern parts of the Dersim region. Mehmet Ali Ünal, *XVI. Yüzyılda Çemişgezek*

Sancağı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999).

22. Robert Mirak, *Genocide Survivors, Community Builders: The Family of John and Artemis Mirak* (Arlington: Armenian Cultural Foundation, 2014), 6.
23. B.O.A., NFS.d. 2588 (1831/1832).
24. Ibid.
25. A native of the Çemişgezek district of Dersim, Sarkis Narzakian mentions people from Çemişgezek and other parts of Dersim going to Aleppo, where they worked in *hans* and inns as manual laborers or artisans. Sarkis Narzakian, *Memoirs of Sarkis Narzakian* (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1995).
26. George Jerjian and Antranik Poladian, *Arabkir:Homage to an Armenian Community* (N.p.: Xlibris, 2014), 26.
27. Mirak, *Genocide Survivors, Community Builders*, 7.
28. Passim.
29. Mahmut Akyürekli, *Dersim Kürt Tedibi, 1937–1938* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2011), 34.
30. Stephan H. Astourian, 'The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power', in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 464.
31. B.O.A., DH.MUİ. 77-2/15 (18 June 1910).
32. L. Molyneux-Seel, 'A Journey in Dersim', 56.
33. Antranik, *Dersim: Seyahatname*, trans. Payline Tomasyan (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2012), 9.
34. Ibid., 51.
35. Ibid., 53.
36. T.N.A., FO. 424/132 (10 September 1882), the Earl of Dufferin to the Earl of Granville.
37. In an official dispatch from Harput by Lieutenant Colonel D. H. Stewart dated 22 August 1882, he describes the Kızılbaş tribes' view of the Armenians of Dersim as follows: 'The feeling towards the Armenians is friendly, and Armenians can travel in districts where no Osmanli [Osmanlı] dare show himself. One reason for this is the sympathy born from the hatred both have towards the Osmanli; another is that the Armenian generally officiates as the Kurd's man of business, buys his produce, sells him what he wants, and, on the whole, treats him with tolerable justice'. T.N.A., FO. 424/132 (10 September 1882), the Earl of Dufferin to the Earl of Granville.
38. Hofmann and Koutcharian, 'The History of Armenian Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire', 9–10.
39. Yerevanian, *Dersimi yev Charsanjaki zhamanakakits patmutiuny*, 104–6.
40. Janet Klein, 'State, Tribe, Dynasty and the Contest Over Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century', in *Social Relations in the Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870–1915*, ed. Joost

Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147–78.

41. Janet Klein, 'Conflict and Collaboration: Rethinking Kurdish–Armenian Relations in the Hamidian Period, 1876–1909', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 1–2 (2007): 158–9.
42. Astourian, 'The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power', 55.
43. B.O.A., İ.MVL. 580/26031 (25 December 1868); T.N.A., FO. 424/132 (10 September 1882), the Earl of Dufferin to the Earl of Granville.
44. He was described in official British reports as 'cruel, unscrupulous, and venal, besides being an enemy of the Kurds and Armenians'. T.N.A., FO. 424/132 (10 September 1882), the Earl of Dufferin to the Earl of Granville.
45. Armenian National Patriarchate at Constantinople, *Reports on Provincial Oppressions* (London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1877).
46. Ibid., 20.
47. Armenians were not the only group subjected to dispossession in Dersim; members of other tribes were often potential targets of land seizure. The petitions filed by the Kızılbaş peasants show that tribes also engaged in grabbing the land of rival tribes. For instance, the Kureşanlı tribe of Kızılkilise, one of the largest tribes in east Dersim, apparently engaged in such seizures in the region, expelling the Kızılbaş peasants by force. Ibid., 21.
48. Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, 'Agrarian Land Reform and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire', *Armenian Review* 48, no. 3–4 (2003): 25.
49. Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, 'A 'Peripheral' Approach to the 1908 Revolution in the Ottoman Empire: Land Disputes in Peasant Petitions in Post-Revolutionary Diyarbekir', in *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870–1915*, ed. Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (Boston: Brill, 2012), 179–215.
50. Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule: 1908–1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 60.
51. Klein, 'Conflict and Collaboration', 161.
52. According to the petition, the chiefs who had usurped the Mirakians' land in Derova were Yusuf son of Cemal(?)/(hamal), who ran a grocery in Kızılkilise, the administrative centre of the district, and Hüseyin Ağa, chief of the Arilli and Karsanan tribes.
53. For an evaluation of the transformation of property rights within the context of the Land Code of 1858 see: Huri İslamoğlu, 'Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858', in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 3–61.
54. For a discussion of petitioning practices and strategies pursued in the Diyarbekir province, see: Özok-Gündoğan, 'A 'Peripherial' Approach to the 1908 Revolution in the Ottoman Empire'.
55. The several land-usurpation cases in the districts of Çarsancak, Hozat and Kuzican

