





MEDITE

BLACK SEA

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

RED SEA

CASPIAN SEA

PERSIAN GULF

[MODERN NAMES  
IN BRACKETS]

▲ ANCIENT ASIA MINOR & PERSIA

MAK-KHASHI [Patalakht]

TUL-SINA [Sennel]

MANA

ZIKIR TU [Sagartia]

BAKHI [Bokhan]

SINGARA

Damascus

Jerusalem

25

30

35

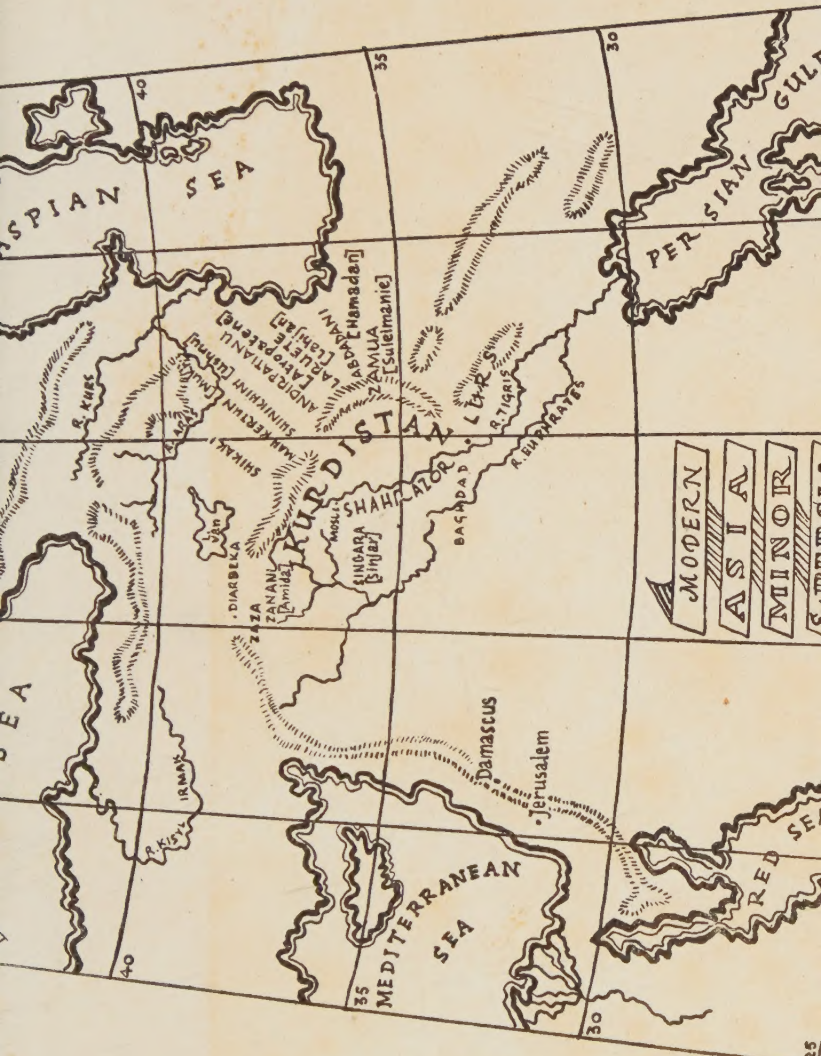
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MODERN  
ASIA  
MINOR



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KURDS AND KURDISTAN



KURDS  
and  
KURDISTAN

BY

ARSHAK SAFRASTIAN



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## *A Very Ancient People in Retrospect*

### 'WE CAN CONQUER THE WORLD'

"Look at our dashing horsemen who know neither fear nor retreat. Look at the speed and the irresistible thrust of their mounts. Our men fire their rifles at the enemy and aim accurately at the gallop; they can fight even while slipping below the girths of their saddles and firing between the forelegs of their horses. We can, by Allah! conquer the world with such men and no nation in the world can resist us for very long."

Such was the boast Musto Ahmad Agha, one of the Chiefs of the Kurdish tribal confederation of Batwan, inhabiting the north-eastern slopes of Jebel Gudi, a high snow-capped mountain in Kurdistan, north of the city of Mosul in Iraq. Musto Agha, as he was affectionately called by his intimate friends, had hospitably entertained me in his tent in August, 1910. He had asked me to postpone my departure for another day in order to witness a tribal fight with the neighbouring Shernakh tribesmen, which he thought was bound to take place the next day. A tribal feud latent for some years was to be settled by a trial of strength. Blood which had been shed in the past was to be wiped out by fresh blood: otherwise the wronged tribe would lose its honour and prestige throughout the region.

In 1910 the whole of Iraq including Jebel Gudi still belonged to the Ottoman empire, where two years earlier the Young Turk party had come in to power and had deposed the notorious Sultan Abdul Hamid II. During his thirty years' murderous rule that Sultan had outwardly favoured the great Kurdish tribesmen and showered special military honours on their Chieftains. In 1909 their patron was dethroned, and many Kurdish tribal Chiefs were frowned upon by the Young Turk government of the day. Entrenched in the fastnesses of the mountains and surrounded by related friendly tribesmen Musto Agha did not seem to take

the Young Turks very seriously; he called them godless and corrupt, bound to bring disaster on the state. At all events, he was determined to get his own back by provoking a fight with the rival tribe of Shernakh.

Early next morning I rode out with Musto Agha to take up position on a hill which overlooked the plain, where the battle was to take place. We were thus at a safe distance from the battlefield. He was escorted by one of his younger brothers and a retinue of some ten well-armed horsemen who served as his bodyguard at all times. His eldest son, a fine figure and a famous marksman, about forty years of age, was the Commander in the Field. His fighting horsemen, some four hundred strong, were already on the spot exercising, occasionally galloping their horses and shouting war songs. For some two hours the enemy did not appear, a delay long enough to make Musto Agha and his brother dilate upon "womanly ways" and "cowardice" of their rivals.

Half-way through a story which my host was telling me confirming his views about his rivals we heard the rattle of distant rifle fire from the opposite direction. With binoculars we could just perceive the Shernakh tribesmen descending low hills and galloping at a tremendous pace towards us some six miles away. They were brandishing their swords in brilliant sunshine and firing volleys to announce their arrival, because unwritten tribal law forbids any attempt at a surprise attack in disputes where tribal honour is concerned. Musto Agha dispatched his brother with exhortations and good wishes to his son commanding in the field, and bowing his head murmured some prayer in Arabic.

Presently the fight was on; but in the thick dust and smoke which soon enveloped the plain we could see very little. I could hear brisk rifle fire and a faint rumble of galloping horses, yelling and shouting. In less than an hour the firing dwindled and gradually ceased altogether. On our return to the camp I saw Musto Agha's contingent ready for a review of the Chief on the parade ground, at a little distance away from the tents. Men and horses covered with dust and sweat, a fierce and menacing look in their eyes, these fighting Kurds seemed indeed ferocious.

Musto Agha was so proud of his tribesmen that he felt justified in saying: "By Allah! we can conquer the world with such men, and no nation in the world can resist us for very long."

### THE "RUMI" MUST GO

Up to some forty years ago the generic appellation *Rumi* was applied to any invader, conqueror or individual who came from the regions of the Bosphorus and Asia Minor. In a general way the boundary of the *Rumi* was drawn west of the Samsun—Sivas—Cilicia meridian. Romans, Byzantines, and Turks were all equally *Rumis*, without any distinction whatever. Of course the term conveyed a sense of profound contempt, synonymous at the same time with godlessness and almost all imaginable vices. The conception underlying the word is still current among the isolated Kurdish tribes entirely untouched by modern movements, and to a lesser degree among the northern Arabs, Armenians and western Persians. Many incidents illustrating this fundamental idea among old Kurdish tribes could be quoted from personal experience. It is sufficient to relate one of them.

Bisharë Chato Agha, a really lion-hearted fighter from the mountains, was the recognised and highly-respected Chieftain of a confederation of five Kurdish clans, which in an emergency could raise about three thousand armed horsemen. Perched on a high rocky crag in the Taurus mountains his family castle, where he lived, was almost inaccessible, far away from the beaten track. He was famous throughout Kurdistan and among tribesmen in Iraq and Persia for his legendary daring and unequalled bravery. Bisharë Chato was a successful cattle-breeder in a large way. Every year in early summer Arab merchants from Aleppo and Damascus would visit the cool valleys of Kurdistan and Armenia to buy entire herds of sheep, goats, horses and cows. The Chieftain thus secured a safe income in gold; but he refused to pay any sort of tax to the *Rumi* intruder, that is to say to the Turkish government, because he maintained that the slopes where his cattle grazed and

the surrounding valleys where his tribesmen cultivated cereals on patches of arable land belonged to him by heredity; he did not recognise any other law except that of his tribe; therefore he considered that he was under no obligation to pay land-tax or sheep-tax to the godless *Rumi*, or to furnish recruits for his army. He was a champion of the helpless and the poor against the oppressor and the robber, although it must be admitted that his tribesman would sometimes come down from the hills to ambush and loot trade caravans which passed to and fro between Syria and Iraq, Kurdistan and Armenia.

After the Young Turk revolution in 1908, as mentioned above, the government started a regular campaign, particularly against those Kurdish tribes which had proved in the past to have been strong partisans of the deposed Sultan, or had been too notoriously turbulent in the previous twenty years. In the pigeon-holes of the Turkish judges in the cities of Diarbekr or Bitlis, there were more than a hundred summonses against Bisharë Chato or his four sons; but the authorities had been unable to deliver them to those concerned, because any officer or gendarme who dared to approach the eyrie of the Chieftain never returned alive.

Somehow or other, however, in September, 1908, the authorities succeeded in trapping one of the sons and a grandson of the Chieftain in a valley north of Diarbekr, and locked them up in the dungeons of the city. Bisharë Chato, then about sixty years old but agile and full of vigour like the mighty eagles of the Taurus, was furious on hearing of the capture and imprisonment of his son and grandson by a mean Turkish trick. He sent a secret message to his intimate non-Turk friends in Diabekr, Mosul and Bitlis (his district in fact lay under the administration of the latter province, although nearer to the former two cities), vowing undying revenge and expressing violent contempt for the *Rumi* tricksters. He recalled how, during the Kurdo-Turkish wars of the thirties of the last century, the newly-formed Turkish regular army had bombarded and destroyed his family castle, murdered his grandfather, and cut off the arms and ears of innocent people . . . (See p. 54.)

There are two practicable caravan routes which lead from Syria to the middle Tigris Valley, from the city of Diarbekr to the headwaters of the river, namely to the cities of Bitlis and Sairt. Bisharë Chato and his tribesmen could easily control both of these routes between Diarbekr and Bitlis. They had often done it in the past. In those uncertain days of revolution, the Turkish government in Stambul were most careful in the choice of their high officials. They were constantly changing provincial *valis* (governor-general of a province) for fear of their turning into reactionaries, specially in provinces so distant from the capital. Consequently, early in 1909, a Young Turk who had studied some years in Paris was sent to Bitlis as governor-general.

After settling down in his new post, this *vali* sent for his wife and household furniture in Stambul. She travelled via the Mediterranean and Syria, but for weeks she was held up in Diarbekr on account of the insecurity prevailing on the mainroads. There cannot be any doubt that our Chieftain had some share in the continued deprivations on the caravan routes. Anyhow Bisharë Chato got wind of the predicament in which the Turkish lady found herself and decided to revenge himself by inflicting on the *Rumi* the greatest indignity imaginable. He posted the bravest of his horsemen at favourable vantage points in the vicinity of the main caravan route to lie in wait for the *vali's* wife; the *vali* himself, fully aware of the dangers threatening free passage, got some fifteen *zabties* (armed mounted police) to escort his wife's caravan from Diarbekr to Bitlis. In the first week of September of the same year news flashed throughout the eastern provinces of Turkey that Kurdish 'bandits' had kidnapped a Stambul *Hanum*, (the wife of the governor-general of Bitlis) and had carried her off to the mountains. Later on it became known that about forty miles north-west of Diarbekr at a river-crossing, the warriors of Bisharë Chato had swooped down on the caravan in full daylight, had disarmed the police escort without firing a shot, and after letting them go free, had driven the whole caravan, including the *vali's* wife, concubines, pack-animals and their muleteers, up to their mountain fastnesses.

On one of the following days I saw the *vali* overcome with grief and a sense of shame and humiliation. He lamented the 'barbaric conditions' of the country and the savage manners of the people. With a war against the Albanians, and two others wars against the Arabs, he said, revolutionary Turkey could not undertake a third largescale campaign against the Kurdish tribes. Only a big army could reconquer and subdue Kurdistan. He impressed me as being as anxious about the safety of his Vienna chairs and furniture, which he had specially ordered from a Levantine shop in Stambul, as of that of his wife and concubines. Perhaps this educated Turk hoped to civilise the 'barbaric country' by his foreign importations.

The following spring I had an opportunity of meeting the Chieftain himself, an old friend who liked hunting wild boar with British Army Service rifles. He said he had no use whatever for the *Rumi* ladies or the *Frangi* (European) furniture which broke down like frail reeds at the first manly jerk. His eyes flashing with anger and determination and all his wiry body shaking with emotion, Bisharë Chato Agha told me: "We do not want the *Rumi* amongst us; we can govern ourselves, as our fore-fathers have done from the days of Adam. The *Rumi* must go; my sons and my grandchildren will never rest until the *Rumi* is gone."

Through the intercession of a great Sheikh of the region, a religious chief who carried considerable weight with the Chieftain, the *vali's* wife was eventually freed and restored to her husband, unharmed and untouched, in exchange for the release of his son and grandson from the prison in Diarbekr. This was in accord with the unwritten code of honour and the sanctity of asylum which rules supreme throughout the ancient civilised East—men or women who seek shelter under your roof are a sacred trust ordained by God. A true guardian of the ancient code, Bisharë Chato would not have behaved in any other way, even to a *Rumi* enemy. As to the Vienna furniture of the governor-general, which for years occasioned laughter and amusement in the neighbouring provinces, it was mostly broken to pieces in



the course of being carried up and down rugged mountain paths, to the great disappointment of its enlightened owner.

This romantic Chieftain, Bisharë Chato Agha, remained invincible in his mountain fastnesses. During the Kurdo-Turkish war of 1930-1 he joined with all his forces in the battle for the independence of Kurdistan. For many months he harried Turkish regular troops in the hills north of Diarbekr. In 1931 however, under circumstances which cannot now be fully ascertained, he was lured by Turks into a trap and foully murdered with his three sons.

The life-work of this Chieftain, totally unknown to the outside world, seems to have been a portent of great significance. An extreme individualist in his younger days, a supreme lord of his valley, deaf to any call for national Kurdish cohesion and action, he woke up to the necessity for unity in his old age and threw himself heart and soul into the struggle for national independence; he died when he must have been above eighty. The Kurdish race is awakening to national consciousness—an awakening which is full of promise.



## Chapter I

### *Secular misrepresentation of the Kurdish race*

IN THE OLD hemisphere there is probably no other genuine ethnic group that has been more persistently abused and misrepresented than the Kurdish race. From the dawn of history, perhaps no other people in the world, inhabiting as well-defined a geographical area, has been more consistently reviled than the Kurdish people. This fact should be emphasised from the outset so as to place the historical problem in perspective, and to discuss the Kurdish question as it presents itself to-day.

Some of the most ancient kings of Sumerian cities, Kings of Akkad and Babylonia down to Xenophon, the Commander of the Ten Thousand, have described their dealings with these invincible mountaineers in simple and matter-of-fact language. The treatment which the ancient kingdoms and the retreating Greeks received at the hands of the Kurds was perhaps somewhat harsher than was usual in similar circumstances; nevertheless those ancient records of the behaviour of the Kurds by no means support the interpretation which has been placed upon them in modern times. From the powerful Kings of Assyria down to the Mongols, Turks and Persians have given the Kurds a name which has stuck to them until the present day. Had no foreigners visited Kurdistan in the course of the last three centuries, and had no personal memoirs been written about certain unpleasant experiences suffered during the journey, it may safely be stated that the Kurdish race would enjoy to-day as good a reputation as any other people in the past or present. Their main fault is assumed to be their insubmissive way of life, always intolerant of and hostile to any higher authority, whether it be conqueror, legal sovereign power or imperial neighbour. But hereditary Kurdish tribes, accustomed to centuries of self-rule and territorial independence, do not consider it wrong to oppose the foreign rulers in their midst by

every means in their power. As long as the weapons of warfare were the bow, the spear or the sling, they held their own against mighty empires and conquerors; since the discovery of gunpowder and the quick-firing rifle, however, they have found themselves at a disadvantage compared with the surrounding empires, namely Turkey and Persia, at any rate up to the beginning of the present century. (a)

Before dealing with the main features of the geography of Kurdistan it seems appropriate to examine first the historical beginnings of the Kurdish people, that is to say, where and when their name first appears in the history of the ancient civilised East. The term 'Kurd' has to be taken first. In so far as it is possible to ascertain from the extant literary documents, the name appears for the first time in a book in the Pahlevi language in the form of Kûrd, Kûrdân. Artakhshir-i-Papâkân, the founder of the Persian Sassanid Dynasty in 226 A.D. mentions among his many opponents, a Mâdig, the King of the Kûrdan (Kurds).<sup>(1)</sup> It seems that this destroyer of the Parthian throne, Artakhshir, shaped the old name 'Guti' into 'Kurd'. The great Arab historians, Al-Tabari, Al-Masudi and others, took over the name from the Sassanids, and it has come down to modern times as 'Kurd'.

The patronymic 'Kurd' is genuine and correct, if you discard the Iranian and Turkish acceptance of the sense. (See note (a).). The name has been derived from the land and kingdom of Gutium and the Guti people, and has assimilated the letter 'r' after the vowel 'u' (Guti = Gurti), a linguistic rule which in general applies to most Indo-European languages, particularly to those of the East, such as Kurdish, Armenian, Sanskrit and Greek.

Cuneiform inscriptions in the Sumerian language have definitely shown that the land of Gutium was one of the oldest independent kingdoms of the ancient civilised East, contemporary with Sumer,

(1) Darab Peshotan Sanjana: *Karnamakh-i Artakhshir-i-Papâkân* 1896. Page 22 v. (= 'Kûrdan Shahi Madrig').

Th. Nöldeke translated the same Pahlevi book into German almost simultaneously with that of Sanjana. Nöldeke renders the line in question in the same sense.





Akkad, Elam and Armenia. In cuneiform inscriptions so far published and interpreted, the name of the land Gutium appears first in a tablet recorded by Lugal-anni-Mundu, the king of the Sumerian city of Adab, which to-day bears the name Bismaya, in southern Iraq in the Euphrates region. In a foundation memorial tablet discovered at Bismaya, Lugal-anni-Mundu mentions the extensive land of Gutium, together with the lands of Subartu and Elam. The meaning of the tablet is not quite clear, but comparing its contents with later Akkadian information, scholars assume that the Sumerian King claimed a victory over the kingdoms mentioned which entitled him to proclaim himself a 'lord of the four corners of the world.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The chronology of this historical period cannot be accurately established. There are no consecutive sources of information for dating the reign of this Sumerian King of Adab, who is assumed to have belonged to the eighth postdiluvian dynasty and to have ruled some ninety years.<sup>(2)</sup>

According to the short chronology convincingly put forward by Mr. Sidney Smith,<sup>(3)</sup> the date of this Sumerian King may be placed tentatively at about 2350 B.C.

The few extant texts prove that as early as the twenty-fourth century B.C. or thereabouts, there was a kingdom of Gutium, which corresponds to the Kurdistan of to-day, and that it was important enough to be classed by a Sumerian King as an independent kingdom together with the larger and better-known kingdom of Subartu and Elam. Thereafter the land of Gutium appears in dozens of omen-texts, year-dates, astrological texts, and oracles, as always hostile to the small Sumerian city-states scattered in the alluvial plains of Southern Iraq.

Sometimes by their own forces, oftener in alliance with Elam,

(1) A. Ungnad. *Subartu* . . . (1936/pp. 36 et sqq.)

(2) S. H. Langdon: 'The Third Dynasty of Kish'. In *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. I (1923) pp. 369 sqq. 390.

(3) Sidney Smith: *Alalakh and Chronology*: 1940. p. 29. From the list of Kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon, the date of the Sumerian King of Adab has to be calculated.

the land of Turukku, Subartu, or other neighbouring countries, the kings of Gutium, who occupied and ruled Babylon and the lands of later Assyria, were always ready to attack the settled communities to the west of the Zagros mountains. (b)

Omen-texts, which, because of their religious character, are the most carefully recorded documents of old oriental monarchies, often refer to the raids or threatened inroads of the Guti people on Sumerian and Akkadian cities. This information from the omen-texts seems to show that the kingdom of Gutium permanently maintained its independence in the mountains.

In a year date, giving only the bare fact, Shargalisharri, (about 1900 B.C.) King of Akkad and successor to Naramsin, mentions wars against Gutium and boasts of having taken prisoner Sharlak, the king of Gutium. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report. In spite of such individual successes, the outstanding fact seems to be that the Sumerians and Akkadians, like the more powerful Assyrians in later centuries, waged wars against Gutium and other mountain peoples with the object of preventing their descent into the more fertile plains of Mesopotamia.

The site of Gutium has been discussed by almost every scholar who has dealt with the subject, in the light of the few and unconnected items of information that can be gathered from documents. The concensus of opinion is summed up by R. Campbell Thomson, (1) who places Gutium in 'the quadrilateral contained by the Lower Zab, the Tigris, the hills of Suleimanya and the river Diyala'. Their capital city lay in or around the town of Kirkuk, named Arrapkha in those days, about eighty miles north of Baghdad, a flourishing centre of oil extraction to-day.