suggest that local tribes, in collaboration with local officials, secured the title deeds for the lands in their own names: once they had forcibly or fraudulently obtained the lands, they had these lands signed over to their names. Since the chiefs of some tribes also took part in local administrative councils and even appointed district directors (*müdür*), we may assume that it would not have been difficult to manipulate ownership claims.

56. B.O.A., DH.MUİ. 77-2/12 (18 June 1910), Armenian Patriarchate to the Ministry of the Interior.
57. Ibid., Ministry of the Interior to Mamüretülaziz Province.
58. *The Ottoman Land Code*, trans. F. Ongley (London: W. Clowes, 1892), 39.
59. The response letter to the district governorate of Kızılkilise, dated 5 May 1910. B.O.A., DH.MUİ. 77-2/12 (18 June 1910).
60. The tribes of Dersim were classified into three main groups: *muti* (obedient), *nîm-muti* (semi-obedient) and *gayrı muti* (disobedient). According to the official classifications; the *muti* and *nîm-muti* tribes were those that paid their taxes (*tekâlif-i emîriye*), could speak Turkish and practised Sunni Islam. In contrast, the *gayr-ı muti* tribes, also labelled 'rebellious tribes' (*aşâir-i bagi)*, were those that lived mainly in the mountainous parts of Dersim, belonged to the Kızılbaş faith and could not speak Ottoman Turkish. As part of the state's efforts to maintain its presence in Dersim during both the reign of Abdülhamid II and the CUP's tenure, the state sought the loyalty and support of the tribes by rewarding the 'obedient' ones with land and appointments to local administrative positions. In dealing with 'disobedient' and 'rebellious' tribes, however, the state used military and economic approaches, such as deportation, forced military conscription and religious conversion, to discipline and ultimately 'civilize' them. Cihangir Gündoğdu and Vural Genç, *Dersim'de Osmanlı Siyaseti: İzâle-i Vahşet, Tashîh-i İtikâd, Tasfiye-i Ezhân, 1880–1913* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2013).
61. In the official report that was submitted to the central government in 1910 both Arilli and Karsanan/Karsanlı tribes were identified as semi-obedient. Ibid., 168–74.
62. B.O.A., DH.MUİ. 77-2/15 (18 June 1910).
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler*, 384.
67. Mirak, *Genocide Survivors, Community Builders*.

EPILOGUE

CONTRIBUTIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND DILEMMAS FACED BY SCHOLARS OF THE OTTOMAN EAST

Janet Klein

A few years ago I wrote about the prospects and dilemmas faced by 'Kurdish Studies' scholars at a moment when they are caught between two scholarly trends that appear to be at odds with each other, and I see similar prospects and dilemmas faced by scholars of other non-dominant or less commonly studied groups. On the one hand, people, such as Armenians and Kurds, whose histories and even very identities have long been suppressed or denied in Ottoman studies and in other 'area-studies' realms, are now increasingly becoming legitimate topics of study, with new area-studies departments, journals, and institutions to support research on these groups. At the same time, 'the newer and more cutting-edge scholarly currents […] are moving away from area-studies and ethnic approaches and into post-nationalist, theme-based, and global or world histories'.[1] I described how, while 'thinking beyond the nation-state' is not only in academic vogue at the moment but is also an analytically meaningful intervention in the way history is researched and written, scholars in 'area studies' have recently begun to offer their own contributions to focusing on less frequently studied groups while at the same time exploring their own positionality in these scholarly currents and producing nuanced studies that *do* see beyond nationalist teleologies and other analytically problematic constraints. This has especially been true for current graduate students and recent graduates in the fields of Ottoman history as well as fields that fall within the rubric of 'Ottoman history'.