The downfall of the Assyrian empire (612—606 B.C.) which up till then seems to have loosely controlled them in the hills east of the Tigris, released the Guti people from all constraint and opened the way for their expansion in every direction. At the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, the Persian, the Guti-Kurdish cavalry

(1) *The Cambridge Ancient History*: Vol. III, pp. 218, 223 et passim: Cf. Sidney Smith: *Early History of Assyria up to 1000 B.C.* (1928). the word Gutium. Index.



served as the advanceguard of the Persian Army (538 B.C.). Xenophon found the Cardouchi-Kurdish tribes entrenched in the main passes of the Taurus from the city of Mosul up to the river Kentrites, the Bohtan-su of to-day, the Eastern Tigris which formed the boundary between Armenia and the Cardouchai.

Contemporary evidence by an eye-witness such as Xenophon, shows that as long as the Assyrian empire was in being no great changes in ethnographical distribution within the framework of the ancient East could take place. Assyria had stabilised the political as well as the ethnographical situation in the ancient East for nearly seven centuries (about 1300—600 B.C.).

The Assyrian Kings themselves often shifted the people of whole cities from west to east or *vice versa*; but tribes accustomed to mountain surroundings, would hardly submit to enforced transplantation to level plains. Migrations of entire peoples from continent to continent, a view which traditional historians still hold as a fundamental dogma, seems to have no factual basis, at least so far as the genuine ethnic units of the ancient East are concerned. Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians and so forth are autochthonous races living in their native habitats just as they did in prehistoric times. (c)

*The First Guti-Kurdish kingdom ruling in Babylonia  
(about 2300—2175 B.C.)*

The dynasty of Akkad produced only two great figures during nearly three centuries of its rule : one of these was King Sharukin, the conqueror. Otherwise chaos and civil wars, particularly in the second half of this period, seem to have prevailed almost throughout the existence of this much-praised Semitic kingdom. A tablet recorded at the time describes the general conditions when it says that no one knew 'who was King, who was not King'. It would have been very surprising if the mountaineers of Gutium, watching the state of affairs in the lowlands, had not marched down from their hills and installed themselves in plains and cities. That is exactly what happened. A King of Gutium, probably named Imbia, established his authority in Babylonia as the legal sover-

eign, and ejected the Dynasty of Akkad just as nearly two thousand years later Cyrus of Persia came down from the heights Anzan (Susa?) and with the help of GUTI-Kurdish cavalry conquered Babylonia (538 B.C.) without any fighting at all.

The Dynasty of Gutium ruled one hundred and twenty-four years and forty days in Akkad and Babylonia (about 2264—2137 B.C.). Twenty-one GUTI kings succeeded each other during that century and a quarter. (d)

A king of this dynasty, Erridapizir, proclaimed himself king of the 'four corners of the world'. Yet in spite of this proclamation, the dynasty of Gutium was overthrown by Utukhegal, the king and founder of the fifth dynasty of Uruk (to-day Warka), another Sumerian city-state of great fame.

The character of the rule of this first GUTI-Kurdish kingdom in world history has been described very unfavourably by contemporary Sumerian scribes. It appears from their inscription that the moment the GUTI kings established their power in the plains of Babylonia they began to pillage, burn and devastate the flourishing cities of Sumer and Akkad. They robbed temple treasuries and carried off statues of gods and priestesses to their capital Arrapkha. Lamentations and prayers were sung in the temples for deliverance from these harsh rulers. Whole cities were laid waste, women were taken from their husbands. 'Weeping and groaning prevailed throughout the land, the dragon of the mountain, the enemy of the gods, ruined cities and spread terror over all the land', etc. Almost all modern historians are equally unanimous in severely condemning the GUTI rule in Sumer and Akkad as barbarian and destructive.<sup>(1)</sup> In fairness, however, it may be questioned whether the modern judgment on the character of the remote dynasty of Gutium is not somewhat influenced by the experiences of travellers in the last three centuries.

Be that as it may, the GUTI people, at least their rulers and chiefs, retired to the mountains whence they had come, to gather

(1) Suffice here to mention one authority as representative of many others: G. Contenau: *Manuel d'Archéologie Orientale*, Vol. I (1928) p. 133; idem: Vol. II (1931) p. 701 *et passim*.

strength and watch for new opportunities. There are no continuous sources of information recording the sequence of historical events and telling the subsequent history of Gutium. It would be idle to suppose that the GUTI people did not raid the cities in the plains during the succeeding Sumerian and the first Babylonian dynasty.

In fact several astrological tablets and liver omen-texts periodically refer to the danger which threatened both Akkad and Babylonia. An oracle, which unfortunately cannot be dated, reads:— 'the weapons of Gutium will strike down the Land of Babylonia',<sup>(1)</sup> while many other astrological texts forecast the fate of Gutium as follows:— 'the overthrow of Gutium will take place through weapons'; 'the land of Akkad will devour the enemy lands of Gutium and Elam for three years' and so on.

These quotations from contemporary tablets clearly show the mutual relationships between the Babylonian kingdom in the plains and that of Gutium in the mountains. During his successful and flourishing rule of forty years <sup>(2)</sup> KHAMMURABI, the law-giver, seems to have kept the GUTI people confined to their mountains.

Kings of this first dynasty of Babylonia were great builders of canals and temples, but as a military power they were hardly capable of holding their own against the virile hillmen around.

### *Kassites conquer Babylonia*

Soon after KHAMMURABI'S death, in the eighth year of the reign of his son SHAMSHU-ILLUNA, the Kassite (Kashshu) tribesmen

(1) A. Ungnad: *Subartu*, p. 87. The Babylonian word for weapon is *kakku*; whereas the word for weapon in modern Kurdish is *jak*; in classical as in modern Armenian it is *zenk*. There can be little doubt that all three words come from the same original source. Both from historical and anthropological standpoints it seems hardly conceivable that the Armenian and Kurdish languages would borrow such an essential word from Babylonia or Akkad. The origin of the word cannot but be sought in the Khurrian language, the oldest known spoken by inhabitants of Armenia, Kurdistan and the periphery.

(2) 1792—1750 B.C. according to Mr. Sidney Smith's calculation already accepted by many scholars.

attacked Babylonia, looted the prosperous cities in the plains and retired again to their hills. It is to be noticed that not the people of Gutium, but a new people called Kassites began the invasion of Babylonia, a big tribe or confederation of tribes living in the hills of Zagros, east of Babylonia, probably due north of the land of Elam. Opinions vary very little among scholars as to their identity. They appear to be the same people as the Kurdish tribes of Luristan, in south-western Persia in the Zagros chain.

Their name, Kashshu in cuneiform may be hidden in that of the province of Khuzistan (Persia). They were an Indo-European people, geographically and ethnologically akin to Gutium. (e)

The rule of the Kassite kings in Babylonia lasted about four centuries; this foreign dynasty is reckoned as the third royal house of Babylonia. Up to some thirty years ago the information in regard to this dynasty was scanty and defective and the Kassite rule in Babylonia was regarded as having been as 'barbarian' and retrograde as that of Gutium in Sumer and Akkad. Discoveries of inscriptions and artistic metal objects in recent years have, however, considerably modified the judgment of the Kassite rule. It now appears that they possessed their own pantheon, the chief divinities of which all bear distinctive names: Kashshu, Kharbe, Suriash, Shipak, Khud,<sup>(1)</sup> Shimaliya—who was 'the lady of the bright mountains, who dwells upon the summit', and others.

A large number of wonderful bronze objects, representing mythical figures, demons, animals, horses and their trappings, excavated in various parts of Luristan, are ascribed to the Kassite period. (2)

The Kassite kings were not unmindful of the religious sentiments and customs of the Babylonian people. Gandash, the first Kassite king who conquered Babylonia (about 1600 B.C.), called himself 'King of the Four Regions, King of Babylon'. One of his inscriptions in the Babylonian language commemorates his

(1) *Khud* or *Khuda* means god in the new Persian language. Evidently it is a loan word in the new-Persian; it is not yet known whether *Khud* as a god existed in the Pantheons of Elam or Gutium.

(2) A. Godard: *Les Bronzes du Louristan* (1931) with 68 plates.

restoration of the temple of Enlil, the Babylonian god. He took care that the taxes and dues of Babylonian temples should be properly collected. Another Kassite king, Agum II, calls himself King of the Land of Gutu, as of many other countries. This may mean that the Kassite dynasty had subdued the ancient kingdom of Gutium. Throughout the long history of the Kurdish people this has often happened, one great tribe conquering another, as the opportunity occurred, and assuming sovereignty over the whole people.

During the later period of Kassite rule in Babylonia (or Karduniash as it is called in international documents of the time), its kings cultivated friendly relations with the great powers of Egypt, the Hittites and the rising Assyria (15th—14th centuries B.C.). There were intermarriages between the royal houses of Karduniash and Egypt, and Kadashman-Enlil, one of the Kassite kings, often requested gifts of gold from the king of Egypt. This period of Kassite Babylonia hardly enters into the life of the Kurdish people, as by then the Kassites had become to all intents and purposes, Babylonians.

*Assyria and Kurdistan (about 1360—606 B.C.)*

Gutium and the Kassites had hitherto had intercourse with states and peoples which were scarcely more powerful than themselves; therefore they could periodically reassert their complete independence and at opportune moments conquer the plains lying west of their mountains. But with the rise of Assyria the general situation in the Ancient East, and not in the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates alone, underwent a radical change, to the disadvantage of every neighbouring country. Not that Assyria was stronger in man or economic power, technique or so on; she was a new arrival on the scene as a 'Great Power', with a material potential hardly commensurate with her pretensions. The core of Assyria lay in the small triangle formed by the old city of Ashur, Nineveh and Erbil, on the banks of the middle Tigris and in the open plain. Without a strong centralisation of power in the hands of determined monarchs, she would never have risen

to the high military efficiency which, with long or short intervals, she displayed for nearly seven centuries.

Ashshur-Uballit I (1362—1327 B.C.) the real organiser of Assyrian might, seems to have immortalised his war-cry in an inscription recently excavated by a British Museum expedition.<sup>(1)</sup> In his campaign against the Kassite-Kurdish kingdom, he makes his soldiers shout :—

*Now press hard against the king of the Kassites;  
bring his rule to an end before its due time,  
Scatter the forces which have taken to themselves  
the name of heroes!*

*Oh Father . . . Crush out our woe! The upstart for  
our hurt continually devises evil. He plots  
daily to destroy the land of Gutium, his finger  
is pointed, stay not!*

*Behind the gods, his helpers, the king at the  
forefront of the Army began the fight, crying:  
'I am Ashshur-Uballit, the destroying giant,  
cast down their corpses.'*

*The warriors of Ashur, eager for the fray, were  
facing death. They shouted: 'Ishtar—how  
long will they cast down the Lady in confusion?'*

And so forth.

For more than a century (1362—1242 B.C.) five great Assyrian kings had to wage wars, on and off, against the Kassites, who were an ever-present threat to their power on the Tigris, until King Tukulti-Ninurta I (1242—1206 B.C.) in his year of accession succeeded in conquering all Gutium and all Babylonia down to the Persian Gulf. In a pitched battle on the left banks of the Tigris, this Assyrian king thoroughly defeated the armies of the Kassites and took their King Kashtiliashu II prisoner. In his

(1) Sir R. Campbell Thompson and R. C. Hutchinson: In *Archæologia*, Vol. LXXIX (1929), p. 132, lines 13—33. To-day, just about thirty-three centuries later, the Kurdish people have raised the same battle-cry against Turkey.

inscriptions Tukulti-Ninurta I mentions some place-names of the lands of Gutium and Kashshu, which enable us to locate approximately the original homeland of the Kurdish people, both Gutium and Kashshu. At the head of his army, says the King of Assyria, he advanced 'to the unyielding mountains of Tul-Sina between the cities Sasila and Mashkhatsharri beyond the lower Zab river, and from the lands of Zukushki and Lalar to the borders of the wide-spreading land of Gutium.' (f).

In spite of the crushing defeat suffered by Kashtiliashu II, the Kassite kingdom continued its independent existence for another century or more. Babylonia, subdued until then by the Kassites, revolted and recovered its freedom. At about the same time, the Kingdom of Elam also awoke to new life. Thus surrounded on all sides by Assyria, Babylonia and Elam, Kurdistan (Gutium-Kashshu) sank into insignificance. (g)

In the third year of his reign, (881 B.C.) Ashurnatsirapli II, perhaps the fiercest king of Assyria, made a savage attack on the whole of Kurdistan. In alliance with most tribes of the land of Zamua (Gutium), Nur-Adad, the prince of the fortress Dagara, had declined to pay yearly tribute. When no tribute was paid the kings of Assyria 'roared like lions' or 'jumped like wild boars'. Ashurnatsirapli II marched towards the mountain pass of Babite.(h) The tribes under Nur-Adad built a wall at the entrance of the pass to prevent the advance of the Assyrian king, who, evidently unable to overcome the obstacle placed in his way, turned to the north-west and attacked the tribes of Jebel Gudi (Kinipa-Nisir), plundered and burnt down eight fortresses; then he attacked the great fortress of Larbusa, where Kirtiara (Kurd?) the Commander of the fortress fought the Assyrians desperately. It appears that eventually both Zamua and Lulume submitted and brought tribute. Scores of similar invasions of the Kurdish territories in the Zagros chain are reported by the Assyrian kings Shalmaneser III (858—824 B.C.), Shamshi-Adad V (821—810 B.C.), Tiglat-Pileser III (747—728 B.C.), Sargon III (722—705 B.C.), Asarhaddon (689—668 B.C.) and others, yet the Kurdish people remained invincible throughout; and Gutium, although

not mentioned as such, except under the covering appellation of 'Media', took a considerable share in the final overthrow and destruction of the Assyrian empire in 612 B.C. (i)

*The Rise of Persia and Gutium-Kurdistan*

(538 B.C.—A.D. 640)

In a baked clay cylinder inscription recorded in the Babylonian language, Cyrus, the founder and the first king of the Persian Achaemenid Dynasty (538—529 B.C.) boasts that Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, 'forced into submission at his feet the hordes of the land of Kutu' (Gutium). This statement by Cyrus can hardly be considered as true, for the simple reason that Persia, just risen to a political status from the sandy regions of the Persian Gulf, scarcely possessed the necessary power to force the invincible Gutium into submission. On the contrary, according to the above-mentioned inscription of Cyrus himself, it was Ugbaru (1), the king of Gutium, who, at the head of the Kurdish cavalry, first entered the city of Babylon, and only a few days later Cyrus captured the city 'without battle or fighting'. Nor was this the first time that Gutium was conquering Babylonia, as already described. As a reward for his military services Ugbaru was nominated governor of the city and later on appointed viceroy 'across the river', that is to say across the Euphrates, king of Syria and Palestine. There are no actual records of any of the kings of Gutium; their achievements are casually mentioned by others who had every reason to minimise their importance. Had there been an inscription from King Ugbaru (or

(1) Sidney Smith: *Babylonian Historical Texts* (1924), pp. 105, 114, etc. The latest full discussion of the circumstances with a bibliography: O. Leuze: 'Die Satrapien-einteilung in Syrien und Mesopotamien, von 520—320 vor Chr.' In *Schriften des Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft*. XI year (1935) Heft 4th, pp 25-36. In his mania for showing everybody as being Persian, Herodotus (III, 70, 73 *et passim*) makes Gobryas (Gubaru) a Persian; Aspathines, an Armenian, is also a Persian; Mardonius, really a Mannian, is made the son of Gobryas, and therefore a Persian (VI. 43).



Gubaru) of Gutium himself, it is almost certain that he would have given a version the reverse of that of Cyrus. Another Ugbaru, the same King or his son, played a considerable role in the success of Darius the Great.

Yet King Ugbaru of Gutium could little have realised at the time what permanent injury he was doing to the civilized East by helping Cyrus to overthrow the independant kingdom of Babylonia. The end of the new Babylonian dynasty (558 B.C.) marked a great turning-point in the history of the world in two main respects:—

- (a) As long as the old hereditary monarchies of the ancient East (Assyria, Urartu-Armenia, Babylonia including Gutium) were at the helm, they were always on the alert against any intrusion from the Mediterranean and western Asia Minor, and thus maintained the purity and the godfearing outlook of the real East. But the moment they appeared on the scene, owing to inexperience and a total lack of a national Pantheon, national culture or aristocracy, the Persians allowed the Greeks and all sorts of nondescript adventurers into the country to act as advisers and guides in matters of empire policy of purely Eastern concern. The Achaemenid dynasty was throughout weak and indolent; it could not even organise successful resistance and expel a score of thousands of adventurers under Alexander the Great. Had the 'king of kings' during the years 335—325 B.C. been an Assyrian, Armenian or Guti, Alexander would probably never have crossed the Euphrates; and had he succeeded in doing so, he would have been flung back into the Aegean.
- (b) The introduction of 'freedom-loving' and 'reasoning' Greeks and other elements into the simple-minded, honourable and serene communities of the ancient East, eventually perverted the real historical development of the region. In the course of a millenium, Greek logography and legends falsified the true picture of the ancient Eastern civilisation. The oldest autochthonous races, Arabs, Assyrians, Gutis, Armenians, were not affected in the least; but their ancient history was entirely

misrepresented. Most fantastic tales and often pornographic incidents are related by Herodotus about 'Scythians', 'Medes', and many other imaginary peoples otherwise unknown, but almost nothing of any value regarding the native races was mentioned and nothing that can remotely be referred to Gutium. (j)

Herodotus often mentions the land Cissia, which topographically corresponds to ancient Kashshu, the land of the Kassites. But he places another Pactyice on the borders of the Indus in India, and makes out that there were Bokhti tribesmen in the army of Xerxes, who is said to have invaded Greece. 'And there were Pactyans with goatskin mantles and with their native bows and daggers.' (VII. 67). If this statement can be relied upon as true, it shows that the dispersion of Kurdish tribes as far as India must have begun with Darius the Great. The Greek historian gives some more information in regard to the Shikak tribe: 'Secondly there is a wandering tribe called the Sagartians (k), a people Persian in language, and they wear a dress between the Persian and the Pactyican: these furnished eight thousand cavalry, but are not accustomed to carry either bronze or steels arms, except daggers, but they use lassoes plaited of leathern thongs; they go to war relying on these. And the mode of fighting of these men is this: when they approach their enemy they throw their lassoes with a noose at the end, and whom-so-ever they hit, be it horse or man, they drag towards them; and those who get entangled in the lassoes are slain... and they were drawn up in the rear of the Persians.' (VII. 85).

About a century and a half later the Kurdish tribes emerge on the world stage by a mere accident. Xenophon and his Ten Thousand were retreating through Kurdistan to the Black Sea (401—400 B.C.). Between Babylonia and Kardukhia (Kurdistan) (1). Xenophon mentions 'Medes who had formerly inhabited

(1) The term Kardukhia corresponds to the classical Armenian Kurdukh, the south-eastern province of Armenia Magna, often mentioned in Greek and Roman classics. The province Kordukh or Korjoikh comprised ten cantons, among which the Upper, Middle and Lower Kordukh exactly covered the district Bohtan, the Babkhi of the Ancients.

a large city, then deserted"; (1) still stranger than the existence of Medes in Kurdistan, he met: 'Scythian archers, who discharged their arrows . . .' (2). There can be little doubt that there were no 'Medes' or 'Scythians' in the area, at least at that time, and that these ethnic groups existed only as preconceived notions, then current in Greek literature. The moment the Ten Thousand began to skirt the lower slopes of Jebel Hamrin, they were in contact with the tribes of Gutium, which are represented here as 'Medes' or 'Scythians'.

In spite of these misconceptions, Xenophon's account of the Kardoukhi people, their customs, modes of fighting and intercourse with foreigners, is as true a description as any that existed up to about the second half of the last century. The Kardoukhi 'would neither heed when they called, nor did they give any sign of friendly feeling' . . . 'some of the Kardoukhi, collecting together, attacked the rear-guard of the Greeks, and killed and wounded some of them with stones and arrows. They were but few, for the Greeks had come on them unawares; but had they assembled in greater numbers, a great part of the army (Greeks) would have been in danger of being destroyed.' . . . 'At night the Kardoukhi lighted a number of fires around them on the hills and observed the positions of one another' . . . 'the enemy pressed steadily upon the Greeks and where the passes were narrow, came close up, and used their bows and slings . . . Cast your eyes upon those mountains (of Kardukhia), and observe how impassable they all are. The only road which you can see is steep; and close upon it you may perceive a great multitude of men, who having occupied the pass, keep guard at it'. . . 'After this success, the Kardukhi appeared on an eminence opposite the third hill and Xenophon began to treat with them, through an interpreter about making a truce and called upon them to give up the dead. They replied that they would give them up on condition that he would not burn their villages . . .' 'The

(1) Xenophon: *Anabasis* III. 4. 10.

(2) Xenophon: *Anabasis* III. 4. 15.

Kardukhi came forward in great numbers and with loud shouts . . . they rolled down boulders of stone and broke the leg of one man,' etc.

It is obvious that the Kurds showed inveterate hostility to the Greeks, because the latter had burnt their villages and had taken supplies and prisoners by violence.

In the period of the Seleucid dynasty of Syria, the dispersion of the Kurdish tribes seems to have assumed considerable proportions. The Seleucids, as the later Sassanid kings of Persia, would not have lasted more than a generation or two, without the voluntary support of peoples like the Kurds, who, warlike and adventurous by tradition, would enlist in foreign service to guard the frontiers in the north-east and south-east of Persia.

*Armenia and Parthia and Kurdish tribes.*

There are no national Parthian records or literature to speak of; their history hitherto has been derived from Greek and Roman sources. (1) But the old-Armenian classical literature beginning in the fourth century A.D. contains enough material to show the neighbourly and benevolent nature of the treatment meted out to the Kurdish tribes in general. These two Eastern monarchies of great antiquity derived their power from autochthonous national communities which were based on territories rich in natural resources and therefore were content with the acquisitions of centuries of labour and culture. Armenia, in particular, pursued the practical method of settling the tribes in fixed habitations and encouraging them to cultivate the land. Unlike other powers, she did not scatter the Kurdish tribes to the four winds for her own defensive purposes.

King Tigranes the Great (91—55 B.C.), built villages even for the Arab tribes on the heights of Mount Amanus. (2)

(1) In the light of cuneiform inscriptions, the origins and the birth-place of Parthia have to be revised completely.

(2) Pliny: *Naturalis historiae*, V, 20, 85; 21, 86; VI: 28, 142; cf. Plutarch: *Zucullus*: XXI is entirely false, regarding the affairs of Armenia and Parthia.

*Sassanid Persia and the Kurds*  
(226—632 A.D.)

Artakhshir, son of Sassan, succeeded in founding the new Persian dynasty by foully murdering Artavan V (216—226 A.D.) the last king of Parthia; then Madig, the king of the Kurds of the Hafbanbokht confederation, and finally Khosrov, the king of Armenia, who for ten years had harried the Persian upstart as far as the borders of India. This was a foretaste of the rule of the Sassanid kingdom, with its series of dynastic murders and plots against the heads of neighbouring nations.

There are only some vague records as to the condition of the Kurdish tribes under this Persian kingdom; but later Arab historians, Al-Masudi and Al-Istakri in particular, describe some twenty-three Kurdish tribes in the south, and several others in Khorasan in the northeast, of Persia. The Sassanid kings were periodically attacked by the Hephthalites (White Huns) and many Turki tribes on their north-eastern frontiers. In order to defend themselves the Persian kings forcibly or voluntarily transplanted large numbers of Kurds to fight the invaders. In fact, Byzantium practised the same policy, until finally the Arab conquest of Persia during the years 632—40 A.D. introduced a new era in the ancient East.









## Chapter 2

### *Islam and Kurdistan (640-1510)*

THE ARAB PEOPLE were not unknown to the ancient peoples of the upper reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris : centuries of intercourse of every kind, commercial, cultural and political, had developed a broad regional outlook. But when the Arabs came as conquerors with the zeal of a new religion, the Kurds, Assyrians and all the neighbouring peoples joined the Persian ruler as 'King of Kings' to fight the Arab armies. But Persia could not resist the Arabs for very long any more than she had been able to repel the small horde led by Alexander the Great. Contemporary historians, Armenian, Arab, Syrian and Byzantine, have recorded many heroic fights by the Kurds against the Arab advance. In accordance with the usual Arab policy, the advancing Arab generals called upon one and all, in the name of the Caliph of Islam, either to adopt Islam or to pay a polltax, not as a symbol of contempt as is generally assumed, but as a source of revenue.

The Arabs forcibly imposed Islam on Persia, because the Persians were pagans and worshippers of nature; but towards all other nations, 'peoples of the Book', they were mild and tolerant. In the course of about seventy years (640—710) treaties of peace were signed with the 'peoples of the Book' living between the river Dyala and the mountains of the Caucasus. It is a noteworthy fact that the Abbasid Caliphate at Baghdad never succeeded in winning over the Kurdish tribes which were nearest to their capital. On the contrary, the periodic civil wars within Islam itself encouraged a general upsurge of the 'peoples of the Books' throughout the region. The Caliphate enlisted a large number of Turkish slaves from Central Asia to fight its battles; yet Kurdish, Armenian, Georgian and other kingdoms, still recognizing the nominal suzerainty of the Caliphate, began to emerge again from obscurity in the ninth century. Kurdish

*Derebeys* (Lords of the Valleys) reasserted their traditional power all over western Persia. Abu Ali bin-i Marwan bin-al Dostak Al-Babkhi Charbukhti (1), a scion of the historic Bokhti-Babkhi confederation, as his name shows, established his kingdom north of the Tigris, with his capital at Farkin, one day's journey north of Diarbahr. Farkin is the ancient Tigranokerta, the southern capital of the great Armenian king of the same name. But Marwan Al-Charbukhti did not assume his family name, Charbukhti (the four tribes of the Bokhti?) he or his successors gave the Dynasty the name of Marwanya-Marvanid because, it would seem, this name was more in consonance with the general atmosphere of Islam.

The Marwanid dynasty ruled in Farkin, Diabekr and Jazirat ibn-Omar from 985—1096; one of its kings, Abu Nasr Ahmad ruled fifty three years (1010—63) and endowed his cities with fine buildings, caravanserais, baths and bridges. Quarrels soon broke out among dynasts for the possession of the throne, and the help of Byzantium was sought for the purpose.

Like many other Arab-Kurdish, Kurdish-Persian mixed dynasties which established themselves between Kurdistan and the Caspian Sea during the Arab Caliphate at Baghdad, the Marwanids were swept away by the hungry Seljuks. With nondescript eunuchs as her pro-Consuls, Byzantium not only did not help her friends in the East, but by undue interference weakened their resistance to the Seljuks. Settled populations suffered terrible hardships; but most of the Kurdish tribes, being nomadic, gathered together their families, their flocks and any movable property, and retired into precipitous mountain fastnesses where defence was easier. The Seljuks from the sandy deserts of Central Asia were reluctant to venture into high hills and gorges; like swarms of locusts they crossed into Asia Minor, leaving behind a number of local Sultans, (named *Atabeks*) who were chiefly native renegades.

What, however, turned out to be more ominous and of permanent danger to the ancient social order was the arrival wave after

(1) His first name was Badh. From him descend the great family of Badrkhans to-day.

wave of Turkoman vagrants, who, clad in a shirt, barefoot and hungry, were advancing with their oxcarts and families to take possession of the cool valleys and pasture grounds between the Caspian Sea and Kurdistan (1100—80).

The Syrian Patriarch Michael an eye-witness, and the Arab historian Ibn-al-Athir have described fully the long-drawn-out and bloody strife waged by the Bokhti, Hamawendi, Shikaki and other Kurdish tribes against the Turkoman hordes for the possession of pasture-grounds and villages. Without unity or common action, single tribes fought heroically for the defence of their hills and homes, but eventually were defeated.

*Sultan Salabeddin and the Crusaders (1137—93)*

The serious danger threatening the Kurdish homeland through the settlement of the Turkoman hordes on the slopes and plains of Zagros, seems to have aroused the Kurdish chiefs to action. One of the greatest, Yusuf Salaheddin (Saladin), was born in the year of Hegira 532 (1137-8 A.D.) in the fortress of Tekrit (in northern Iraq), where his father Ayub (son of Shadi) was governor. Ayub himself was born at Dwin in Armenia on the river Araxes. While still a youth Ayub entered the service of Zangi, the *Atabek* of Mosul, and finally obtained the governorship of Baalbek. Salaheddin was educated in this Syrian city, and invited later by the Fatimid Caliph at Cairo to join his army.

In 1171 Salaheddin completely suppressed the Caliphate of Cairo and replaced it by an Ayubite one which he established in the name of his father. Aided by a set of fortunate circumstances and with consummate planning, this great Kurd united Syria and Iraq under his rule and gradually subdued the Atabeks of Aleppo, Mosul and Diaebekr and a large number of smaller Seljuk, Kurdish and Arab Emirs (princes), from Arabia to the Tigris. Even the Seljuk Sultanate of Iconium was compelled to recognize his sovereignty. He reduced or extinguished most of the Latin kingdoms which had established themselves at Jerusalem and on the Syrian coast. Expecting reprisals on the part of European rulers Salaheddin called out the entire East to fight

the Crusaders. Kurdish tribes of Gutium and Bohtan, the Yezidis of Sinjar, large numbers of Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians and Georgians flocked to his colours, in answer to his call. Emperors and kings of western Europe organised the third Crusade in order to 'rescue the Holy places of Christendom from Saladin.'

A great army of Franks, Germans, English and Eastern Europeans achieved little success, despite their great pomp and splendour. The first thing they did was to loot the Byzantine Empire, their Christian brothers. The Emperor, Frederic Barbarossa, the Commander of the third Crusade, was drowned in Cicilia while bathing. Most of his followers dispersed; while the Kings Richard Coeur-de-Lion and Philippe Auguste were so paralyzed by their violent distrust of each other, that after the capture of a few coast towns in Syria, they withdrew having acquired much and learnt little.

Although Salaheddin died in 1193, and the ineffectual Fourth Crusade followed, it was his great heroic figure that stood between the Crusading forces and the Levant. Again we learn from the Arab historians that it was Derbas, a Kurdish tribal Chief, who captured the King of the Franks and that Yezidi Mihranis of Jinjar held several Frank Commanders captive.

In his lifetime the great Kurdish King set his brothers and relatives on the thrones of Syria, Mosul and Armenia. Had he taken measures while he was at the height of his power to consolidate the Kurdish power in the Zagros as his base, and in Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Taurus, he would have rendered an undying service not only to the Kurdish race but to the whole region as well. Persia was prostrate and Byzantium, as always, was powerless and effete. The kingdom of Georgia, as well as Armenian princes north of the river Araxes, were growing in power.

But as Salaheddin chose the Caliphate of Egypt and his successors settled in the valley of the Nile, there remained no centralising power to guard the ancient East against the hordes of central Asia.

*Mongol and Tatar Invasions (1210—1500)*

One incident during these invasions from Central Asia will give some idea of the Kurd's attitude in face of the invader. The Great Khan Mangu gave the following instructions to his younger brother Hulaghu Khan whom he was sending at the head of a huge Mongol army to conquer the Arab Caliphate and western Asia.

“Listen always to the counsels of Dokuz Khatun, the Christian Princess and his wife. Treat well all those who obey! Crush all rebels! Raze to the ground all citadels and fortresses on your way! . . . March from Turan to Iran and when you finish them, march on to Iraq: exterminate those Lurs and Kurds and destroy their strongholds of Kerdeh-Kuh and Lembeh-Ser, where those people are always worrying travellers by their brigandage! (1) . . .”

Hulaghu's advance-guard commanded by Naiman Kit-Buga surprised and massacred the tribe of the Assassins in Kuhistan. The main Mongol army marched to Hamadan and through the passes entered the Kurdish mountains. At Kirman Shah, Hulaghu gave orders for the march on Baghdad and detached an army corps under the command of Arkia-Noyan to attack the Kurdish garrison at Erbil, a fortress 'the like of which does not exist'. Saleh Arbili, the Kurdish Commander, was anxious to surrender, but his troops declined to follow him and, when he attempted to submit to the Mongol General, they put him to death. One night the Kurdish garrison made a sortie, suddenly fell upon the Mongol besiegers and butchered every one that fell into their hands; they burnt the Mongol siege engines and quickly returned to the fortress. Enfeebled and discouraged by this disaster Arkia-Noyan abandoned the siege of Erbil until the following summer, when the Kurds left the fortress in accordance with their annual custom in order to graze their flocks in the

(1) M. Quatremère: *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse*. 1830. Vol I. Part II, p. 144. Translated from a Manuscript in Persian and written by Rashideddin. Also page 315.

cool northern mountains. Then only did the Mongols capture Erbil and demolish the fortress.

The Kurdish tribes offered stout resistance to Hulaghu Khan himself, particularly in Bohtan and Diarbekr; but eventually they were overcome and massacred. During the next two and a half centuries (1260—1502), the rule of Mongol Ilkhans, and that of the Tatar Tamerlane (1387—1405) and his successors, was constantly disputed by the Kurds, jointly with the Armenians and even 'the White Sheep' Turkomans who had settled in the region two centuries earlier. The moment the storm of these invasions had spent itself, the native inhabitants would rebuild their ruins and reconstruct their industrial or pastoral economy in a few years. Under the simple economic system of the Middle Ages, recovery was simple and rapid.

### Chapter 3

## *The Ottoman conquest and the Kurdish Tribes (1514-1890)*

WITH THE BEGINNING of the sixteenth century a new era set in.

After nine centuries (639—1502) of utter suppression and laceration Persia raised her head again, and, under the leadership of Shah Ismail Safavi restored her united sovereignty with her capital first at Tabriz (Azerbaijan) and then at Ispahan. The Ottoman empire, on the other side, firmly established in Constantinople and the Balkan countries, cast its eyes on the wide territories which lay between the Euphrates and the new Persian empire; the Arab lands, Kurdistan Armenia and Georgia.

The attitude of these native peoples was of primary importance, both to the Shah and to the Sultan. Persia was well known to them through their secular association with her; Turkey was more remote and the character of her rulers had yet to be tried. After dethroning his father, Sultan Selim I (1512—20), one of the vigorous rulers of Turkey, came into power. Like most Arabs and Turks, the Sultan was a devout *Sunni*, whereas the Persians were *Shias*. Sultan Selim began his reign by ordering the massacre of about forty thousand Shia Moslems within the Ottoman Empire, and from his winter headquarters of Amassia, in Asiatic Turkey, he invited the Shah of Persia to abjure his religious errors and to surrender territories which 'belonged' to the Turks. The Shah replied in very offensive terms. The ensuing war lasted two years (1514—16). In the plain of Chaldiran, near the city of Kars, the Persians were thoroughly defeated, and the Shah fled leaving his throne and treasure to the Sultan.

The Ottoman victory at Chaldiran marks the beginning of the modern history of the Kurdish tribes. Their geographical distribution, their subdivisions and the names of tribal areas and chiefs become clearer, thanks to the work of Mollah Idris of the City of Bitlis. This Kurdish statesman had been secretary of State to

Yakub Khan, one of the pretenders to the Persian throne, and, while at Chaldiran, had rendered great services to Sultan Selim by advising him on the state of affairs in Kurdistan and Armenia. In 1515 the Sultan sent him from Amassia to Kurdistan with flattering letters and presents to the great Kurdish Chieftains in Gutium and the Zagros in order to detach them from their Persian allegiance and win them over to the Ottoman side. In response to a call from the Sultan himself, nine Kurdish *Derebeys* declared themselves for the Ottomans. (a)

There remained fourteen great tribes in the fastnesses of the Zagros and the Taurus, with whom Mollah Idris concluded some sort of treaty in the name of the Sultan. To all of them the Sultan had sent imperial *Firmans* (Decrees), proclaiming their chiefs as *Beylerbeys* of their respective domains, inalienably entitled to their hereditary rights and privileges, in full and undisturbed possession of their castles, fortresses and lands. They were given the title of Kurdish *Hukumats* ('Governments') liable only to an annual nominal tribute, and the levy of a fixed number of armed and mounted recruits in the event of war. These nine Kurdish Beylerbeys (they preferred to call themselves Derebeys) were an *imperia in imperium* (c), placed under the supreme military command of the Anatolian Beylerbey, the Commander-in-chief of Ottoman Asia. (b)

The reorganisation scheme of Mollah Idris aimed primarily at guarding the frontiers against future invasions by Persia. The frontier between the rivers Dyala and the Zabs was secured by the Kurdish *Hukumats*. Idris knew that the sympathies of the natives of Great Armenia were historically on the side of Persia. In order to secure the safety of the strategic positions in the valley of the river Araxes, he and his successors induced sections of the large Kurdish tribes of Diarbekir and the Taurus to emigrate to Van, Kars and other Armenian regions, with promises of military fiefs, dignities and administrative posts. Thus the Turks continued what the Persians had practised for many centuries: the dispersal of the tribes for their own military ends.

That the hereditary Kurdish tribes came to an agreement with



the Sultan without any opposition at all, was due to the intermediary Mollah Idris, a trusted and learned Kurdish leader, who seems to have convinced the level-headed tribal Chiefs of the advantages likely to accrue from direct connection with the Ottoman empire. It appears that this hope was realised for about two centuries, although the ruinous and long-drawn-out wars between Turkey and Persia (1514—16, 1534—56, 1587—1628, 1636—8, 1724—32), partly devastated the frontier provinces and took a heavy toll of the youth of the tribes, who often enlisted eagerly in the Ottoman armies to fight in the European wars of the Turks.

For several generations, many chiefs, particularly those of the inaccessible mountains, benefited by the agreement without incurring all the liabilities. They enjoyed their former self-government undisturbed and almost without paying any tribute or furnishing recruits. It was natural for them to abstain from doing so because regardless of race, religion or power, whoever attempted to conquer their regions from the west was a *Rumi* (a 'Roman') and as such had to be opposed. These tribes isolated in outlying valleys could not know that the 'Rumified' Turk, though coming from the west, was Central Asian by origin.

There were other reasons why the Tribal Chiefs did not always carry out the agreement into which they had entered. Persia was a next door neighbour to the Kurdish homeland and, despite her prevailing anarchy, she could be a formidable foe if slighted too often; the more so as Constantinople, the centre of the Ottoman empire, was far off and, since the reign of Suleiman Kanuni (1520—66), the empire itself was inextricably embroiled in Europe. Moreover the civilisation of the Turks failed to impress the Kurds. Although illiterate and, for all practical purposes, cut off from the outer world until recent times, the average Kurdish chief is a keen observer and intelligent enquirer; his perception is sharp and his judgement in matters of immediate concern is often accurate. He could hardly fail to note that the Turkish conquerors had neither a literary language nor a literature of their own; that they had borrowed the Arabic alphabet and both the

Arabic and the Persian vocabulary; whereas the Kurd himself delighted not only in the epic tales of his own race, but in the poetry of the Arabs and the Persians as well.

Nevertheless the Ottoman armies were gaining resounding victories throughout the world; during most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the whole of *Frangestan* (Europe) shuddered and cowered at the tramp of the Ottoman armies. Nearer home the Ajam (d) (as Persia is usually known in the colloquial language of neighbouring peoples) could just hold his own with alternating fortunes. But the Persians were themselves impressed by the Ottoman advance in Europe. European missionaries and travellers visited them in increasing numbers to pay their respects to the Shah and his dignitaries, but they could not offer practical assistance against the Turks. On the contrary, several European missions were seeking Persia's help to organise a new crusade against Turkey. Hundreds of Colophons of Armenian manuscripts and personal memoirs recorded from day to day throughout those centuries show the deep impression which Ottoman victories in the West were making on the mind of the Eastern peoples.

On ascending the throne of Persia, the vigorous Shah Abbas II (1585—1628), the Great, prepared for a new trial of strength with the Turks; he needed the support of all the peoples who dwelt between the Persian Gulf and the Caucasus. He could not overlook the immense prestige which the Ottoman empire enjoyed in the eyes of one great section of powerful Kurdish tribes. He therefore commissioned Prince Sharafeddin, the famous Kurdish historian and a scion of the Sharaf Khan Dynasty of Bitlis, to write, in Persian, a history of the Kurdish tribes and their genealogies. His aim was, of course, to arouse the hereditary pride of the Kurds to recall their ancient associations with Persia and the East, and thus to divert their attention from the Ottoman Empire. But the pleasure which this step must have given to the tribes seems to have been counter-balanced by the severe military actions which the Great Shah was forced to take against some of them. Without the active support of their large cavalry contingents the Shah would never have been able to overthrow the Uzbek army

which threatened Persia in the north-east from Central Asia. Yet the moment he subdued the Uzbeks, he turned against the Kurds, his allies of yesterday. The Kurdish King of Ardaan, who, as a reward for his services against the Uzbeks, claimed recognition of his sovereignty by Persia, was seized in 1613, and executed by the Shah. (1)

One of the great Kurdish epics must have been composed at this period. The theme of the poem is both heroic and moving, Dim-Dim-Kala, an impregnable fortress belonging to the Chief of the Hartoshi confederation, did not respond to the Shah's call for submission. The Persian army besieged the fortress. Men, women and children kept watch on the ramparts and successfully repelled every Persian assault. Months went by and the food supplies began to give out. All communication with the outside world was cut off by the besiegers, and daring messengers who tried in disguise to get through the besieging army in order to call for help from Kurdistan, were seized and executed. The Persians threw up high earthworks in front of the fortress walls in order to deliver a final assault. Men and women inside the fortress, exhausted by thirst and hunger fought to the last on the walls. Maidens threw themselves into the deep ditches surrounding the fortress and killed themselves, to escape shame. The besiegers entered the fortress only when the last defender was dead or too weak to move.

*Kerim Khan Zendi, a Kurd, King of Persia (1751-79)*

Except for an eight years' truce, the Ottoman and Persian empires fought for fifty years (1588-1638). At the end of this time both sides were so exhausted and consequently their internal discontent and strife had grown so acute that they were obliged to conclude peace. The frontiers remained as they were before: and as the frontier-line followed the natural features of Mounts Ararat and Zagros, it remained unchanged until the war of 1914-18.

For the next eighty years peace reigned in the East, and the

(1) D'Herbelot: *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1675) p. 511.

native peoples speedily recovered their losses and rebuilt their ruins. Having wasted the proceeds of robbery in Asia and Europe, the Turks yearly tightened the screw on the Kurdish tribes. Oppression breeds contempt among peoples of long memories, and the opinion expressed by a Kurdish chief in 1675 is characteristic :

'It is I and not the Ottoman Sultan who is the emperor of this land. He may be stronger than I am, but I am nobler than he is.' (1) Had that particular chief lived long enough he would have seen that the worst was yet to come.

With the accession of Nadir Shah to the throne of Persia (1722—47) a new—and last—cycle of war broke out between the two empires. But this time the sympathies of the greater part of the Kurdish tribes had turned towards Persia. The strong but ephemeral rule of Nadir was followed by complete anarchy in Persia, the Caucasus and the contiguous provinces of Turkey. Pretenders to the throne and ambitious tribal chiefs turned Persia one more into a battlefield.

In 1750 Merdan Khan, the Chief of the Bakhtiari tribes appointed himself regent of the empire. Another Kurd, Kerim Khan Zendi, became the leader of Luristan; he joined Merdan Khan in order to fight the Afghan invaders. But the two chiefs soon quarreled for supremacy. Aided by the Armenians of Julfa (near Ispahan), Kerim Khan Zendi got the upper hand and the army proclaimed him sole regent for life. Throughout his reign Kerim Khan based himself on southern Persia with his capital at Shiraz, the region where both the Akhaemenid and the Sassanid dynasties had arisen. Supported by his faithful Lur, Bakhtiari and Arab cavalry, he fought and defeated two rivals and thus bestowed some twenty years' comparative peace on Persia. After his death Lutf Ali Khan, another Kurdish chief of the Lur Confederation, took over the helm, but could not cope with the

(1) *Relation de Doury Effendi. Ambassadeur de la Porte Ottomane auprès du roi de Perse. Traduit du Turk et accompagné d'un 'Extrait du Journal' de Petits de la Croix, fils* (1810) p. 95. The Frenchman who travelled on a raft on the river Tigris from Diarbekr to Mosul.