The present volume represents some of the best of this innovative thinking on how to conduct research on non-dominant groups (still in the area-studies realm) while remaining thoughtfully aware of the pitfalls and opportunities presented in this endeavour, and at the same time finding a way to make theoretical contributions to important thematic questions *beyond* the world of area studies. While it may seem that a volume dedicated to the 'Ottoman East' is, in fact, not only celebrating but actually parsing out a narrower field of study than Ottoman history itself, the approach taken by the contributors is indeed the opposite: to write the history of the region as '*an* Ottoman history rather than a chapter of it' and in so doing be able to contribute to a better understanding of Ottoman history and broader imperial histories in general. What is particularly refreshing about these authors' approaches is their effort to draw

attention to the *shared* histories of all peoples in the region in a manner that neither privileges ethnicity nor ignores it, so that 'the coeval presence of Armenia, Kurdistan and Turkey […] is appreciated',[2] in the Ottoman period and beyond. Additionally, by treating subjects beyond the usual suspects in scholarship on the region (mainly relations between ethno-confessional groups, violence, tribalism, state–society relations), the chapters in this volume collectively tell us that this region has a rich history indeed, and one that is much more complex than has been hitherto acknowledged.

As cited in the introduction, Libaridian's words are helpful in describing the pitfalls of the 'two historiographies' approach, namely, that the histories of Armenians and Turks (and Kurds) have been written as if these peoples 'that coexisted for centuries did not interact except when they crossed each others' paths during massacres, each performing the predetermined and inescapable role their characters mandated: one, that of the victim; the other, that of the victimizer'.[3] All of the works in this volume tear down the 'two historiographies' approach, notably those by Dzovinar Derderian and Ohannes Kılıçdağı. In Derderian's piece, we see Kurds and Armenians together as groups who both occupied exploiter and exploited roles in the changing agrarian regime in the late-Ottoman period. Derderian reminds us that discourses were produced that 'depicted each ethno-confessional community as having a collective experience and singular subjectivities', but that these experiences and subjectivities emerged in a *context*, which she discusses. As Kurds became the barbaric Other, the Ottoman state became the 'just' and 'benevolent' saviour. I wonder what James C. Scott might say about the public and private transcripts of the oppressed and oppressors here. Could the use of the Kurds in depictions of Armenian–state relations have served as a public transcript of power, as a way of speaking truth to power through a foil? But Derderian does not leave things so uncomplicated. Instead, she shows us that while Armenian writers may have used the Kurds to paint a picture of many problems they faced, ultimately, they were concerned with Armenians themselves, and held Armenians responsible for the harm they caused to their own community. This was not a simple matter of Kurds vs Armenians. And as Ohannes Kılıçdağı demonstrates, even after the mass violence against Armenians in Adana in 1909, Armenian leaders, whatever their erstwhile affiliations, '*consciously chose to be optimistic*' regarding the Armenians' future in the new constitutional regime, whether the matter was about questions of violence and assimilation or regional autonomy. When the new constitutional regime was in power, Armenians (along with sympathetic compatriots from other Ottoman ethno-confessional communities) remained rather sceptical and wary. After all, they, like others, were waiting to see what changes would actually come about. As Kılıçdağı shows, the arrival of the constitution was complicated even for those communities who had fought for it: after all, 'the constitution did not [only] produce feelings of fraternity, but also engendered envy and enmity among some Muslims against Christians'.[4] This discord was not age-old, but produced in a specific historical context.

While the chapters contributed by Derderian and Kılıçdağı serve to break down the 'two histories' approach, we also learn from several other authors in this volume that people in the region had concerns that moved well beyond anxiety over their relations with 'the Other'. As Cora demonstrates, there was so much going on *within* certain Armenian communities that had

nothing to do with the ‘Other’, whether the ‘Other’ was Kurds or Turks. Armenians were dealing with their own (Armenian) landlords at the same time as they were negotiating their position vis-à-vis Protestant missionaries. The ‘Other’ could indeed emanate from one's ‘own’ group. Gündoğdu's work on the Armenian Mirakian tribe of Dersim not only works to dispel essentialist and monolithic depictions of ‘Armenianness’ and ‘tribe’, but the author's work further highlights the richness and complexities of tribal ties and factors involved in a tribe's formation, transformation, and dissolution as well as the level of ‘tribalness’ a society experienced in a particular time and place. Members of the Mirakian tribe were much more concerned with access to land than they were with the ethnicity of competitors in the struggle over land and resources.

Yezidis, as Gölbaşı shows, had equally complex identities, as their people confronted an Ottoman state bent on integrating their diverse communities through coercive means, despite the inclusive ‘Ottomanist’ rhetoric. Yet beyond pointing out the roles of state and non-state actors in communal identity politics, state–society relations are complicated in this volume, and the authors go far in breaking down the state–society binary that has long existed in the literature. Bayraktar's study of local intermediation networks in Diyarbekir (the eastern ‘periphery's centre’) also draws attention to the diversity and complexity of ‘state’ actors and their visions and agendas. His work exposes the pitfalls of simplistic ‘centre–periphery’ approaches to studies of states/empires and societies, and further highlights the problems inherent in drawing rigid lines between ‘state’ and ‘society’. Polatel's chapter on the Sasun massacres helps us to understand violence not only on the local level, but also what causes states to engage in ‘extraordinary terror’ methods against their own people, particularly in his attention to what Mann calls ‘exemplary repression’.[5] Polatel's contribution further complicates our understanding of state orders to perpetrate violence by highlighting how those orders are perceived on the ground and carried out and how they are covered up and reframed.

While all of these works break down the ‘two histories’ approach and expose the multi-layered character of social, economic, and political dynamics in the region, they also challenge the literature that has imposed isolation on the Ottoman East and its people, and that has failed to ‘contextualize the study of the Armenian past(s) [as well as Kurdish past(s), I would add] in an interactive framework’, thus making their history stand ‘apart from other histories and peoples instead of creatively interacting with them’.[6] Some chapters in this volume stand out in offering this correction. In her work on Ottoman attention to their networks of roads in order to ‘save the empire’, Özkan connects debates over road construction to the development of the modern state and trans-imperial competition, but reminds us that ‘the very nature of modernization was actually contradictory and inconsistent and that its logic counteracted the creation of a structural order of neatly separated provincial and imperial borders’.[7] She shows that local, provincial, and imperial actors had a variety of agendas and interests, a fact which in itself helps us to break down the notion of a monolithic and non-dynamic state. Gutman's chapter on the trans-hemispheric migration of Armenians from the Ottoman East to North America also highlights the non-monolithic nature of the Ottoman state as it reveals how, while the Ottoman state may have worked to *prevent* large-scale Armenian migration to North America, frequently local officials often *facilitated* it for their own reasons, which were often

at odds with the vision embraced by officials representing the central government. His chapter further emphasizes both the unique local conditions that gave rise to the large-scale departure of Armenian peasants and artisans from the Harput region as well as the role that broader (including trans-hemispheric) connections played in this process. Gutman's work challenges the frequent simplistic depiction of the various forces that interacted and impacted the region commonly referred to as the 'six Armenian *vilayet*s'.[8] Balistreri's contribution sheds light on the multiple layers in discourses of self-determination, and how we cannot read them as straightforward texts calling for '*Independence!*'[9] Instead, statements by nationalists were often framed as being not just an agitation for the stated goal, but were also carefully modified according to the audience intended to engage with those statements. Nationalist discourses had to engage with shifting international 'standards' on what made a group eligible for self-determination, and had to engage with contemporary global norms – findings that are still relevant today.