Kajar dynasty, a Turkoman tribe, which, with its centre at Tehran, was strengthening its hold over northern Persia. This new Kurdish leader was ambushed and delivered to Agha Mahmad Khan the founder of the Kajar dynasty, who murdered him in December, 1794, after gouging out his eyes. Frightened at the prospect of a new Kurdish revival in the south of Persia, in Luristan and the Bakhtiari lands the Kajar Shahs at Tehran ruthlessly persecuted the descendants of Kerim Khan's dynasty. They were executed openly or murdered secretly, so that the Kurdish tribes in Persia ceased to be a political factor until recent years.

*Geography of Kurdistan in modern times.*

The Ottoman official sources in respect of the administrative divisions of Vilayets (provinces) have been both defective and contradictory. After the Ottoman occupation of the Eastern marches (Iraq, Kurdistan, Armenia and Georgia) in the first half of the sixteenth century, many and undefinable shiftings of boundaries took place, often for the convenience of local governors, but, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, for political ends as well. The power of the Kurdish tribes in Persia during a good part of the eighteenth century and the inevitable attraction which they exercised over the Kurds in Turkey caused considerable anxiety to the Turkish government. The Porte therefore undertook an administrative redistribution in the eastern and northern Vilayets (provinces) contiguous with Persia and Russia; its main object appears to have been to sink Kurdish hereditary *Hukumats* in the new administrative areas, to reduce the ranks of Kurdish Pashas making them merely Ottoman district governors, and thus to turn over the real power to the three Ottoman Pashas of Baghdad, Diarbekr and Erzerum. These governing Pashas were of the first rank, and, wherever possible, of Ottoman origin.

(a) The Pashalik of Baghdad covered ancient Gutium, the original homeland of the Kurdish race, the ancient Kashshu, the land of the Kassites, and the highlands up to the frontiers of Persia. As in the days of Sumer and Babylonia, the great hereditary tribes led a partly, and at times entirely, independent existence

in their mountain fastnesses. Carsten Niebuhr, a keen observer<sup>(1)</sup> who travelled from Baghdad to Mosul, Mardin and Diarbekr in 1763-4, recorded that the province of Kala-Cholan (not Kara-Cholan) was governed by a Kurdish Pasha of the Sohran family of the great Baban (g) confederation; that the principedom of Shahrazor was much reduced; the castle of Gulamber, once the seat of powerful Kurdish Derebeys, was in ruins, destroyed by the Persian Shah Abbas more than a century before; the position of the chief of Koi-Sanjak in the lower Zab valley was no better, though he still exercised nominal power over the Kurdish rulers of Erbil and Altun-Keupri. Niebuhr vaguely hints that these Kurdish Pashaliks were once independent and received their investiture direct from the Ottoman Porte, but at his time the Pashas of Baghdad had broken the system of tribal self-government introduced by Mollah Idris, and were selling the posts to the highest bidder among tribal chiefs. A strong garrison of Constantinople Janissaries stationed at Erbil controlled the main roads throughout the Pashalik. Thus the once powerful tribes had now to submit to foreign troops in time of peace. The traveller found the historical Adiabene, the Kurdish land between the two Zab rivers, almost a desert. West of Mosul, in Jebel Sinjar, the block of Yezidi settlements were still powerful and maintained their privileges of self-government.

(b) The Pashalik of *Diarbekr*. Further north and west of the Tigris Yezidi and Kurdish tribes of Mardin and Tur-Abdin declined to pay tribute, whereas at Viranshahr, the home of the famous Yezidi Mihrani tribe, (to-day called 'Milli') and the surroundings were in ruins.

Across the Tigris, north of Mosul, the confederations of Amadia, Zibari, Dehok and Zakho maintained their hereditary titles over their districts. Still more powerful and independent were the Bedrkhans at Jezirat-ibn-Omar.

'But Ottoman Pashas alternately support one Kurdish principality against another; they practise this policy not only among

(1) Carsten Niebuhr: *Reisebeschreibungen nach Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern*. 1774-1837. Vol. II. p. 127 sqq.

the hereditary families, which by birth are entitled to self-government over their areas, but also among the nomad tribes, thus extorting money from all and preventing their union. These Ottoman Pashas do not care a scrap that in this way the provinces of the Sultan are turning into desert.'

The Yezidi, Zaza, Kurdish and Armenian blocks in the valleys of the Middle Taurus were more fortunate owing to their impregnable situation. Until 1938, the mountain fortress of Dersim remained independent and unvanquished. From the spurs of the Taurus overlooking the city of Kharberd (to-day El-Aziz) and skirting the slopes of Gapan-Madan and Arghni-Madan to Sasun and Farkin, the tribes were left completely undisturbed until the thirties of the last century.

(c). The Pashalik of Erzerum (1) was bounded by the *vilayets* of Trebizond, Sivas and Diarbekr, and comprised the Pashaliks of the second and third ranks. (2) The Kurdish *Hukumats* as established by Mollah Idris, had been suppressed in Chaldir and Kars in the course of the frontier wars. Beyond the main military routes, however, these families renewed their power after 1750. The fortress of Akhlat, the capital of the *Shah-i-Arman* (kings of Armenia in the twelfth century), like the Castle of Arjish and Bergri, all along the northern shores of Lake Van, had fallen into decay, partly owing to the frequent passage of Turkish troops.

The impressive rock fortress of Bayazid, at the foot of Mount Ararat, had been governed by the family of Bahlul Pasha, an Armenian by origin, who scarcely paid any attention to the Pasha of Erzerum.

The city of Van with its famous fortress castle, and the old capital of the Armenian-Urartian empire, was governed by native princes, often presided over by Yezdi Sher chiefs. This Yezidi

(1) The Ottoman official maps, up to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, marked *Ermanistan-i Kebir* (Armenia Magna of the classics) across the Pashalik of Erzerum.

(2) Akhaltska, Kars, Bayazid, Van, Bitlis, Mush, Kighi and Erzinjan. Armenian and Kurdish hereditary families had governed these cantons since the Ottoman conquest of 1534-6.

family of princes originated from Hakkari, the range of mountains adjoining Persian Azerbaijan. In these mountains also lived the Assyrian Christians under their patriarch Marshimun, and Kurdish Shikaki and Hartoshi tribes.

Murad IV, the last great Ottoman Sultan (1623—40), in visiting the province, had granted a large number of Firmans of exemption from taxation to the ruling princes of these Armenian fortresses. These Firmans held good—many of them—until modern times.

South of Lake Van, the beautiful and wild mountain valleys of Mekk (Moxuene of the classics) and Shatakh (the Upper Kordukh of ancient Great Armenia) were in the hands of the family of Avdal Khans, who never recognised any other sovereignty.

To the west of the Lake, at Bitlis, reigned the dynasty of Sharaf Khan, of the Roujeki confederation, the descendants of the old Armenian aristocratic family of Reshtunik. Nominally it was subject to the Pashalik of Mush, where the dynasty of Aladin Bey Babonts had ruled over the whole region watered by Murad-Su (the eastern branch of the Euphrates). Among the chief pillars of the self-government of the Pashalik of Mush were the Kurdish *Derebeys* and the Armenian princes of Sasun and Khuyt, who had never seen a Turk until modern times.







## *The Kurdish rebellion against Turkey (1830-1847)*

“It is a well-known fact that the Ottoman empire comprises vast regions in which the Porte exercises no real authority. It is certain that the Padishah (the Turkish Sultan) has to reconquer widespread regions within the territory of his own state. To this category belong the highlands (of Kurdistan) between the Tigris and the Persian frontier.” (1)

von Moltke (1838)

The Massacre of the Janissary Corps at Constantinople in 1826 and the gradual suppression of their *ojaks* (hearths) in the provinces by the Ottoman authorities, and the institution in their place of a regular army and militia, were great changes of ill omen for the Kurds, destined as they were to threaten the old-established order of things, and consequently to destroy the last vestiges of their ancient privileges. These radical reforms undertaken by the Porte seemed to sound the death-knell of the grand feudalism, alone compatible with the Kurds' conception of an order of society.

Simultaneously with these efforts at reform, the Ottoman empire was rushing from disaster to disaster: the success of the Greek war of Independence (1828), the defeat and the total rout of the Ottoman empire in the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-9 and the consequent Treaty of Unkiar—Iskelessi (1833) by which Turkey virtually placed herself under the protection of Russia, and finally the triumphant march of Ibrahim Pasha through Asia Minor to the gates of Constantinople, at the head of an Egyptian army, were one and all events which rekindled in the souls of

(1) Helmuth von Moltke: *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei, aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839*. Third edition (1877). Letter 45th. p. 266. Von Moltke was a young Prussian officer lent to Turkey for the reorganisation of her army. He accompanied the Turkish expeditions operating against the Kurds in those years.

some Kurdish chiefs an ardent desire for complete independence. If the Greeks and the Egyptians, both formerly vassals of the Porte could defeat and rout the Turkish army and achieve their independence, why should not the Kurds assert themselves in their own way.

In more than one sense the term rebellion could not really be applied to the action of the Kurds at this juncture; they did not wish to pay taxes to the defeated Rumi and desired to govern their hereditary areas according to their own ideas. Judged by the standards of an organised State, the tribes had been practically always in a state of rebellion amidst the chronic anarchy prevailing in both neighbouring Empires. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Andrianople (1829) with Russia, the Porte, availing itself of the presence of the new regular army on the eastern frontiers, employed it to suppress all native governors (cf. p. 42) and to replace them by Pashas of Turkish origin.

'Mardin was one of the first towns to revolt in favour of the old state of things. Everything that was European was discarded; the new military dress was looked upon as the cause of all misfortunes.' (1)

The Turkish campaign of reconquest against the tribes falls into two distinct periods. The first lasted from 1834 to 1839, when at Nezib, in the Amanus passes, the Turkish army was routed by the Egyptians under Ibrahim Pasha: Consequently there was a pause of three years. The second lasted from 1842 to 1847. Both were accompanied in the traditional Turkish style by massacres and the torture of thousands of innocent Kurds, including women and children, the destruction and burning of entire districts inhabited by the Kurds and the resultant unexampled misery. (2)

In the first period, Mohammed Reshid Pasha, the Ottoman

(1) William Ainsworth and H. Rassam: Notes on a Journey from Constantinople to Mosul in 1839-40. In the *Journal of the Royal Geogr. Society*. (1840) p. 324.

(2) Cf. Von Moltke: Briefe.... op. cit: Letters No. 43 (p. 275-6) *et passim*.

Commander at Diarbekr, then the headquarters of Kurdistan, was given a whole Army Corps of Nizam troops, squadrons of Guards, Cavalry and Artillery to overcome the Kurdish rebels. It is regrettable that some mercenary chiefs joined with the Turkish army to fight their own people. Reshid Pasha started from Sivas and attacked the Yezidi Mihrani tribes at Viranshahr and Jebel Sinjar. The hostilities dragged on for two years, as the Yezidis offered stout resistance. In face of the revolting Turkish cruelties, the tribal chiefs retired to peaks and caverns with their families and flocks ready to emerge again at the first opportune moment. The sedentary tribes as well as the Turkomans were compelled to pay annual taxes and furnish recruits. In 1836 Reshid Pasha turned to the East to attack the tribes on the banks of the Tigris. For several months he tried to storm Jezirat-ibn-Omar, the principal seat of the great Badrkhán dynasty. Prince Badrkhán Bey inflicted heavy losses on the Turks and then retired to Jebel Gudi. In the meanwhile, the Turkish army was being reinforced by an influx of other Kurdish chiefs, who being given the title of Pasha, served as guides and advance guard of the Turkish army to fight their own kith and kin.

Eye-witnesses have recorded that Badrkhán Bey would not have been obliged to retire to the mountains if his ally Khan-Mahmud, marching from the north and followed by about twenty thousand Kurds, Assyrians and Armenians, had been quick enough to cross the Bohtan Su by the bridge at Khaskher before another Turkish army, commanded by Hafiz Pasha, could blow up the bridge by artillery fire. The forces of Khan-Mahmud tried to ford the river near Tillo, the junction of Bohtan-Su with the Tigris, which in the spring becomes a deep lake. The hostile forces met and fierce fighting ensued.

'Khan Mahmud's irregular cavalry dashed yelling at the Ottoman regular troops using their long lances and daggers (Khancher), but the Ottoman artillery and flintlocks got the upper hand in the end.' (1)

(1) A report by A. Manogli, an Armenian adviser and eye witness, embodied in Father Ch. Pirgalamian's Manuscripts.

Failing to reach Bedrkhan Bey, Khan-Mahmud returned with his army and entrenched himself in the mountains of Ardos (the second chain south of Lake Van). Reshid Pasha died of cholera in Diarbekr as did most of his army. Hafiz Pasha, who was nominated to succeed the dead Commander, was a Circassian by origin and brought up in the Palace of the Sultan. As a Caucasian he understood the Kurds, and used all his ingenuity to sow discord among the tribes and by bribes and promises to win them over to the Turkish side. He was successful in fostering rivalry between the greater chiefs, among others Védé Khan Bey of Shirvan (north of Bohtan-Su) and Kurd Mehmed Pasha, who joined the Ottoman forces and fought against their kindred tribes.

*Kiör Ahmed Pasha of Revanduz (1836)*

The Ottoman troops had the greatest difficulty in coping with the Emir Kiör (or Ahmed Pasha), the Yezidi Bey of Revanduz, the mountainous district lying between the Great Zab and the Persian frontier. He was the fiercest leader of the rebellion in the first period. His power extended from the Tigris to Ushnu, in Persian Azerbaijan. He had even annexed to his territory the Kurdish castles of Amadia and Zakho. (1) He was of the Rawandi tribe and claimed that his forefathers had held power since the days of the great Salaheddin. He drew his forces from the tribes of Sohran, Shikaki and Hartoshi, and on this account his independent family had been in secular antagonism with the Babans in the south and the Badrkhans in the west. Emir Kiör did not recognise anybody superior to himself.

At first the Ottoman forces could not make any headway against him. From his inaccessible fortress perched on a lofty peak, the Chief himself set his men the example of how to use bows. Although blind in the left eye (hence comes his name Kiör) he was a notorious marksman with the bow. The Porte ordered the

(1)H. C. Rawlinson: 'A Journey from Tabriz through Persian Kurdistan to the ruins of Takhti-Suleiman.... in 1838.' Communicated by Viscount Palmerston to the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. X. (1841) pp. 17-20.

Pashas of Baghdad and Van to send regular contingents and *bashibozuks* to storm the castle of Emir Kiör. Cut off from all supplies and water, Emil Kiör surrendered on conditions of honourable treatment; he was banished to Constantinople with his family and chief tribesmen.

The offensive against the Kurds continued on the slopes of Sasun-Motkan, the *massif* of high mountains and narrow valleys south of the city of Bitlis. The Badikans offered the stoutest resistance. The joint Kurdish-Armenian army commanded by Haji Zilal Agha, 'offered pertinacious opposition to the Ottomans at Lidje and Nerjiki.' (1) These Kurds and Armenians had never submitted to the Ottoman Pashas; neither had they paid any taxes to the Sultan. Rejeb Bey of Hazzo, Temir Beg of Haini, north of Diarbekr, fought the Ottoman *Serasker* (Commander-in-Chief); but ultimately the latter's artillery, to which the Kurds were not used, destroyed their castles, entire villages were burnt to the ground and the leaders were seized and exiled.

In Pasur, the most secluded district of Guinj along the Euphrates, the Bekran and Rashkotan tribesmen, men and women, fought bravely to defend their homes and their honour.

Hafiz Pasha, like his predecessor, had offered rewards to those of the Turkish troops who brought him heads, ears and fingers of the Kurds; prisoners were tortured and bayoneted, including many women and children who had fought by the side of their men. 'Kurdish women opened fire on the Ottoman troops and one of them disembowelled one of her assailants with her *khancher* (dagger)'. (2)

About a year after these butcheries, when the Ottoman regular army, commanded by the same Hafiz Pasha had been massacred or routed (1839) at Nezib by the Egyptians under Ibrahim Pasha, the Kurdish Sheikh of Zilan, a learned theologian, said that 'it was the blood of innocent Kurdish women and children who

(1) James Brant: 'Notes on a Journey through a part of Kurdistan in the Summer of 1838.' H.M. Consul at Erzerum, in *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*. Vol X. (1841) pp. 356-58.

(2) Von Moltke: *Briefe* . . . . op cit. letters mentioned.

cried to the Almighty in Heaven for vengeance on the Rumi.'

*Prince Badrkhan of Jazirat-ibn-Omar (1842—47)*

In the second stage of the Kurdish struggle for independence, Badrkhan Bey stands out as the bravest warrior and a wise and far-seeing statesman. His victory over the Ottoman army and his subsequent withdrawal to Jebel Gudi has been related above.

The best and fullest account of Bedrkhan Bey was written by two American missionaries (1), who were asked to visit him at Dergule (the Gate of the Rose-garden). The two Americans travelling from Persia, were the guests of the Chief in June, 1846. They write as follows :

'About eighteen miles east of Jazirat, across the Tigris, Dergule was the residence of Bedrkhan Bey, a town of a few hundred houses, built of stone and mud at the foot of Gudi Dagh. The Castle of the Bey stood near the village, on the brow of a hill, overlooking a small stream which flows into the Tigris. Singular things happened at Dergule in the Castle yard. Surrounded by a bodyguard of sixty Yezidi warriors and other Kurdish tribal chiefs, the Bey distributed money to hundreds of widows, children, to the lone and sick who, raising their eyes towards heaven, invoked the blessing of God upon him. Bedrkhan Bey prided himself upon being a man of 'one word'. Eight years before he had been weak and Turkey strong and though then (1846) the power had changed hands, he did not break his word. His wealth was incalculable. His power extended from the Persian frontier in the East to far into Mesopotamia, and from the Gates of Diarbekr to those of Mosul. His fame was widespread. Nearly every chief in Northern Kurdistan came to pay his respects to Bedrkhan Bey, bringing him presents of money, horses, mules and other valuable property. Even Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, high in rank and once more powerful than he, and Khan Mahmud of Mokus (Mokk) seemed to think themselves honoured by being

(1) Messrs. Wright and Breath, in *Missionary Herald*, a weekly published in Boston, Mass. Volume 42nd. (1846) pp. 378—81.



in waiting upon him. . . . The idea of destiny did much to strengthen his power and to palsy the arm lifted against him. The many spirited chiefs under him, though restive and extremely impatient of power, dared not lift a finger in opposition to him, as in their own language 'God had given him, and it is in vain for others to strive for it. . . .'

'The guilty under the government of Bedrkhan Bey found no escape. Bribery, favouritism, etc., which too often in these countries pervert the cause of justice, were unknown there . . . A Kurd thief had his right hand amputated as soon as the evidence of his guilt was established . . . Such security prevailed in the wildest parts of Kurdistan that no one could realise being in a region reported as a scene of robbery and murder . . . He spent a great deal of time in his devotions; he was exact in fulfilling all the prescribed forms of his religion; and often in hours of business was engaged in ejaculating prayers. He has proselytised a large number of Yezidis either by argument or the sword.'

#### *His political programme.*

By dint of character and sometimes by violence Badrkhan Bey had brought under his rule most of the tribal chiefs north of the meridian of Mosul. It is to be observed that from time immemorial all these Kurds had been in daily contact with Christian Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Armenians further north. Their national consciousness was therefore more developed and they were more advanced politically than the mass of the Kurdish people in ancient Gutium, that is the range of mountains which lay between the rivers of the Lowker Zab and Dyala. Besides this, the northern Kurds consisted predominantly of hereditary tribes of Yezidi faith, and not a few were of Christian origin. These considerations seem to have formed the basis of Bedrkhan's Bey's political programme. He gave the first sign of his intention when he declined to respond to the call of the Ottoman government, demanding tribal contingents to be sent to the war against Russia in 1828—29 (1). On the contrary, he did everything

possible to win over Khan Mahmud of Mokka (Mukus in Turkish) and Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, to his scheme for organising an independent Kurdistan.

The capture of the Kurdish castles one after the other during the Ottoman campaign of 1834-8, and the fiendish treatment by the Turks of Kurdish women and children had taught him the futility of a single-handed struggle against the Turk. He aimed at creating an independent Kurdistan within the frontiers as described above by the two American missionaries. He would be the ruling prince under the nominal suzerainty of Persia. He would grant full powers of self-government to the great tribal chiefs; the Armenians and Assyrians were to organise the state and secure the friendship of Russia and Georgia. The surprise and massacre in 1843 of some ten thousand Assyrians, a most valuable element for the success of the planned independence of Kurdistan, is said to have been due partly to jealousy between overzealous missionaries. (2)

The accession of Sultan Majid to the throne of Turkey soon after the Ottoman rout at Nezib (1839) heralded the era of *Tanzimat* ('Reforms'). The new Sultan at once reversed the policy of military reconquest of the Kurds and attempted to win over the heretofore unsubdued Chiefs by peaceful means. From 1840 onwards Kurdish agents speaking Turkish were nominated to mediate between the Porte and Badrkhan Bey who declined to the last to go to Erzerum as demanded, but expressed his formal submission to the Sultan. He even sent gifts to various corrupt Turkish Pashas, and consented to allow Ottoman officials to recruit a specified number of Kurds for the army. The experiences in the Ottoman army of the Kurdish hillmen, sturdy youths brought up in open spaces and free mountains, had been anything but satisfactory; those who had been compelled to serve in the

(1) Gh. Vard: Pirgalemian, an Armenian Chronicler, has written the history of those times in five volumes, still in MSS.

(2) C. Sandreczki: *Reise nach Mosul und durch Kurdistan nach Urmia*, unternommen in Auftrage der Church Missionary Society in London. (1857). The whole of Volume III and specially pages 70-71.

infected Turkish barracks had either died of disease or had saved themselves by desertion. Eye-witnesses have testified to seeing the healthy Kurdish lads handcuffed and often tethered and led to barracks under the knouts of Turkish sergeants. Badrkhan Bey could hardly close his eyes and ears to the complaints which reached him from the tribal Chiefs all over Kurdistan. In this second period it was mainly the question of military service which rallied the Kurds to the side of the great chief. Then followed heavy taxation, and the substitution of Turkish governors for the hereditary Chiefs. These many grievances left no doubt in the minds of the Kurdish leaders that the Porte was determined to make an end of all the privileges they had known and valued and that the so-called *Tanzimat* were a mere cloak to suppress their race. Even those tribes in the Taurus and in the south which were supposed to have been subdued in 1834-9, refused to furnish recruits and to pay taxes. The young men of military age took to the hills to escape capture and every pass on the caravan routes was swarming with armed bands lying in ambush to pillage travellers. 'The general insecurity prevailing from Mount Ararat to Baghdad was now worse than before the promulgation of the *Hatti-Sherif of Gulhane*' (the decree of Reforms), wrote a contemporary, 'because Ottoman Pashas attempted to capture Kurds for the army.'

The Christian Ecclesiastical Authorities in Constantinople and in provincial towns, speaking in the name not only of their flocks, but of defenceless Kurdish and Yezidi cultivators, made repeated representations to the Porte regarding the increasing depredations of Kurdish deserters and of some rebel chiefs. The Porte decided on a new campaign under the command of Marshal Osman Pasha, whose headquarters had now been transferred from Erzerum to Diarbekr as a concession to Russia.

In 1844 Osman Pasha called the Kurdish leaders to present themselves at his camp in Diarbekr to discuss ways and means of levying taxes and recruits. Badrkhan Bey disregarded the invitation of the Ottoman *Serasker*. On the contrary, attired in his gold-braided *Jubbè* (cloak) and his enormous headgear wrapped

up in bright shawls and silk kerchiefs wearing his striped silk *shalwar* (trousers) and red top-boots with upturned toes, preceded and followed by squadrons of his faithful tribesmen carrying ten feet long lances and primitive breach-loader rifles, he started on a royal tour of inspection. He visited all the local tribal Chiefs from Jazira to the southern shores of Lake Van. Everywhere in the area he was received as the Prince of Kurdistan by Christian and Kurdish peasantry alike. He called upon all to make contributions to the war chest and to remain loyal to the cause of independence to the end. That in some places he exercised force to extract contributions from the natives may be gathered from the evidence of contemporaries. This was another pretext for the partisans of the Ottoman rule in Constantinople and the provinces to raise a fresh outcry against Badrkhan Bey's depredations. The Patriarchs of the Christian *Millets* (nations) made collective representations to the Porte, and sent circulars to their provincial councils and notabilities to rise in support of the Ottoman Imperial army led by Osman Pasha and put down the Kurdish 'rebellion'. By choice or for reasons of expediency, these appeals fell on deaf ears where the Christian peasantry within or in the vicinity of the area was concerned.

By now convinced that appeals or negotiations were of no avail, Osman Pasha concentrated large forces at Diarbekr in the south and in Van in the north. The latter were to march on Hakkari-Mokk along the head waters of the Tigris and to scatter or push the contingents of Nurullah and Mahmud towards the Bohtan-Berwari heights, which were to be assaulted by the southern Army at Diarbekr with the main object of encircling both Badrkhan Bey and the other two chiefs in the mountains.

It is impossible to trace exactly the course of military operations in the years 1846-7. Local sources are lacking and the European powers had started on their nefarious policy of 'reforming Turkey' and therefore were anxious 'to pacify the Levant':

In order to prevent further devastations, the local Kurdish Chieftains and Armenian princes of Van met in consultation in the spring of 1846 and offered their mediation between the

Porte and Khan Mahmud. Hard pressed on all sides, the latter consented to surrender to Kurdish and Armenian representatives if they secured a pledge from Osman Pasha that his person, family and treasure would be honourably treated. His conditions being accepted on the most solemn oath, Mahmud came down from the mountains and placed himself in the hands of these representatives who conducted him to the Ottoman Commander. In spite of oath and pledge, the invincible Khan Mahmud was handed over to the Turkish soldiery and *bashibozuks*, who tied him to a tree in a most undignified manner, flogged him and spat on him: then they smeared honey on his face to attract flies while his hands were tied.

The Ottoman soldiery thoroughly plundered the whole district and massacred Kurdish women and children. Castles and fortresses of great historic interest, the handiwork of ancient and mediaeval Armenian architects, were pulled down and in most cases razed to the ground. There indeed the Turks had passed. . . . Until recently the natives pointed out the traces of shrapnel on some of the standing walls and the widespread *débris*, once the impregnable strongholds of Armenian Mokatsis and Reshtunis, and subsequently of the Kurdish and Armenian Barons of the land of Mokka, who for centuries had successfully repelled the Persian, the Roman and the Arab, but who now succumbed—not to the personal courage of the Turk—for it is a shameful lie to say that the Turk is in any way braver than the Kurd, the Armenian or the Assyrian—but to the unequalled mechanical devices of western mercenary civilisation and the machinations of mercenary politicians.

Once Khan Mahmud was out of the way, the Turks concentrated in the Bohtan valley, having received new reinforcements and arms as well as an Albanian battalion accustomed to mountain warfare. 'The greater part of the Ottoman forces was badly disciplined, at best fit for scouting, but with better knowledge of looting.' (1)

(1) Xavier Hommaire de Hell: *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse, exécuté par l'ordre du gouvernement Français pendant les années 1846-48* (1854) Vol. II p. 493.

The Kurdish cavalry of Badrkhan Bey, who knew every inch of their hills and vales, surprised and wiped out whole Turkish contingents. The fates were against brave Badrkhan Bey; when success seemed within his grasp, his nephew commanding one wing of the Kurdish army, turned traitor and went over to the enemy. At a new summons to surrender, Badrkhan Bey, cut off on every side, came down in August 1847 to submit to Marshal Osman Pasha who received him well and allowed him to keep his sword. His family was treated honourably and his war chest was taken from him 'for safe keeping', but his castle and his district were laid waste and some of the tribal leaders devotedly attached to the great Chief were horribly bayoneted. Most of the remaining unvanquished Chiefs fled to Persia or Transcaucasia or concealed themselves in the fastnesses of the mountains. 'It is impossible to imagine the sad situation of this unfortunate country: three fourths of the valleys are reduced to ruins; the inhabitants crowded into the towns, where cholera soon broke out throughout the length and breadth of the country.' (1)

Osman Pasha withdrew to Bitlis, where cholera broke out among his troops, three fourths of whom fell victim to the epidemic in the winter of 1847-8.

Escorted by two batallions of Infantry, Badrkhan Bey with his large family and relatives was taken to Constantinople through Kharberd and *Trebizond*. He was exiled to Varna, others were detained in Crete and at Candia, soon to be released on political grounds, when the Crimean war (1854-5) seemed to be imminent.

### *'History repeats itself' (1848-90)*

The removal of the great leaders from Kurdistan was in most cases temporary. In no way did it imply the pacification of the

(1) Xavier Hommaire de Hell: *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse, exécuté par l'ordre du gouvernement Français pendant les années 1846-48 (1854)* vol. II p. 494.

areas concerned. Fresh rebellions broke out in 1850-1 among the same tribes and among the same mountains where it was believed that peace had been established forever! There indeed history has repeated itself with more continuity and consistency than elsewhere.

However, in anticipation of the forthcoming war against Russia (1854-5), the Porte adopted a conciliatory policy toward the tribes: many of the younger Kurdish tribal leaders, captured a few years earlier, were liberated and sent back to their mountains to recruit troops as cannon fodder.

The perennial demand for Kurdish taxes and recruits still remained a source of constant friction between the Ottoman authorities and the tribes. Whole pages could be filled with the military expeditions sent by the former to levy the sheep-tax or to collect recruits and the latter's resistance and constant sniping; throughout that period the events of 1834-47 were repeated, on a smaller scale and in isolated areas. It was a *reductio ad absurdum* of a sovereign power, which was obliged every year to escort its tax-collectors with regiments of the regular army to raise money and recruits among the Kurds.

As a consequence of the Crimean war, a large number of Circassian and other Musulman tribes emigrated to Turkey from the Caucasus. As they were allowed to choose some of the best pasturages, they came into collision with the Kurdish tribes which for centuries had considered these lands as their patrimony. This induced the Turkish government to take measures to establish both the emigrants and the Kurdish *Kocher* (nomad) tribes in fixed settlements. During the period under review large numbers were successfully settled in agricultural communities, mainly on land supposed to be *miri* (State property).

The settlement of the wandering tribes was of vital interest to the peaceful peasants and townsmen. It is recorded that in the seventies the Armenian Archbishop of Diarbekr personally looked after the newly settled Kurds, teaching them to make ploughs and agricultural tools, sowing their fields and blessing their crops. The cultivator of the soil acquires fixed habits and begins to

think and learn. The process continued steadily among the tribes in the north and brought the workers on the land nearer to each other. Often the Kurdish peasant and labourer was as liable to depredations and robbery as his Christian neighbour.

### *Kurdish invasion of Persia (1880-1)*

The Russo-Turkish war in 1877 caused great devastation in the eastern provinces of Turkey. The war itself and the resulting famine and pestilence decimated Kurds and Christians alike. The defeat of Turkey aroused the smouldering fires of Kurdish independence, but this time it was directed against Persia, at least during the first period. Sheikh Ubeidullah of Shamdinan (in Hakkari near the Persian frontier) was the leader of the movement. The son of the highly respected Eheimh Tahar, and following in the footsteps of Badrkhan Bey, the Sheikh intended creating an independent Kurdistan on the frontier. In 1878, in the course of a raid, the Persian Governor of Urmia had arrested and beheaded some Kurds belonging to the clan of the Sheikh, and kidnapped a few girls. ('Persians were very fond of handsome Kurdish maidens').

In a protest to a British Consul the Sheikh wrote :

"The Kurdish nation is a people apart. Their religion is different (to that of others), and their laws and customs are distinct. They are known among all nations as mischievous and corrupt . . . The chiefs and rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan (the Christians) one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on in this way with the two governments, and that necessarily something must be done so that the European governments having understood the matter shall enquire into our state . . . We want our affairs to be in our hands . . . otherwise the whole of Kurdistan will take the matter into their own hands, as they are unable to put up with these continual evil deeds, and the oppression which



they suffer at the hands of the two governments of impure intentions" (1) etc.

Giving effect to his threat, Sheikh Ubeidullah rallied round himself some of the bravest Kurdish chiefs of the surrounding country and formed a union which he called The Kurdish League. Among his advisers was Bahri Bey Bedrkhan, the son of the famous Chief. At the head of a cavalry corps, the Sheikh sent his own son to occupy the town of Saouj-Bulak(1) in Persia (south of Lake Urmia) in order to obtain some redress of the wrongs he complained of. Early in 1881 he himself occupied the city of Urmia and would have conquered Tabriz and all Azerbaijan, had not Turkey and Persia, under Anglo-Russian pressure, come to an agreement to nip the movement in the bud. The Sheikh, his family and his tribal chiefs were seized and deported to Mecca, where the Sheikh died and was buried. His elder son, Sheikh Abdul Kader Effendi was amnestied in 1908 by the Young Turks and made an Ottoman Senator. During the Kurdish revolutionary war of 1925 he was seized and hanged. Since the armistice of 1919, a younger scion of this great family, Sheikh Said Taha has distinguished himself in many ways and is one of the great leaders of the Kurdish movement for independence to-day.

### *Growth of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement.*

The failure of Sheikh Ubeidullah in 1881 profoundly wounded the pride of the Kurdish leaders and gave a fresh impulse

(1) *Blue Book* (Turkey, No. 5 1881) 'Correspondence respecting the Kurdish invasion of Persia' Vice-Consul Clayton's report from Bashkalé (Van-Hakkari) dated July 11, 1880, p. 7.

(1) Early in (1946) Saouj-Bulak figured very conspicuously as the centre of the Kurdish movement in Azerbaijan. It is one of the market towns for the powerful tribe of Mukris, whose history can be traced back at least to the beginning of our era. Al-Masudi, the Arab historian, calls them: Al-Majerdan, but in earlier Armenian classics they are referred to as 'the prince's of Mahkrtnun', inhabiting the region south of Lake Urmia.

and stimulus to the collective consciousness of the more advanced individuals among them. By then many young Kurds were studying in growing numbers at the Turkish schools in Constantinople and some of them like the Badrkhan Princes and Babans, went further to Swiss and French universities. A newspaper in the Kurdish language and Arabic script began to appear in Egypt (*Kurdistan*, editor, Prince Midhat Badr Khan), and a periodical appeared in Geneva in French under the same name.

For several reasons the idea of an independent Kurdistan grew but slowly and on lines totally dissimilar to all other nationalist movements. First of all, most of the hereditary fighting tribes were in fact *quasi*-independent long before they were aware of it and long before they formulated their programme. This peculiarity of the Kurdish movement was no doubt due to the social organisation of the tribes.

Lack of a common medium of national education and of most of the means essential for the expression of racial sentiment have considerably retarded the development of cohesion and political co-operation. Intense particularism and excessive jealousy among the hereditary tribes and their leaders regarding precedence and rights have been the bane of the Kurdish race. The most trivial disputes, inseparable from the social life of any community, which could be smoothed over in a face-to-face talk in a few minutes, have usually led to bloodshed and long-drawn-out hostilities between parties. Mutual rancour and intolerance have kept the wounds festering from generation to generation, thus causing a disastrous waste of energy, of time and of the limited financial resources available. Any tribe which considered itself aggrieved in any way would never feel satisfied until it had wrecked vengeance on the opposing party, very often a sub-branch of the same clan.

Perhaps a personal experience will best illustrate the way these conceptions of honour and superior personal bravery operate in practice. The city of Bitlis stands in a trough of the northern spurs of the Armenian Taurus. It is the natural bridge-head between the range of mountains leading to Diarbekr and





the plains of Mesopotamia. Here were two Kurdish clans, the Gabols and the Zeidans, with their headquarters in the city but drawing their strength and recruits from the mountains as far south as Diarbekr. Warmest friendship had prevailed between the two clans for several years. They inter-married, hunted together and often joined in organising raids on the herds and flocks of defenceless Armenian and Kurdish peasants.

Suddenly hostilities broke out between them in the spring of 1910, because at an impromptu horse-race a Levantine harlot had loudly acclaimed the Gabol champion while expressing contempt for the Zeidan rider. For two hours, brisk rifle-fire was heard in the southern suburbs of the town, in which many people were killed and a larger number wounded. As usual Turkish police and troops kept a benevolent neutrality: often they were not strong enough to cope with the situation.

The real 'war' began next day and, on and off, went on for eight months; tribes friendly to either side joined in from the districts of Motkan and Kharzan, thus carrying the war to those parts of the mountains. I had known the Gabol chief for many years, a middle-aged, svelt and delightful person, reasonable and mild at normal times, but ferocious and bloodthirsty when I saw him during the 'war', at his headquarters. He had lost his usually serene and charming ways; he threatened to fight the Zeidans to the last drop of his and his tribes' blood, unless the enemy withdrew the insulting words spoken within the hearing of his men. Finally Sheikh Mahmud of Kharzan (half way between Bitlis and Diarbekr), a greatly loved and respected Chief, effectively interceded and brought the quarrelling parties together. The 'war' between the two tribes broke out again in 1912 after I had left the city. Tribal wars and bloodshed are occasioned also by old blood feuds, the kidnapping of women, the seizure of flocks and arms, disputes regarding the ownership of pasture-grounds and other similar causes.

In modern times the Kurds have had no national centre or authority to train them in self-government and in national ways; their simple-mindedness has been abused and their manhood has

been exploited by Turkey as cannon-fodder in her losing wars on all fronts.

Like all their neighbours of genuine autochthonous origin—Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians and Persians, the Kurdish race has been, up to recent years, entirely impervious to foreign cultural or spiritual influences. More tenaciously than the others it has maintained intact throughout the last four thousand years its racial characteristics and social and economic organisation. But the moment the Kurds gave martyrs to the cause of national freedom, as in the struggle for independence led by Prince Badr-khān and Sheikh Ubeidullah, a new era dawned for them. There can be no doubt that the Armenian revolutionary activity, in the eighties of the last century and subsequently, worked as a stimulant and example to thinking Kurdish leaders. The Chieftains of the great Haidaran, Taguri and Shikaki tribes, living north and north-east of Lake Van, were instrumental in smuggling Armenian arms from Persia and Russia and Kurdish bards sang the heroism of Armenian revolutionary leaders. The Kurd is deeply stirred by any act of personal valour or military exploit.

One principal feature of the first Kurdish newspapers published in Egypt and Switzerland was their constant reiteration that Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians and Yezidis should act in concert for the prosecution of the common purpose. Groups and individuals of these races met and discussed common interests, although on the other side many tribal Chiefs, closely linked with Turkey, indiscriminately murdered and robbed defenceless people.

#### *Organisation of Kurdish Cavalry (1889-91)*

The Turkish Porte could hardly fail to note this growing co-operation between the discontented races on its eastern marches. Two distinct revolutionary movements, Armenian and Kurdish, although outwardly antagonistic and mutually hostile, might conceivably join hands under certain given circumstances and bring about the real partition of Turkey. Somehow or other a wedge must be driven between the two neighbouring peoples and something done to set one against the other. Hence the

idea arose of organising the northern tribes into irregular light cavalry regiments as auxiliaries to the Turkish Army. The Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, honoured this cavalry corps by according it his own name (i.e. *Hamidié*). Nominally seventy six such regiments, each four hundred strong, were recruited, officered by their own tribal chiefs and placed under the command of the IV Ottoman Army Headquarters, then at Erzingan (1) (b).

The regiments were never at full strength; some of them were never constituted at all. In this new guise, some twenty representative regiments, in picturesque uniforms, were led to war against Greece in 1897. They rode out from their mountains to Trebizond and were shipped to Salonica after a parade in Constantinople before the Sultan himself. They were pushed in front of the Turkish Army in Thessaly; they fought very bravely but eventually a quarter of them—with their horses—returned home.

The incorporation of Kurdish youth into the body politic of Turkey injured the natives in two ways. It increased their violence towards their neighbours, the Armenian as well as Kurdish agricultural population; but above all, it considerably retarded the growth of Kurdish nationalism, by deflecting the energies and the aspirations of a healthy race into negative and anti-national channels.

In order to complete the picture, it should be noted that no irregular cavalry regiments were recruited among the oldest tribes of Gutium and Kashshu proper, the original homeland of the Kurds, namely between the city of Mosul and the Jebel Hamrin, the lower ridges of which overlook the plains north of Baghdad. The Sultan made arrangements for their intellectual advancement. Large numbers of youths were selected in the region of Gutium and taken to Constantinople to be educated in special schools.

(1) The idea and actual plan of organisation is attributed to Marshal Von der Goltz, the German officer who since 1882 had been in the service of Turkey. This does not seem to be the whole truth. The States which then were championing 'the territorial integrity of the Ottoman empire' cannot be absolved of a share in this policy.

The teaching of Kurdish, their mother tongue was forbidden as being a 'barbarian' language; the medium of education was Turkish. Of course, the education of Kurdish youth, even in Turkish, was a hundred times better than none: yet it showed the trend of Turkish statecraft in regard to the friendly tribes.

Even this measure did not solve the whole problem. The youths who were liable for military service in the Turkish army could now join their own cavalry regiments. That was at least an honourable way out of the difficulty. But the question of taxation remained ever-present and continued to cause interminable friction. One instance will suffice to show the terror in which the irrepressible Kurds were held.

In 1899 the local Turkish *Mudir* (governor) of Bervari, north of Bohtan-Su, was threatened with dismissal and punishment by the higher authorities, if he did not immediately collect and forward about £1500, due as sheep-tax from the Kurds of the district. Twenty regular cavalymen were placed at his disposal to enforce the collection. A Gendarmerie colonel, escorted by five *zabties* (tax-collectors) and the cavalry rode out to collect the tax or seize the flocks. Having got wind of the plan, the recalcitrant Kurds entrenched themselves at the entrance of a narrow gorge, and shot all of them dead except two *zabties*, who, being unable to escape, knelt down and begged mercy in Kurdish. A few months later, the Sultan, by an Imperial *irade* (order) forgave these Kurds and sent them a decoration and greetings!



## *The Turkish Revolution and the Kurds (1908)*

'THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE' had never been more sick than during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876—1909). A comparatively very small number of people benefited from the anarchy which prevailed in these years. The first beneficiary was the Sultan himself, his harem of four thousand women, his favourite Pashas and flunkeys, spies and informers, some chiefs in the vast empire then extending from the Adriatic to the Persian Gulf, and of course the European bondholders of the usurious Turkish loans. The general poverty in the Empire was increasing by geometrical progression. Almost every year wars against Arabs, Albanians, Macedonians, Kurds and many others were sapping the life-blood of every race and class. Educated Turks, both within and outside the country were gradually joining the non-Turk revolutionary committees for the common purpose of overthrowing the Sultan and saving the fair lands of the Ottoman Empire from utter ruin and collapse.

The visit of King Edward VII to Czar Nicholas of Russia in 1907 was said to have resulted in a practical scheme of dividing up Turkey. These rumours in regard to the fate of Turkey filled the cup of bitterness, and found expression in a military revolt in the Turkish army in Macedonia in the summer of 1908, which brought the Young Turk party to power. The new rulers could easily deal with the friends and the partisans of the Sultan in the capital of the Empire and the great centres near the capital, but it was a different matter in the mountains of Zagros or Taurus and the deserts of Arabia. In the first year of their rule, the Young Turk government took military measures against those Kurdish tribes which had been especially favoured by the dethroned Sultan. (1)

(1) In particular against Yezidi Milli (Mihrani), Ibrahim Pasha of Viranshahr (Diabekr), the Barzanis (who distinguished themselves throughout the last fifteen years, and particularly in recent times), and finally against the invincible Kizilbash tribes in Dersim.