Lastly, the approaches taken by Pehlivan and Sipahi bring studies of the 'Ottoman East' and global history together in a refreshing way, as these scholars employ innovative analytical tools that have thus far been scantly employed in Ottoman histories. Pehlivan explains that factors well beyond simple 'centre–periphery' relations, or relations between Armenians and Kurds/Turks helped to contribute to the growing crisis in the land regime. Indeed, her chapter is quite pioneering in its focus on environmental history, which has seen a rich, but sparse start in Ottoman studies. As she highlights the effects of climatic conditions on agriculture in the Ottoman East, she is able to offer another explanation for peasant abandonment of their lands in the mid-nineteenth century. Climate change, along with other factors (such as local government policies) affected agriculture in the region, and the situation of scarcity also prompted the speculation on foodstuffs by foreign companies and other imperial agents. As she highlights the intersection of these events, policies, and practices, Pehlivan adds to our understanding of famine, not only in the Ottoman East or the Ottoman Empire at large, but on a global level. And Sipahi aims to fill the serious gap in literature on urban and suburban spaces in the Ottoman East in his study of urban duality in the Harput region. His study is particularly important for addressing the problematic assumption that 'the best theoretical tools to analyse the Ottoman East are power relations, sectarianism, internal colonization, orientalism, and resistance, but never consumption, urban beauty, bourgeois utopias, or tastes'.[10] He reminds us that Ottoman urban spaces and transformations were not unique to regions only to the west and south of the Ottoman East, but that this region, too, had its own emerging bourgeoisie, which helped to build a new push towards urban spatiality and appreciation of urban beauty, and that it was primarily this local class transformation rather than either military exigencies emanating from the centre or the influence of foreign missionaries that influenced these changes.

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A decade ago, Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-El-Haj wrote a plea to reverse the trend whereby the 'historiography of the Ottoman Empire continues to emphasize the peculiarities, oddities, and particularism of Ottoman history and civilization', and in which Ottoman historians have often been 'inclined to treat phenomena that occur throughout the world in vastly different states and

cultures […] as if they were the outcome of purely conjunctural factors affecting the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman Empire alone'. Abou-El-Haj emphasized how a result of this has been that neither Ottoman historians nor historians of other (even neighbouring) regions have been able to be in dialogue with one another, as Ottoman history has been characterized by its 'differentness'. We might add that this has also (and perhaps especially) been the case for the study of 'sub-Ottoman' groups, like the Armenians and Kurds. Abou-El-Haj suggests that, '[i]f history is a science, it should be possible to treat and analyse Ottoman history according to criteria commensurate with those that have been developed in studying the history of other areas'. He suggests that 'such an approach should facilitate the entry of Ottoman history into the discourse of comparative history, thereby allowing communication across ethnic, national, civilizational, and continental divides. Global communication of this kind in turn should allow one to bridge the gap that today separates historians and social scientists, most particularly historically oriented sociologists and anthropologists'.[11]

The present volume demonstrates how far we have moved in this direction, even over the past decade, as the authors collectively work to paint vivid new pictures of social, economic, and political dynamics in the Ottoman East, the wider empire, and even on global levels. The works in this volume are the kinds of studies that lend themselves to dialogue with not only Ottomanists at large, but also to scholars of other regions (and even other time periods) who seek to address broader issues of identity-making, violence, class formation, land tenure, state-building, urbanization, migration, and the effects of climate change on human societies. The contributions by these authors present wonderful opportunities for comparative study. They not only fill gaps in Ottoman history, but serve to bridge the gap between historians and (other) social scientists described by Abou-El-Haj. I see the vibrant and engaging research done by this generation of current graduate students and recent graduates as inspiring for my own future research as well as that of my colleagues in the field (and even outside of the field). These young scholars are already in conversation with cutting-edge research across many scholarly divides, and it is my hope that we can continue the dialogue with them.

Notes

1. Janet Klein, 'Minorities, Statelessness, and Kurdish Studies Today: Prospects and Dilemmas for Scholars', *Journal of Ottoman Studies/Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, special issue in honor of Rifa'at Abou-el-Haj (December 2010), 229. This special issue has also been reprinted as a book: Donald Quataert and Baki Tezcan, eds., *Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Ottoman and Middle Eastern/North African Studies: A Tribute to Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010).
2. See 'Introduction' in this volume.
3. Cited in 'Introduction' in this volume from Gerard Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 185.
4. See Kılıçdağı's chapter.

5. Although Polatel does not use this term, the Sasun massacres might fall under what Michael Mann describes as ‘exemplary repression’, pre-meditated mass violence performed against a group (often a particular city or village) with the goal of cowing others into submission. See Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12, 16.
6. Cited in ‘Introduction’ in this volume from Sebouh Aslanian, ‘From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories: World History's Challenge to Armenian Studies’, unpublished manuscript (n.d.), 3.
7. See Özkan's chapter.
8. See Gutman's chapter.
9. See Balistreri's chapter.
10. See Sipahi's chapter.
11. Rif ‘at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 1–2 (quotes not in order).

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