None of these tribes or areas could in fact be permanently subdued, unless strong garrisons were stationed in their midst. Even then—such are the powers of resilience in a virile and hardy people like the Kurds—they succeeded in making the life of the garrison intolerable and costly. Besides, in the fourth month of the Turkish revolution, foreign political crises succeeded each other with dramatic suddenness. First of all Bulgaria, declared her complete independence of Turkey; in conjunction therewith Austria-Hungary annexed the Sanjak of Novi Bazar. These international complications, striking a deadly blow at the prestige of the Turkish revolution, were just got out of the way when in the autumn of 1911 Italy declared war on Turkey and occupied the two provinces of Lybia. The two belligerents were negotiating a peace treaty in the autumn of 1912 when the Alliance of the four Balkan States attacked Turkey and at the point of bayonets routed the Turkish armies and marched up to the gates of Constantinople. In the meanwhile, the six Great Powers of Europe imposed a 'scheme of reforms' on Turkey under European control for the benefit of Armenia.

The repercussions of these events far and near, the probable doom of Turkey hovering on the horizon, stirred the intellectual Kurdish leaders to greater activity. The Young Turks' régime did actually introduce some constitutional reforms, such as freedom of speech, of the press and education. In the autumn of 1908, a Kurdish club was established in Constantinople on the initiative of Prince Emin Badr Khan, the grandson of the great leader of 1842-47, with the object of studying the essential principles which must govern the organisation of the nation and the homeland. They published a newspaper called *Kurd Taavun ve terakki gazettesi* (Journal of Kurdish mutual Help and Progress). In the first few numbers of this journal, leaders like Babanzadè Ismail Hakki, Said Kurdi and Sheikh Kader mentioned above, laid great emphasis on 'acquiring and organising a good language', as a key to learning and civilisation. Details were published showing the wealth of Kurdish folklore and unwritten literature; their study was urged as being a sure guide leading to national unity.

In cautious and veiled language the study of Turkish was discouraged 'a waste of time' for Kurdish children. The primary condition of good Turkish citizenship for the Kurds, was alleged to be their education as good Kurds. Further, it was suggested that a national Kurdish force should be raised on the basis of tribal regiments.

Similar Kurdish clubs were established also at Baghdad, Mosul and Diarbekr to promote the same ideas and methods among the tribes. The constitutional liberties had opened up new prospects and there was great eagerness among the youth of every nation in the Ottoman Empire to learn sciences, law and foreign languages. This common passion for education formed a close bond between the students who met each other not only at school and public meetings, but also at social gatherings where they could talk and exchange their views. The reconciliation of races and their harmonious co-operation under the Ottoman banner was one of the much spoken-of aims of the Turkish revolution.

Yet there is proof that the inner ring of the Young Turk Committee, mostly men of hybrid origin, looked with disfavour upon the rapid development of mutual understanding and co-operation between the Kurdish and Armenian neighbours. Members of these peoples in the Ottoman *Majlis* (Parliament) frequently took concerted action and often settled out of court disputes between them on land ownership and other causes of friction. As early as the summer of 1909, the secret agents of the Young Turk Committee were touring the eastern provinces, sowing suspicion and discord among Armenians and Kurds.

In spite of the political storms and wars in Africa and the Balkans, the Armeno-Kurdish provinces east of the Euphrates were fast recovering from the economic ruin of Abdul Hamid's reign. In the course of some five years (1908-13) all Ottoman Asia, and particularly its Armenian-Kurdish Arab belt, grew in prosperity, wealth and well-being to such an extent as to be almost unrecognisable. Freedom of enterprise and travel, comparative security on the high roads induced these peoples to

develop their latent gifts, inherited from forty-five centuries of culture. (1)

But there was the reverse of the medal too. Since the summer of 1908 there was *hurriet* (freedom) in the Ottoman empire for everybody. The words freedom, equality and fraternity were on the lips of all those who could shout loud enough, or join in noisy victory parades. But under certain circumstances 'freedom' is a two-edged sword. The average Kurd, untutored in such constitutional niceties, would have ceased to be human if he did not interpret the word *hurriet* in his own way and according to his own conceptions.

Those Kurdish Chiefs and clans who had benefited under the fallen Sultan were being incited by reactionary circles in the capital to make trouble in the outlying provinces and create difficulties for the revolutionary party in power. Widespread robberies in isolated valleys and out-of-the-way districts and the raiding of flocks of defenceless peasants increased in proportion to the Turkish defeats in the Balkans.

There was also a political aspect to it. 'Kurdistan for the Kurds;' the new pass-word, was being whispered from *tekké* (a shrine and hostel) to *tekké* of the Sheikhs who were convinced that the Ottoman Empire had suffered the great disaster of 1912-13, because the Young Turks were godless and *Farmason* (Masons). As usual the Kurds of Armenia took the initiative in revolutionary action.

In dire need of funds and fresh recruits to replenish their melting armies in the west, the Turkish authorities in the eastern provinces turned over their old account books to discover fresh sources of supply both of money and soldiers. A true type of Constantinople Turk, with a smattering of French, was the *vali* (governor-general) of Bitlis in the spring of 1913. He found out that for the past twenty years the family of the Kurdish Sheikh of Khizan (a) had not paid one penny in taxes nor had he supplied

(1) Agha Bisharëë Chato told me in 1910 (see p. 5) that in two years his flocks had doubled; that he was able to sell then a hundred horses instead of thirty two years earlier.

any recruits from among his tribe numbering several hundreds. The *vali* sent 'salaams' to the Sheikh and politely asked for the arrears of debt due to the State and a specified number of soldiers. As politely the Sheikh replied that, like his forefathers, he was the spiritual head of a large area and the patron of a Tekkè, where every year thousands of travellers, rich or poor, Dervishes, vagrants and merchants found shelter and food free of charge, and tens of thousands every year came as pilgrims, therefore, as such, he was exempt from any taxation and the men in his immediate service were needed for religious duties. Sheikh Seid Ali was indiscreet enough to add further that in the beneficent reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II no such demands were made of him. This was sufficient to infuriate the Young Turk *vali*. He sent a large number of gendarmes to seize the flocks of the Sheikh. Almost every Kurd and every Moslem from Diarbekr to Van was in sympathy with the ideas of the Sheikh, as many of them revered him as a saint. Having heard from his sympathisers the intentions of the *vali*, Sheikh Seid Ali collected some seven hundred of his fittest warriors, armed them, and rode out at their head to capture the city and drive out the godless 'Rumi'. The gendarmerie force whom he met on the way dispersed without firing a shot, because, being mainly Kurds, they would not fire on their Sheikh. In July 1913 the Sheikh occupied the city of Bitlis and the neighbourhood, every Turkish official, including the educated *vali* himself, having already fled.

Like Prince Badr Khan, Sheikh Ubeidullah and others, the Sheikh of Khizan issued a well-reasoned proclamation inviting Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans to rise in his support and rid the country of the *Rumi*. The time chosen by Sheikh Seid Ali was most inopportune. The whole of Asiatic Turkey had greatly prospered since 1908; to the advantage of all and to the best interests of the country, argued the Armenians, peace and order should be maintained in the eastern provinces of Turkey, Armenia and Kurdistan, and the progressive Young Turk régime should be supported in order to overcome the difficulties in the centre; it was true that the Young Turk government had murdered tens

of thousands of Armenians in Cilicia in 1909, and had reduced that flourishing province almost to ashes; nevertheless Kurds and Christians would eventually profit by the continuance of the Ottoman empire as a political and economic unit.

The reign of Sheikh Seid Ali in Bitlis lasted a week. The Turks brought troops from Diarbekr and Mush, reoccupied the city after some sharp fighting, and the Sheikh himself and some of his lieutenants sought asylum at the Russian Consulate in the city. While trying to escape to his mountains a few weeks later, the Sheikh was caught and publicly hanged with four of his chief followers.

#### *The Kurdish tribes and the war (1914-18)*

It is hardly realized that the Kurdish tribes living north of Mosul, Bohtan-Su and in Armenia suffered only a few degrees less than the Armenians during the Great War. Most of the unsophisticated Kurds still hold a fatalistic view of human affairs and political events; therefore they consider that confessing their losses or whining about them is a reflection on their individual self-respect and tribal dignity. Like most of their neighbours the intervention of Turkey in the European war took them unawares, though they are always ready for any fight and resultant booty at a few minutes' notice. Some of the tribes, particularly the old light cavalry regiments living in the vicinity of the Trans-Caucasian frontiers, were compelled to join in the war as an integral part of the Turkish army. The more thoughtful leaders, imbued with the spirit of Kurdish nationalism, still lacked cohesion and were not yet sufficiently organised successfully to pursue a distinctly Kurdish national policy. As a people the Kurds had no interest whatever in taking part in this destructive war. On the other hand, the invasion by the Russian Caucasian army of the Armenian provinces of Turkey turned Kurdish villages and pasture grounds into a battlefield between the various belligerent States; perhaps no other choice was left to the Kurds. Even the great Kurdish tribes in Persia—a sovereign State that remained neutral throughout the war—were dragged into the vortex both

in the north and the south. It may sound paradoxical yet it is a fact that the Shikaki, the Mukri, the Hartoshi and other tribes spread along the Turkish—Persian frontier in the north, and the Lurs, the Sinjabi, Kalkhori and other tribes in the south, commanding the main passes between Baghdad and Kirmanshah in the south, suffered as much in the fluctuations of the war as the tribes in Turkey, which was a belligerent.

These two regions of Persian Azerbaijan and Persian Kurdistan respectively in the north and south, changed hands several times between Russia, Turkey and eventually Britain, time and again undergoing devastation, destruction and a chronic famine.

Prince Sureya Badrkhan, a worthy grandson of the great chief of the rebellion (1842—1847) writes as follows of the relations between the Armenians and the Kurds during the war;

‘At the outbreak of war, most Kurds of military age were drafted into the Turkish army. In the absence of any means of communication with their home folks, they were kept in complete ignorance of the plans and acts of the Turkish government in Kurdistan. Moreover the government was prosecuting a vigorous anti-Armenian and anti-Christian campaign among the Kurdish regular and irregular troops. The real or artificial antipathy of the Armenian for the Kurd had long been deeply rooted and sedulously cultivated in the Kurdish mind by Turkish propagandists. The Young Turks now told the Kurds that the Armenians had made common cause with the Allies; that only a month or so before the entry of Turkey into the war, the Armenians of Trans-Caucasus and of Turkey had entered into a written agreement with Russia, whereby Russia would help them in the invasion and conquest of Turkish Armenia and of Kurdistan, and that quite naturally the Armenians would exact a terrible vengeance from the Kurds for past wrongs, etc. This sort of propaganda was impressive and convincing. It won the Kurdish fighters to the side of the Moslem Turks. In thus playing into the hands of the Turks, the Kurds suffered terribly both physically and morally, and contributed greatly to the destruction of their

own fortunes and homes, and to their present plight.' (1)

Unorganised and thoughtless, a large number of Kurds indeed allowed themselves to become tools in the hands of the non-descript ghoulish gang of Salonika and Constantinople in murdering and despoiling nearly one half of the Armenian people, all that remained of the Armenian people in Turkey (except those in Constantinople and Smyrna).

In 1915-16, before the advance of the Caucasian army reinforced by special Armenian regiments most of the Kurds fled from the provinces of Van, Bitlis and Erzerum, except those tribes which had always co-operated with the Armenians. Some by their own will, others coerced or frightened by the Turkish authorities, entire Kurdish tribes living in the above-mentioned *vilayets* left their homes and moved ahead of the routed and retreating Turks. Sometimes in the depth of winter snow, at other times in the heat of summer, the Kurds had to trek to and fro with their flocks and their earthly possessions as far south as Diarbekr and Mosul, or as far west as Kharberd and Konia. Accustomed to the cool valleys of Armenia, the fleeing Kurds fell by hundreds by the roadside in the torrid heat of Iraq, or the sandy malarial plains of Anatolia.

The sum-total of the Kurdish losses during the war will never be accurately known. Prince Bedrkhan says that the Turks 'deported nearly 700,000 Kurds during the war (1914-1918) of whom all but one half perished.' (2) But very few of the survivors who returned to their tribal areas or settlements in the Armenian provinces remained very long because there were no more Armenian tailors, shoemakers, and artisans of every type, and the tribal Kurd himself, up to then at least, had not taken to such productive arts and crafts.

(1) Prince Sureya Badrkhan: *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey*. By authority of the *Hoyboon*, the Supreme Council of the Kurdish Government. Together with an Introduction by Herbert Adams Gibbons, Princeton, N.J. (U.S.A.) 1929, pp. 33-34.

(2) In the authoritative book mentioned in the previous note p. 20.



*Kurdish Claims at the Peace Conference (1919-20)*

If throughout the war Kurds fought and died for the Turks indiscriminately and without any agreed national plan, they were, however, wise enough to adopt the policy of two fronts: the one directed towards the Allied peace conference in Paris, the other keeping in touch with the defeated Turks. At Cairo Prince Sureya Badrkhan and his colleagues organised a Committee for the independence of Kurdistan, and nominated General Sharif Pasha, a Kurdish nationalist from Dersim, and up to then Turkish ambassador to Sweden, as a delegate to present the Kurdish case in Paris. As some of the Kurdish territorial claims clashed with those of Armenia, the principal representatives of the two nations, Boghos Nubar Pasha (Armenia) and Sharif Pasha, signed an agreement as to the common pursuit of the interests of these two countries. European diplomats, experts, third-rate journalists in every camp were dumbfounded at this Armenian-Kurdish understanding, because for nearly half a century they had recorded and proclaimed that the two neighbouring races were 'deadly enemies' and could never work together.

The treaty of Sèvres, signed between the Allied powers and Turkey in August, 1920, provided for a Kurdish state as follows:

Art. 62. A Commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the Southern Boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia . . . The scheme shall contain full safeguards from the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas.

Art. 63. The Turkish government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in

Art. 62 within three months from their communication to the said government.

Art. 64. stipulated that if within one year the Kurdish peoples as defined in Art. 62 . . . could show that their majority desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council of the League of Nations then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence . . . Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.

The plenipotentiaries of Turkey signed this treaty, but the 'Cryptos' in every allied country saw to it that the Treaty of Sèvres recognising the independence of Kurdistan and Armenia should remain a dead letter. As stated above, however, the Kurdish leaders were wise enough to keep in touch with Turkey at the same time.

Soon after the armistice of 1918, most of the Kurdish intellectuals, hailing from well-known Kurdish families, resumed their activities in Constantinople: many of them are still alive today and working for the cause of independence. Among them were Prince Kiamuran Bedr Khan, a true representative of the great family bearing his name, who edits *Hawari*, a newspaper in Kurdish in Syrian to-day, and other publications; the three sons of Djemil Pasha zadé of Diarbekr, Ekrem Bey, Kadri Bey and Omar Bey; the Senator Seid Abdul Kader, the patriot who was hanged by the Turks in 1925; Memduh Selim Bey; Mustapha Pasha of Suleimanya; Emir Ali Bey and many others, noblemen, generals and officers. These Kurdish patriots founded various educational institutions and newspapers, both in the capital and in the provinces of Kurdistan; and when Kamal Atatürk grew stronger in Asiatic Turkey and re-occupied Constantinople in 1923, these Kurdish patriotic leaders left the country to continue their work outside Turkey. As it will be seen below a miracle happened within the next few years, between 1923-7; in spite of all their promises and the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, the Allied powers betrayed both Kurdistan and Armenia. (The Treaty of Lausanne with Turkey, 1923).

A wide-spread Kurdish rising against Turkey followed in 1925, the Sheikhs giving the signal for a national revolution; then surprisingly enough, the above mentioned Kurdish patriots sank all their differences and abandoned all their positions in order to merge into the *Hoyboon*, the National Kurdish League (1926-7): a single harmonious supreme council of the Kurdish government. The most individualist and stubborn Kurdish tribal Chiefs offered their wholehearted support to the *Hoyboon* and many placed their services at the disposal of the national government. The immutable East is moving fast toward self-realisation and self-assertion, a solemn warning to whom it may concern! The ashes of the Kings of Gutium, of Gordyene, of Viceroy Gubaru, of Sultan Salaheddin, Kerim Khan Zendi, Prince Badrkhan and recent Kurdish martyrs for their national freedom, will rejoice in their sacred graves.

The Kurdish leaders came to realise that in a world of intense national centralisation and international chaos, the tribal system of society would no longer work, and that if the ancient order was allowed to continue it would operate to the detriment of all. It is to be noted that long before the war, tribal disintegration had set in for different reasons. Since the organisation of the *Hamidié* irregular cavalry in 1891, personal jealousies had increased between those tribal chiefs who were chosen to enlist and those who were not. A particular tribe or one of its sub-tribes would suddenly break away from the old allegiance and would fix itself in any area endowed with streams and pasture-lands. Various causes underlay such divisions: a personal grievance, a belief that an independent existence in an area separated from the old might qualify the new Chief for enlistment in the cavalry regiments, or an enterprising son dissatisfied with his father would revolt and start on his own; or an aged or weak Chief, unable to control the more ambitious leaders of his *Qabilés* (subtribe) or *eels* (clan) would let them take the matter into their own hands. In other areas the converse process of integration was going on as well. A capable sub-chief of a small *eel* might choose a favourable moment to fight his rivals or neighbours and force them to

accept his authority. Thus he would acquire a great reputation and accrued strength, and raise his own group to the rank of a great tribe.

Now, however, these personal dissensions and rebellions are likely to come to an end. The great war and its terrible losses and consequences has shaken the Kurdish race to the marrow of its bones. The impact on its collective mind has been revolutionary: in spite of many serious political obstacles in the way, nothing is likely to arrest their vigorous march towards the fulfilment of their moderate national aspirations.

In the best sense of the word, the Kurdish leaders are realists; they know by instinct that real national freedom is not granted by the sovereign power that is: it is wrested from it by force of arms and superior organisation. The proof that the Kurdish leaders have clearly understood this truth, is supplied by the three armed risings against Turkey since 1923.

## *First Kurdish revolutionary rising (1925)*

THE KURDISH RACE has rendered great services to the Ottoman Empire. They have shed their blood for the defence of the Empire and have supplied statesmen and high officials to its civil service. The parting between the two races came very slowly, but once the two parties had become aware of the widening gulf the movement rapidly gained momentum. With the advance of the Russian armies into Turkey in 1915–16, the Young Turks prevailed upon the Sultan Reshad V to sign a decree which provided for the transfer of the Kurdish people from the war fronts in Armenia and Kurdistan, and their settlement among the Turks of western Anatolia in the proportion of 10 Kurds to 100 Turks. The two races professed a common faith and the Kurds were to be compelled to speak Turkish, so that the second Kurdish generation would be thoroughly Turkified. Before proceeding to the mass 'assimilation' thus planned, the Turks first deported groups of Kurdish notables. They discovered, much to their surprise, that the Kurds were just as averse to becoming 'assimilated' as the Armenians. (1)

The register of the Turkish Director of Emigration in Constantinople disclosed the fact that in 1915 some 700,000 Kurds from Kurdistan had been transferred to western Anatolia. (2)

In 1919, defeated and at the last gasp, Turkey lay prostrate. The Turks flattered the Kurds and both in their *Majlis* and in

(1) During 1915–1918 Turks not only murdered and despoiled the Armenian nation, but forced a quarter million of Armenian youth of both sexes to deny their faith and 'become Turks'. They collected hundreds of thousands of Armenian orphaned children and 'made them Turks'. Turks must now be called to account for their ghoulish conduct.

(2) Cf. Prince Sureya Badrkhan. *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey*, op. cit. p. 32.

the press proclaimed that Turkey was the fatherland of Turks and Kurds alike, that they—the two peoples—alone had any right to speak for the country. 'Turkey was in grave danger of being partitioned by the victorious Allies and Armenians and Greeks are being supported in their demands both in the east and the west of the Turko-Kurdish territory', said the Turks to the Kurdish leaders, and promised a fair settlement of the Kurdish national aspirations after the crisis was over. They knew that Sharif Pasha, the delegate of Kurdistan at the Peace Conference had presented his case and that there were provisions in the Treaty of Sèvres for the limited independence of Kurdistan.

But the moment the Turks succeeded in forcing a new Peace Treaty (at Lausanne) on the Allied and Associated Powers in 1923, they at once changed their attitude towards the Kurds and revoked every pledge and promise made during their eclipse (1918–22). Foreign bondholders, concession-hunters, and oil-seekers in every camp were at work, and the delimitation of the northern boundary of Iraq with Turkey (the oil of Mosul) came before the League of Nations at Geneva.

Under the circumstances, the nationalist leaders of Kurdistan could hardly stand aloof and helplessly watch the unseemly quarrels over the ownership of the Kurdo-Assyrian patrimony which had been theirs for forty centuries. All along the Syrian-Turkish, Iraq-Turkish and Persian-Turkish frontiers, large belts of territory on both sides of the border are inhabited by the Kurds, warlike, healthy and virile. It was in Turkey alone that the Kurds were considered a potential danger, and efforts were being made to 'assimilate' them.

Disillusioned and angry, Kurdish leaders organised a revolutionary war of independence against Turkey—a war which, but for a mishap, might have caused great trouble to Turkey, which had just turned republican. Under the leadership of Sheikh Said of Piran and a staff of veteran officers, munition depots were established and a general uprising of the Kurds was set for March 21st, 1925, with the aim of driving the Turks out of Kurdistan. But, owing to successful espionage the Turks fore-

stalled the event. Sheikh Said was summoned to the Turkish headquarters but, suspecting foul play, he called upon his bodyguard, only a few hundred strong, to rise on March 7th, 1925 instead of March 21st, as planned. The Kurdish forces had neither telegraph nor wireless stations at their disposal to warn their fighters of the change of plan. The Turks mobilised three Army Corps against the Kurds, who fought very bravely, the more bravely in that they knew this fight was for their national cause. They inflicted many defeats on the Turks and advanced on the cities of Urfa, Severak and Diarbekr, the capital of Kurdistan, occupying the southern section of the latter city. Hard pressed in their southern provinces, the Turks brought a fresh Corps over the Syrian railways under French mandate, and posted it in the rear of the Kurdish forces, who, being caught between two fires, had to abandon their positions and retire to their strategic posts. Fighting extended north of the Tigris and as far north as Mount Ararat, the slopes of which form an impregnable natural fortress; with superior numbers in front of them Kurdish groups entrenched themselves on Ararat, with the Armenian and Azerbaijan republics, as always, buttressing their flanks. During 1926 the Turks struck a sharp blow at Ararat which the Kurds had made the Headquarters of their national forces. Mutual sniping and fierce encounters took place during 1927-8, in the course of which Kurds took many Turkish officers and troops as prisoners and captured guns and every kind of war supplies. (1)

From 1924 onwards in the heated debates on the question of Mosul the Turks instituted 'Tribunals of Independence' in Diarbekr, Konia and at other places for the summary trial of all those who did not submit to the reforms introduced by Kemal Ataturk. A large number of Kurdish fighters captured in the rising and many civilians suspected of having had a finger in its preparation were tried before this Tribunal at Diarbekr. Some 53 of the Kurdish intellectual and military leaders were condemned to death and publicly hanged in that city. (a)

(1) Early in 1928, Turks used an air force against the Kurdish forces on Ararat; two planes were lost.

'In October, 1927, Kurdish leaders of divers political faiths and affiliations met in convention outside Kurdistan to elaborate a National Pact, and to take the necessary steps to realise their national aims. This convention unanimously created the *Hoyboon*, the supreme National organ, or Kurdish Government, and invested that Government with full and exclusive national and international powers.'

'The *Hoyboon*, thereupon proclaimed the independence of Kurdistan on 28th of October, 1927, as laid down in the Treaty of Sèvres, designated Kurd Ava, at Egri Dagh (Ararat) as the provisional capital of Kurdistan and by resolution, expressed the friendly sentiments of the Kurdish people for Persia, Armenia, Iraq and Syria, and their determination to wage relentless war against the Turks, until they had left for good, the Kurdish soil now under their grip. The war between Turk and Kurd is going on—and will go on—until the objective of the Kurd has been attained.' (1)

Prince Jeladet and Prince Kiamuran Bedr Khan, Memduh Selim Bey, Shahin Bey and other intellectuals were appointed members of an executive committee. This committee nominated as Commander-in-Chief of the Kurdish National Army Ihsan Nuri Pasha, an ex-staff officer of the Turkish army during the war a heroic and romantic soldier of the first rank. Ihsan Nuri Pasha knew the real Republican Turkey, her strength and her foibles, her resources and her utter exhaustion.

#### *Second Kurdish revolutionary war (1930–2)*

Resolved to risk their existence in the struggle to get rid of the Turks, the *Hoyboon* and the Commander-in-Chief took every measure in their power to prepare their forces for the struggle for their independence from Turkey. Taught by the failure of the first attempt in 1925, the *Hoyboon* proceeded cautiously and carefully; they co-ordinated all efforts of hitherto indifferent tribes and untouched districts and secured the sympathy and, in some cases, the active co-operation of neighbouring peoples which

(1) Prince Sureya Badrkhan: *op. cit.* p. 54.



pursued similar aims. Isolated clashes never ceased throughout 1929, but in the spring of 1930 war flared up in the Kurdish headquarters on Mount Ararat, and spread to various valleys of Van, almost the whole *vilayet* of Bitlis and Diarbekr and Bohtan being involved.

For months the Turkish press, like their guns and aeroplanes, roared against the Kurdish insurgents and their 'savagery' while the great powers of Europe, which had stipulated the independence of the Kurds, could hardly find words to express their admiration of the republic of Turkey.

From 1915 onwards the reformed Turks resorted to fiendish measures to suppress both Armenians and Greeks. They massacred innocent Kurdish women and children and deported those that remained to Western Anatolia. Whole tribes were forced to leave their homes in green and healthy valleys and were marched to the malarial coasts of the eastern Mediterranean; girls, women and children of tender age were enslaved by the thousands; hunger, disease and fatigue exacted a terrible toll of the long caravans of these helpless human beings; heaps of corpses and the dying filled the ditches by the roadside. Not even one half of these unfortunates reached their destination. This is the *ta'alim a la Turca!* (culture in the Turkish style). The details of atrocities committed on Kurds, specially women and girls and published by the *Hoyboon* are too revolting to quote here. The depopulation and devastation of the provinces east of the Euphrates begun in 1915 by the murder and spoliation of Armenians, was nearly completed during 1925—32 by the murder and spoliation of the Kurds. During the thirties various Turkish correspondents writing from those eastern provinces to their newspapers at Constantinople lamented the wide-spread ruin, the desert like conditions of lifelessness which prevailed. And yet Great Britain, the old ally of Turkey, desired to maintain 'the political independence and territorial integrity of Turkey.'

*'Dersim is no more.'* Third war, 1937—1938

Encouraged by irresponsible Europeans who vied with each

other in political subserviency, the Turkey of Ataturk thought the moment opportune for 'consolidating' the new regime. There remained still the mountain ranges of Dersim, a district lying in the great bend of the Euphrates in western Armenia. Surrounded almost on all sides by the high snow-capped peaks of the Merjan Dagh (about 11,000 feet), Mntsur Dagh and others, Dersim was an oasis of green fields, shady valleys, ancient forests and flourishing orchards. Up to 1908 scarcely known to the Turks, it lived a secluded life of agriculture, cattle-farming and vine-growing. Its population of about 70,000 consisted of Kizilbashs, (1) (b) Armenians and Kurds. Perched on the high ridges of the Armenian Taurus, its landscape is broken by deep seismic fissures dating from prehistoric times. Perhaps nowhere else are such long and narrow valleys to be found winding among overhanging crags and perpendicular rocks.

There had ever existed a tug-of-war between the authorities and the tribes of Dersim, in respect of taxes and recruits. This time the initiative was not taken by the tribes. Turkey wished to show the efficiency of her army and the achievements of the Republic. In the summer of 1937 the main passes of the Dersim mountains were occupied by Turks who summoned a certain number of Chiefs to surrender and to proceed to Ankara. A clash of arms was inevitable. Overwhelmed by heavy artillery and aeroplanes, the Dersim chiefs retired with their people to inaccessible heights and caverns, as had been their custom for many centuries. The Turks could not make much impression on them, so they besieged the ingresses and egresses of the mountain passes until the spring of 1938, when they began to bomb mountain villages and encampments. Incapable of resisting pitiless bombing from the air, Sheikh Seid, a man eighty-two years old, his sons and chief followers surrendered, were subjected to a mock trial and some twelve of them hanged.

For some weeks the Turkish press extolled the conquest of

1) Cf. Captain Molyneux-Seal: 'Dersim' in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, July 1914, and Ewald Banse: *Die Turkei*, 1915, . . . 215-217.

Dersim and shouted the paean: 'Dersim is no more'—*Delenda est Dersimo*.

European powers on the one hand helped the Turk, a central Asian nomad people, by financial means, arms etc. to destroy the autochthonous races like the Kurds, Assyrians and Armenians who had been in unbroken occupation of their native lands for at least 4,000 years; on the other, they cheated and betrayed these races for their own sordid ends. A little more sense and honour, fewer empty words and less self-righteousness would have saved many tragedies.

#### *Political Distribution of Kurds to-day.*

In the political jargon of to-day Kurdistan is a geographical expression of a characteristically equivocal type. Nowhere in their historic homeland of Gutium, Kashshu, or Bohtan does a Kurdish government rule its own people, though the tribes reign supreme in many respects in the regions mentioned. As a consequence of the Peace Treaties of 1920–23, the territory of Kurdistan proper is divided between Turkey, Iraq, Persia and Syria, apart from some 80,000 Kurds who for a long time have been settled in the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, whereas before the war of 1914–18 Turkey and Persia shared the country between them.

In spite of all its fatal vices the Ottoman empire was an economic unit, where exchange operations and trading customs had been stabilised for many centuries. It was the secular custom of the Kurdish tribes of the Mesopotamian plains to leave their winter quarters at the first signs of spring and to drive their flocks to the valleys and hills in the north as far as the regions south of Lake Van. But after 1924 when a political boundary between Turkey and Iraq was established the Turks did not allow the Kurdish tent dwellers to exercise their prescriptive rights to the northern pasture lands, and vice-versa, Iraq refused to allow the Kurds from Turkey to move to the south.

This disruption and its damaging effects on the economic life and meagre resources of the nomad tribes was not the least of

the causes which drove the Kurds to desperation, permanent unrest and revolution. In addition to these factors the Turks kept unusually large numbers of troops on the Iraqi and Syrian frontiers throughout the Kurdish risings, thus further hampering the free movements of the tribes and their herds from one pasturage to another. Although the States concerned are exceedingly chary of publishing any information in regard to the ancient rights of the tribes to their customary pasture grounds, it appears that some means have been devised of allowing the Kurds to move about under a certain measure of control.

But the political question of Kurdistan and the future of the Kurdish race remains an urgent problem to be solved by the States concerned. Responsibility rests not least with the Allied powers who broke up the economic unity of Turkey and left the Kurdish people in the lurch. In as far as it is possible to ascertain from responsible sources, the Kurdish leaders have no territorial claims against Persia, although in connection with the recent political movements in Persian Azerbaijan, the great confederation of Mukri, Bilbas, Shikakis, etc. living to the south and west of the Lake of Urmia, all of them of great historical antiquity, have declared their independence with their capital at Mehabad, in the region of Saouj Bulak. (1)

The Kurdish confederations in Iraq constitute the kernel of the Ancient Kingdom of Gutium and contain to-day the most ancient and aristocratic families of the Kurdish race. The Baba Zades (at Suleimanya), the Avromans, the Sohrans (or Sorans), the Hamavends, the Jauffs, the many tribes which bear the general denomination of Guran, the Rawandis of Revanduz and the

(1) It is not yet clear whether this Kurdish State is independent *sui generis*, or as an autonomous province within the framework of the Persian State or of that of autonomous Azerbaijan. The other large confederations of Lurs (Luristan) and of Ardalan (with its central city of Senna) extending almost to the gates of the city of Hamadan, and other smaller groups, such as Sinjabis, Kalkhoris and others commanding the road from Baghdad to Kirmanshah, seem to be closely allied and in full co-operation with the government of Persia.

Kelashin Pass and the Barzanis close to the Turkish frontiers. On the lower slopes of Jebel Gudi and up to Jezirat-Ibn-Omar and the Turkish frontiers live the six tribes, the Haftanbokht of the Pahlavi history of Artakhshir-i-Papâkân, almost certainly the southern portion of the land of Babkhi (Bohtan or Botan) mentioned by the kings of Assyria.

The numerous Yezidi community of Sinjar, an isolated mountain in the north-west of the kingdom of Iraq, has hitherto kept aloof from all political activity. All but a few European travellers who have come in contact with Yezidis in Kurdistan and Armenia have spoken with disparagement and scorn of these fine and courageous people. The traveller of average education does not possess the necessary historical knowledge to understand the sanctity of very ancient religious beliefs and the meaning of their ritual.

#### *The Kurds in Syria and Lebanon.*

It is impossible to ascertain from documentary sources how many Kurdish lieutenants and chiefs of Sultan Salaheddin settled in Damascus, Aleppo and other Syrian cities after the death of the Sultan. There is evidence from cuneiform tablets to prove that 'fair-skinned slaves' from Gutium were very popular in Sumerian and Babylonian cities, just as to-day Kurdish and other hardy peoples from the mountains work in the cities of Iraq and Syria as artisans, gardeners, bakers or porters. Since the persecution of the Kurdish tribes by Turkey there has been a large influx of Kurds from Turkey into Syria; there they settle as farmers and cattle-breeders along the Baghdad railway on the Syrian side and particularly in the north-east corner of Iraq and south-eastern Turkey.

#### *The Kurdish problem in Turkey.*

It is one of the strangest phenomena of world politics that every neighbouring country of Turkey has large or small territorial claims on her. Leaving aside the demands from the Balkan countries, Syrians, Kurds, Armenians and Georgians all advance internationally recognised claims upon various provinces of Turkey.

Gutium, Gordyene, Kurdiatan, Assyria, Armenia, Iberia, Syria are all historic names with a renowned past and easily definable areas, which every student knows from his Greek and Roman classics. Any educated person can put his or her finger on Lydia, Phrygia or Cappadocia and recall some lore or legend about them. But the present names of these provinces do not convey any meaning to the average person, not even to the present-day natives who were born there. All the four claimants of their national territories mentioned above are unanimous in asserting that a strong and sovereign Turkey as a neighbour is of 'vital interest' to each of them and that all of them, once their legitimate claims are met, can harmoniously work together, as they have done for centuries in the past.

Among these claimants it is only the Kurd who possesses no national home, no national centre on which he may concentrate all his love and energy, his devotion and his gifts. The patriotic leaders of the *Hoyboon* desire to own a small corner of their historic fatherland, where they may freely and without any outside interference or hindrance educate their children in their mother tongue, publish their books and newspapers, collect and edit their oral epics, songs and vast folk-lore, study their ancient and modern history, make their own laws and govern themselves to the best of their ability. Can the Great of the world deny this minimum of 'freedom' to the brave and virile Kurdish race? Providence willed that the Kurdish race should be established for four thousand years in high lands of world wide importance. As shown above, the Kurd has proved that he is capable of causing international complications spreading far beyond his frontiers. So far no proper population statistics have been compiled in Turkey. Gabriel Effendi Noradunghian, for forty years an intimate legal adviser to the Sublime Porte, a Senator and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey (1912-13) told me that before 1914 the usual Turkish method of recording a census was to add 25 % to the real number of the Turks and subtract 25 % from that of all other races of the Empire. I asked his opinion on the first census, carried out by Republican Turkey in 1927. His

reply was that the Turks suffered such terrible losses between 1911 and 1923 that this time they had doubled the number of Turks, and had lowered the number of the other races by 50 per cent. In an otherwise accurate book (1) on Turkey, published in 1915 by a German Adviser to the Turkish Ministry of the Interior, the local number of Kurds in the Ottoman Empire as then constituted, is shown as 800,000. This figure is very low indeed, when it is considered that the numerous Kurdish population of Iraq and Syria was included. After the deportations, massacres and casualties during the three revolutionary risings, it would be very hard to give a figure even approximately correct.

The League of Nations Commission which reported in 1925 on the Mosul boundary dispute supplied the following figures for the whole of the Kurdish race:

In Turkey . . . . .	1,500,000
In Persia . . . . .	700,000
In Iraq . . . . .	500,000
In Syria and elsewhere . . . . .	300,000
	Total 3,000,000

Massacres and mass deportations of the Kurdish people took place during the rebellions of 1925 and on a larger scale during that of 1930-2.

#### *Kurds in Transcaucasia.*

There are about 80,000 Kurds and Yezidis in the three Soviet Republics of Transcaucasia. The greater number are in Armenia, pasturing their flocks on the slopes of the Mount Alaghiaz and in neighbouring valleys. In 1927 a special alphabet in phonetic Latin letters and susceptible of rendering the sounds of the Kurdish language was prepared for them, and a Training School established in Erivan (Armenia). They have their own school and teachers, their theatre and Pioneer Leagues. Quite recently it was reported that Kurdish authors had dramatised one of the finest of the Kurdish epic poems, entitled *Zin u Min* to be re-

(1) P. Krause: *Türkei*, p. 28.

presented in their theatre. Efforts have been made to collect and publish all Kurdish folklore, hundreds of songs, poems, proverbs, animal stories and popular sayings. Latin script is used also for Kurdish publications in Syria; whereas Arabic script is used in Iraq and Persia.

*The ethnology and the ethos of Kurdish people.*

Writing confidentially to the British Consul in 1880, Sheikh Ubeidullah, a responsible religious chief, told the real facts regarding the religion and ethnology of the Kurdish people (see p. 59). 'The Kurdish nation', wrote the Sheikh, 'is a people apart. Their religion is different (to that of others) and their laws and customs are distinct . . .' Had the Sheikh made a statement in public as regards the religion of the Kurds he would have affirmed that they were Muslims of the *Sunni* faith and devoutly religious too, which is true to some extent where some tribes in the south in close touch with the Arabs are concerned; otherwise the average Kurd is indifferent in matters of religious faith and worship. Many Kurds would punctiliously join in public prayers and other religious duties, but as many would visit the old Christian shrines and convents in fulfilment of vows.

In matters of religion and allegiance a clear distinction should be made between those Kurds who live in cities where there are mosques and those who are nomads or live in villages. In the heyday of Turkish power up to the thirties of the last century, many Kurdish chiefs would go on pilgrimage to Mecca and learn the Koran in Arabic. But the moment the Turk or the Persian weakened and sought the protection of Christian powers, the incentive disappeared. There have been so many shades of religious zeal or of its absence and of sectarian professions according to locality and expediency that their religion cannot really be formulated in general terms. The idea of an Almighty God is universal and deeply rooted among them and this belief is common to the whole Kurdish race.

From the point of view of religion and ritual, the Yezidis are entirely different from the Kurds; they have their Holy Books



in Kurdish and Arabic. Owing to the constant massacres and persecutions of the Yezidi people by the Turks, no authoritative edition of their books exists so far,<sup>(1)</sup> though there have been a few attempts at translating them into European languages. The nature of their worship and the secrets of their ritual are not so simple as generally described. It is wrong to call them devil-worshippers, without understanding the mysteries which underlie their rites.

The archaeological discoveries of the last thirty years have brought to light the names not only of forgotten states and countries but also of ancient races. These new discoveries raise more problems than they solve. The variety of physical types depicted on monuments of the ancient East seems to be well represented in the same regions to-day. There was hardly any mixture of races in the 14th century B.C. as there has hardly been any in modern times in the Highland regions. Notwithstanding these facts, the variety of types among the Kurdish tribes is surprising. The Kurds are generally a longheaded people with strongly marked features, dark brown hair and eyes, and often aquiline noses. At the same time there are many among them who have blue eyes and fair hair, as well as dark eyes and hair and a straight nose. This variety of type cannot have anything to do with a mixture of races, because it exists among tribes which for centuries are known to have led an isolated life, and to have had intercourse only with their nearest neighbours, also presenting features of the type generally known as the Armenide type. According to some anthropologists this human type must have prevailed from the Aegean to the Zagros and from the northern Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, as exemplified in early historical times by the Hittites, Khurrians, Mitannians, Gutis, Elamites and probably Sumerians. With the exception of the last-

(1) Ismail Beg Chol: (Yazidi Amir of Sinjar) *The Yazidis, past and present, being three original texts about Yazidi doctrines, customs and some events of their History . . .* edited by Costi K. Zurayg (1934) Beirut. The American press.

There are other Yezidi books which have not yet been published.

named, these are the oldest Aryan peoples, with their aristocracies fighting in war-chariots and carrying the battle-axe. Unfortunately, very little is known of their old religion and customs, because the subsoils of Armenia and Kurdistan have not yet yielded the earliest remains of their culture.

*The evolution of the Kurd and his prospects.*

The effects of the stirring events of the last thirty years on the Kurds, their political thinking as well as their social conditions—just as on all historical nations in Western Asia—have been revolutionary in the literal sense of the word. It can safely be stated that these fundamental changes have not been fully appreciated by outsiders. From a divided and quarreling tribal stage the Kurds have advanced to a degree of national consciousness and racial cohesion which would have been inconceivable a generation ago. Any national call from any Kurdish representative body will henceforward meet a ready response. On the surface the movement does not appear to be noticeably articulate, yet it would be a mistake to underestimate its inherent potentialities.

Their ancient customs, primitive manners and customs described so fully and scoffingly by many hundreds of travellers, may yet continue in the remote and unsophisticated regions of the high mountains, as was the case in all civilised countries about a century ago. The educated among them have proved their worth almost in every branch of human activity. The important fact to be borne in mind in regard to the Kurds is that living under the most adverse conditions for centuries, they have stood the test. To-day there is not a people called Hittite, Elamite or Scythian, but there are Kurds in the same geographical area as the Kurd of Gutium 4,000 years ago. To-day as then, the Kurds are a people high-spirited, physically and morally healthy and totally devoid of any sign of neurosis. The average Kurd takes a keen interest in machines, arts and crafts; he can easily master the details of any problem.

For centuries he held his own with spears, bows, slings and swords—weapons which testify to his personal courage and nerve.

In times to come he is certain to take to flying or chemistry as readily as other peoples.

The Kurdish women are natural, simple and highly moral, though not polished enough for the taste of the west. Physical beauty is an entirely relative notion. The beautiful carpets, rugs, clothes, embroideries etc., they make will lead them to higher arts when they are educated. Like their men, they are highly sensitive to music and poetry. In the *zozan* (grazing ground) of the fierce Jibran tribesmen at the foot of Bingöl Dagh (between Erzerum and Mush) I witnessed an extraordinary sight one moonlit evening. A Kurdish bard was reciting and singing a love story, in which a young man fights single-handed against thirteen assailants for the defence of his promised bride. Having fired his last cartridge and being mortally wounded, the young man unsheathes his dagger and speaks encouraging words to his bride who bends over him attending his wounds. At this point the bard's voice rose and recited the words with great emphasis: instantly the whole camp, some 30 men and women, deeply moved broke into heartrending sobs.

There is probably nothing in the world which the Kurds will not learn as intelligently and as quickly as any of their neighbours. These innate aptitudes of the Kurds will drive them more and more into political discontent as they see their homeland parcelled out among neighbours who deny them elementary national rights of self-government. Here lies openly explosive material astride some of the most sensitive arteries of western Asia.

The Kurds speak an Aryan language, many radical words of which are identical with Indo-European words.

The *Hoyboon* proclaimed the Independence of Kurdistan in 1927 with the city of Diarbekr as its capital; a reasonable choice, as in accordance with the present-day distribution of the Kurdish race, Diarbekr is the central city. The Kurdish people inhabit the country round the city of Malatia, on the middle Euphrates and in the surrounding region, the highlands of the Taurus chain and its slopes on both sides, the shores of the Tigris as far as Jazirat and the ancient kingdom of Gutium and Kashshu, or the Shahr-

azor of the middle Ages. The Treaty of Sèvres (1920) rightly traced the boundaries of Kurdistan in accordance with the present ethnographical and economic facts. World-history is world judgment. With forty centuries of history, a vigorous manhood and plentiful natural resources to support it, the Kurdish people can hardly be expected to be satisfied with the sorry conditions in which they find themselves to-day. They know that they are firmly rooted in their native soil internationally recognised as theirs; whereas west and east of Kurdistan there are empires which for generations have presented complicated psychological and political problems.

A country so important and a people so original deserve better treatment than they have hitherto received. Their history, old and new, shows that they can take risks when fighting for their regional political ends, a spirit and temper which under present world conditions might have repercussions far beyond the limits of Western Asia.

# Notes

## CHAPTER I

### (a) *Kurd and Koort.*

As to the general attitude of the two neighbouring Empires of Turkey and Persia towards the Kurdish race, no better illustration could be found than a play of words on the very racial name Kurd. By a strange coincidence the word 'Koort' means 'wolf' in both Turkish and the new Iranian languages; the learned etymologists of the two Empires have not failed to discover an original identity between their word 'Koort' and the generic name 'Kurd'. The hypothesis is entirely false (cf. p. 3). Yet this faked etymology sums up a political theory which is in no way out of tune with the actual practice as understood, and periodically put into effect, by Turkey.

One of the reasons for rejecting the identity of the Iranian-Turkish word 'koort' and the racial gentilic 'kurd' lies in the fact that Gutium-Kurdistan and her people were an independent kingdom nearly two thousand years before there was a Persia or a Turkey. On reliable historical evidence it can now be proved that the above-mentioned interpretation placed on the national name 'kurd' is entirely false. The idea was probably started to express both the fear and dislike which the two neighbouring Empires have always felt towards this invincible people entrenched in their difficult mountains.

### (b) *The approximate site of Gutium.*

From the many vague references in Sumerian, Akkadian or Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions, the site and geographical area of the land of Gutium can only be inferred approximately. The difficulty in locating the kingdom of Gutium lies in the fact that various neighbouring countries have often given new geographical names to the mountains which the earlier Sumerian Kings knew as Gutium. It may be assumed that when the great kings of Akkad and Babylonia took the offensive against the mountain regions lying east of the Tigris, they came to know better the geography of Gutium. It cannot be stated what were the relations of the lands of Markhashi, Kashshu, Lulubi and the later Zamua to Gutium. Clearly there is a large measure of overlapping, which cannot be disentangled at the present stage of

research. This peculiarity of insufficient knowledge by the oldest Dynasties is shown in an inscription of Sharukin (Sargon), the first king and founder of the Dynasty of Akkad (Agade, about 2050 B.C.). As a first attempt at drawing a map of the world as then known, (great scholars—E. Forrer, A. H. Sayce, Sidney Smith, A. Ungnad and many others have discussed this oldest map of the world from many points of view) it shows, that Sharukin's knowledge of the extent of the various countries he mentions is not quite correct. He ascribes an area of 180 double-hours to his own Akkad, which can hardly correspond to the fact. Sharukin gives the length of roads (i.e. the geographical extent) of the various countries which he claims to have subdued in the following order:—

1. Land of Markhashi (western Media)—Length of roads 40 double-hours nearly 425 klns.
2. Land of Tukrish—Length of roads 50 double-hours, 640 klns.
3. Land of Elam—Length of roads 90 double-hours, 960 klns.
4. Land of Akkad—Length of roads 180 double-hours, 1920 klns.
5. Land of Subartu—Length of roads 120 double-hours, 1280 klns.
6. Land of Ashsi (Assyria)  
(W. F. Albright in *Journal of American Oriental Society*, XLV, p. 335, deciphers this geographical name as Khalsi. If this reading should prove correct, then the Kingdom of Akkad must have comprised the area of the later Assyria).  
—Length of roads 120 double-hours, 1280 klns.
7. Land of Lulubi-Turukki(?)—Length of roads 90 double-hours, 960 klns.
8. Land of Anzan  
(The geographical identifications of Markhashi with western Media, and of Tukrish with Armenia, are E. Forrer's: *Reallexicon der Assyriologie*, Vol. I (1928) p. 239, col. 2. The reduction of the Akkadian double-hours to kilometres is also Forrer's.)—Length of roads 90 double-hours, 960 klns.

It will be noticed that the name of Gutium does not occur in this list of countries which Sharukin considered the most important kingdoms of his time. It is, therefore, to be assumed that Gutium is covered by one of the above names, probably by Assyria or Lulubi-Turukki. Nor is there any mention of Gutium in an inscription of King Naramsin of Akkad, the third successor of Sharukin. Naramsin reports his victorious campaign against a coalition of seventeen kingdoms, stretching from the Persian Gulf to Armenia and the Hittite country in Central Asia Minor.

(c) *Epigraphic error concerning Kurd, Kurtie, and Kurti.*

It may be appropriate to correct here an epigraphic error which has introduced considerable confusion in the ethnographical picture of this Assyrian period. During the fifties of the last century Sir Henry Rawlinson, the decipherer of Cuneiform script, published five volumes of cuneiform inscriptions which had been dug up on various old-Assyrian sites. Inevitable as it was, for many decades the decipherers used to misread a certain group of cuneiform signs as 'kur-ti' (kurti) or 'kurtie', the name of a land which in fact covered most of eastern Armenia. The striking resemblance of this misread name with Kurd seemed to justify the interpretation of all those who otherwise desired to make out the region of Lake Van as Kurti. E. Forrer, however, corrected the mistake in 1928, (*E. Forrer, Reallexicon der Assyriologie*, Vol. I (1928) pp. 255, 281, 328), and transcribed the group of signs in question as Khab-khi (Khabkhi) a patronymic which solves accurately an essential problem otherwise insoluble in the old-Armenian historical literature. Some of the great Assyriologists, E. F. Weidner, Seidmann and finally A. Goetze (*A. Goetze: Journal of the Near East Studies*, Vol. V (1946), p. 129), have since confirmed this correction, thus definitely eliminating an important geographical confusion.

(d) *Guti Kings of Akkad and Babylonia.*

The names of twenty Guti kings have been discovered by combining several tablets. Some of the names are totally lost and others exist only partially, (cf. *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. I (1923) p. 670, no. 67). The most distinctive marks of these Guti names lie in their outstanding originality. Names of kings like Imbia, Ingishu, Warlagaba, Iarlagash, Arlagan, Tirikan, etc., are unique throughout the whole range of old-oriental civilisation, at least in the inscriptions which have been hitherto published.

One of these Guti kings of Babylonia, Lasirab, another distinctive name, dedicated a fine stone mace-head to the temple of the Babylonian city of Sippar. Having no script of their own, Lasirab wrote his inscription in the Akkadian dialect, in which he mentioned the gods of Gutium as well as the Sumerian goddess, Innini (later Nana, Anahita) and the moon-god, Sin.

(e) *Kassites.*

The names of the Kassite kings, Gandash, Agum, Kashtiliash Kharbe-Shipak, Kadashman-Kharbe, etc., are as distinctively Kassite in general, as the Guti names are Guti; totally different from Sumerian and Akkadian names. For a long time previously

Kassites had settled in Babylonia in the cities of the plains as workmen or traders. The first dynasty of Babylonia had to face not only the hardy Kassites in the eastern hills but Sumerian pretenders from the South until in the quarter of the seventeenth century B.C. the Hittites from Asia Minor coming down along the Euphrates seem to have facilitated the task of the Kassites in finally conquering Babylonia.

(f) *Localities mentioned in King Tukulti-Ninurta I's inscription.*

Some of the localities mentioned in King Tutulki-Ninurta I's inscription seem to be quite clear:—

- (a) The mountains of Tul-Sina seem to correspond to the present day Persian province of Ardalan, attached to Gutium from the east, with the central city of Senne (Sina) as to-day. Some of the oldest Kurdish families, powerful Kurdish tribes, have been living in Ardalan from times immemorial.
- (b) The city Sasili or Shasili sounds like the city of Chamchamal, some seventy miles north of Baghdad on the main road from Arrapkha-Kirkuk to Suleimanya, which may be considered as the capital city of Gutium.
- (c) The land of Zukushki, a name which conceals the actual name Zagros, the chain of mountains which stretches from south-western Persia to the Armenian Taurus.
- (d) Whether Lalar can be identified with the later Assyrian Gular, to-day Kollara-Dagh, which forms the boundary between the plains of Pishdar and Ranya, cannot be usefully discussed here.

In the Cuneiform annals of later Assyrian kings, where wars with Guti or Kashshu hill-tribes are described, there are many other place-names which can be identified with present-day towns or villages of Kurdistan lying east of the Tigris. Like the few examples mentioned above, they all prove that the original homeland of the Kurdish people was to the immediate north and north-east of Babylonia.

(g) *Assyrian names connected with Gutium.*

The names of Kurdish localities scarcely appear in the records of many subsequent centuries. Instead, Assyrian kings mention the land of Lulubi, the new names of Zamua, Namri, Zimri and others, as corresponding to the site of ancient Gutium; the localities of these lands can at present be surmised only approximately.

(h) *The Pass of Babite.*

The pass of Babite is identified with that of Bazian, a mountain and a valley north-north-east of the city of Suleimanya. The



region is inhabited to-day by the Kurdish tribes Hama-vend and the neighbouring Jauffs. The personal name Nur-Adad seems to have been the prototype of Nureddin, to-day a respected name among Arabs and Kurds. In modern times the Hamavend have often repulsed Turkish armies and massacred them. They appear to be the true descendants of their forefathers of the days of Ashurnatsirapli II (885-859 B.C.).

(i) *The Kurds and 'Medes'.*

Among the various services rendered by Herodotus, the Greek historian, to the knowledge of the ancient East, there are some which can best be described as the 'bear's service'. He has stereotyped the ethnic term 'Mede', and 'the Median empire' to the great confusion of historical truth as revealed by recent research. Yet Herodotus is not to blame for the entire misunderstanding of the ethnographical complexity in Central Persia, because the error seems to have arisen in much earlier Babylonian times. Even to-day the Kurdish tribes are commonly regarded as the descendants of the 'Medes', a legendary people, whom the Greeks and the Old Testament made into a 'great empire'.

Accurate contemporary information from cuneiform sources of many nations has proved that the name '*Mada*' as applied to a people is a misnomer of great antiquity. (Medoi of Herodotus, I, 72 sqq, 95 sqq, 101 *et passim*). As the mythical Media, as depicted by Greek classical writers, throws an obscuring fog over the entire history of Armenia, as well as that of the Kurdish people, I will discuss this problem shortly in an Introduction to the history of Armenia. Some Sumerian lexical texts published by Prof. E. Chiera and interpreted by Ungnad (A. Ungnad: *Subartu*, p. 45) clearly show that the Sumerians originally used the word '*mada*' as synonymous with *land* or *country*: such as '*mada Gutium*', which meant 'the land of Gutium'; '*mada Elamti*' which meant 'the land of Elam'. The Babylonians who took over the Sumerian literary tradition hundreds of years later, had missed the original sense of the word and thought it was the name of a distinct land or people which they could never locate. Later on the Assyrians inherited the name from the Babylonians, and Persians and Greeks from the latter and the European classical tradition from the Greeks. Indeed there have been many *mada*-s in Central Persia; but it appears, never a particular land named 'Media'. The cities of Hamadan (Ecbatana), Sultanabad, Kazwin, Ragy and many others in Central and Northern Persia, west of the Salt Desert, have always been governed by native families or Khans. There is evidence to show that similar conditions prevailed in the days of Sumer and Akkad; consequently there

never existed a 'Median' people or a 'Media', nor does it exist to-day.

The great kings of Assyria, such as Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.), Tiglat-Pileser III (747-728 B.C.) and Sharukin II (722-705 B.C.) who invaded *Mada* several times, mention scores of place-names which lie in the present-day Persian provinces mentioned above. Notwithstanding this, they report conquest of, or enforced tribute by, *Mada*, evidently not aware that the place-names they mentioned were the very *Mada* (land) they were operating in. The hordes, often called also the Umman-Manda (another synonym of *mada?*), who helped Babylonia to overthrow Assyria in 606 B.C. were the very tribes of Central Persia who had nothing to do with the Persia of the Greek classics; whereas the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (668-624 B.C.) who had to fight his own brother Shamashmukin, the king of Babylonia, mentions Gutium among many others, as an ally of the latter.

(j) *The Persian Satrapies.*

In the list of Persian satrapies Herodotus lumps together Armenia and the peoples as far as the Euxine Sea with Pactyice, which indeed is the land of Babkhi of the cuneiform period referred to, and the district of Bohtan to-day. From this Babkhi-Bohtan arose the confederation of the Kurdish tribes variously mentioned as Haftanbokht, Charbukhti and the vague geographical name Bahdinan. Originally these tribes seem to have lived in the region lying between the two Zab rivers and the eastern Tigris (Bohtan-Su), where they still live under different tribal names. But as has been shown above (p. 36) on the appearance of the Turks in the first half of the sixteenth century, these tribes were encouraged to emigrate along the spurs of the Taurus mountains into Armenia and Syria.

(k) *The Sagartians.*

In his Behistun rock inscriptions, Darius calls the Sagartians Asagarta. The old-Armenian Urartian cuneiform inscriptions often refer to them as allied to the kings of Urartu. Old Armenian classical writers describe the various modes and uses of lassoes in wars with tribes in the Caucasus range. It cannot be true that the Sagartians-Shikaki spoke Persian; on the contrary to-day, as certainly in the old times also, they speak a pure Kurmanji dialect, probably the old language of Gutium, therefore about two thousand years older than Persian.

(1) *Tribal Chiefs at the Armenian Court.*

At least five tribal chiefs (such as the Prince of Ake, to-day the Yezidi Hajanan tribe in Hakkari, and the Prince of Ashakmar, the Yezdinsher tribe, famous in the Middle Ages) had their 'thrones' or 'cushions' at the Royal Court of Armenia, almost in complete equality with the noblest feudal princes of the land. Besides the generic name Kordukh, Armenian classics mention also *Mar-s* and 'Medes': these terms raise highly complicated ethnological and geographical problems which cannot be satisfactorily dealt with in this book.

## CHAPTER 3

(a) *Kurdish Derebeys who declared themselves for the Ottomans...*

Sharaf Beg of Bitlis, Malik Khalil, the heir of Sghert and Hisn-Keif, on the Middle Tigris, who expelled the Persian garrisons from those fortresses; Mohammed Beg of Sasun, the great Badr-khan Dynasty of Jazirat-Ibn-Omar. The hereditary princes of Erbil, Kerkuk and Suleimaniya (together making up the Dynasty of Baban, more or less the ancient kingdom of Shahrazor) consented conditionally. The Kurdish Beg of Diarbekr, and Jamshid Beg Magdesi, an Armenian renegade of Palu.

(b) *The Hukumats.*

Originally the nine Hukumats under tribal chiefs were those of Erbil, Kerkuk, Suleimaniya, Hisn-Keif, Jazirat-ibn-Omar, Hakkari, Sasun, Amadia and Bitlis. But as in the course of the following two centuries (1516-1730) the city of Baghdad and several of the above-mentioned Kurdish districts often changed hands between the two contending empires, the original agreements were abandoned or forgotten. The remaining confederations, the Yezidi groups of Sinjar, the Mihranis, (Millis) of Diarbekr, Nisibis, Arghni-Madan and the Zaza tribes of Dersim, were given the title of Sanjak-Beys, with the same right of self-government as the former, and named *Ekrad Hukumati* (Kurdish Governments).

(c) *Self-government under Sultan Mehmed Fatih.*

Soon after the capture of Constantinople in 1451, Sultan Mehmed Fatih (the Conqueror) had accorded a very large measure of civil and religious self-government to Greeks and Armenians. The patriarchs of these nations were empowered to pass death sentences on the guilty of their respective peoples.

(d) *Derivation of the word Ajam.*

It seems to me that the generic term Ajam is derived from the personal name Akamanish or Hakamanish, the legendary of real Head of the Persian Akhaemenid dynasty. In his Behistun inscription Darius the Great (521—485 B.C.) says that his eight forefathers had been of royal race, and kings, the first and foremost being Akamanish.

(e) *European Accounts of Western Persia and Turkey at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteen Century.*

Historic place-names and patronymics were often changed with a view to suppressing them from memory, and sometimes because the Turkish scribes at Constantinople were careless in recording them correctly.

During the Napoleonic wars in particular many British, Russian and French and other missions scoured Eastern Turkey and Persia with a view to securing allies among those people. These missions have written many interesting memoirs on the geographical aspects of Eastern Turkey. Combining their information with Turkish sources, we get the picture as valid for the years 1750—1830 (see pp. 41-6).

(f) *The Pashalik of Bahdad.*

It extended from the Persian Gulf to the Southern slopes of the Armenian Taurus. Energetic Pashas, when of Kōlaman origin, often stretched their jurisdiction up to Armenia, at least demanding taxes and recruits. (The Kolaman government and army at Baghdad consisted of Arab chiefs and Circassian, Georgian and other Caucasian mountaineers who had flocked to the south to seek fortune.)

(g) *Independence of titulary of Babanzades.*

The titulary chiefs of the great Babanzades with their centre of Suleimaniya often ruled as independent sovereigns. In 1806, Abdurrahman Pasha Baban destroyed Turkish regiments and after two years' unequal struggle succumbed to treachery. In 1812, Ahmed Pasha Baban, his son, reached the very precincts of Baghdad.

## CHAPTER 4

(a) *Two important allies of Bedr Khan Bey.*

I. Khan Mahmud, 'The Baron of Mark (Kurds) and Armenians',

as he was locally called, ruling in Mekk and the districts extending between Hakkari and the southern shores of Lake Van. He was the senior member of the great family of Avdal Khan, of Yezidi faith, originating from Hakkari. A collateral branch of the family of Yezdin Sher, Avdal Khans had sometimes been rulers in the city of Van after the invasion of Tamerlane. Khan Mahmud did not nourish any political aspiration of his own, except in conjunction with Bedrkan Bey. As long as he could he did not allow any Ottoman influence in the affairs of his province. Security and justice ruled in the country. A British officer found that 'Khan Mahmud was evidently considered as a very formidable person who had lately seized the district of Khavasur. The authority of Ishak Pasha of Van reached but little beyond the plain in which the city is situated.' (Colonel J. Shiel: 'Notes on a Journey from Tabriz through Kurdistan, via Van, Bitlis, Seert, Erbil, etc. in July-August, 1836'. In the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*. Vol. VIII (1838) pp. 63-64.)

Two years later a British Consul found Khan Mahmud in full military possession of the district mentioned above, with only one difference, that the Khan had wisely expressed nominal submission to the Ottoman Serasker of Erzerum. The natives complained of heavy taxes, but were satisfied with the efficient authority and the police organised by Khan Mahmud. (James Brant: *op. cit.* pp. 384-384.) He drew his chief forces from natives of all nations; among his allies were the Armenian clergy, the chiefs of the Shikaki, Hartoshi and other tribes and the Amirzadas (princes) of Van.

II. Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, the lineal descendant of the family which had governed this district on the borders of Persia for many centuries. Very little is known of him, except that he was of a grasping and cruel nature; his co-operation in the general scheme of Badrkan Bey remained doubtful to the end.

(b) *The tribal corps.*

The tribal cavalry corps under Turkish command was recruited among the hereditary tribes of Bohtan and Jebel Gudi, the sphere of Prince Badrkan and the Kurdish national movement. The powerful tribes, the Mirans, the Tayans, the Batwans, the Duderis, the Kachans and Shernakhs, supplied some forty regiments. The Heiderans, the Jibrans, the Jallals, and Mugurs supplied some twenty regiments. A third group was recruited in the province of Diabekr, from the Millis (Mihranis) and subsidiary subtribes of Viranshahr and the river Khabur.

## CHAPTER 5

(a) *Tekké.*

Khizan is a beautifully wooded valley in the mountains south east of Bitlis. Twice I visited his *Tekké* and spent a few days each time as his guest. He was an inveterate conservative and distrustful of the Turk. He rode out very seldom, and whenever he did he would put on a huge turban wrapped round with colourful shawls and kerchiefs. Mounting a native thoroughbred, his face covered by a transparent veil so as to avoid both the evil eye and sinful glances, followed by a retinue of hundreds of well-armed and gaily dressed horsemen, he would impress the people by his cavalcade. Actually many Kurds thought him to be a Sheikh of such saintliness that they sent their wives, for purely ritual reasons, to be purified and cured by him.

## CHAPTER 6

(a) *Kurdish leaders condemned to death.*

Among the Kurdish leaders condemned to death were Seid Abdul Kader, a member of the Turkish Senate; Hassan Khairi Bey and some other deputies in the Turkish *Majlis*; Sheikh Said of Piran, the leader of the revolution, and others. At the time it was reliably reported that the Kurdish patriot, Dr. Fuad, shouted on the gallows that he died cheerfully for the love of his country and for the independence of Kurdistan.

(b) *The Kizilbashs.*

The tribes of Dersim speak the Zaza-Dialect of the Kurdish language, and call themselves *Yol-Ushaghi* ('children of the true Faith'). Being pagans, *Shias* and Christians at the same time they accept beliefs and rites from each: they celebrate Friday, know the Bible and the Koran. Like most Kurdish tribes in isolated areas, where there are no Sheikhs, they have no fixed prayer-houses and not seldom go on pilgrimages to Armenian or Syrian Convents and Churches to be cured of sickness. These Dersim tribes are a most interesting survival of very ancient times and deserve to be studied both from the standpoints of anthropology and religious history.













