THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF MUSH REGION BETWEEN 1865 AND 1890

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2021

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF MUSH REGION BETWEEN 1865 AND 1890

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by
Evren Çakıl

Boğaziçi University
2021

The Social and Economic Transformation of Mush Region between 1865 and 1890

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ABSTRACT

The Social and Economic Transformation

of Mush Region between 1865 and 1890

This study investigates the ethnic conflict through land, reforms, and migration. The central government, after the Tanzimat period, eliminated the Aladdinpaşazadelis who owned the yurtluk-ocaklık lands in the Muş region. The population in the Muş region was mixed and composed of Armenian, Kurdish and Circassian people. Unlike the claims that the interference of the European Powers started the conflict, this study investigates the importance of the land which escalated violence due to the scarce resources which were taken by Kurdish tribes by force. The violence reached its peak in the region after the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments in 1891.

This study also investigates the reforms attempts of the state and divides the period into two: Between 1865 and 1878, a series of reform attempts of the state were visible in order to protect the local inhabitants from attacks of Kurdish tribes. Between 1878 and 1890, the reforms were aimed to secure the region and state officials started to favor the Kurds and the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments illustrates this. Land disputes in the region, on the other hand, also transformed from class conflict to an ethnoreligious conflict; at the end of the 1880s, the state officials tolerated the land seizures of the Kurds. However, not every example is the same. In the case of the Surp Garabed Monastery, displacement of the Kurdish people from their houses with the help of the state investigates how the peasants cope with problems, developed new strategies and created their own discourses.

ÖZET

Muş Bölgesinin 1865 ve 1890 Yılları Arasındaki Sosyal ve Ekonomik Dönüşümü

Bu çalışma, 1865-1890 yılları arasında Muş bölgesindeki etnik çatışmayı toprak, reformlar ve göç üzerinden incelemektedir. Tanzimat'ın başlaması ile bölgeyi kontrol altına almak isteyen devlet Muş'ta yurtluk-ocaklık topraklarına sahip olan Alaaddinpaşazadelileri tasfiye etmiş ve bölgede bir güç boşluğu yaratmıştı. Muş bölgesi Ermeni, Kürt ve Çerkes gibi karışık bir nüfusa sahipti. Çatışmaların Avrupa Devletlerinin bir propagandası olarak başladığına iddialarının aksine üretilen ürünün azlığı sebebiyle bölgedeki toprağın önem kazanması ve bunların da Kürt aşiretleri tarafından zorla alınmak istemesi ile yükselişe geçen şiddeti incelemektedir. Bu şiddet ise 1891'de Hamidiye Alayları'nın kurulması ile en tepe noktasına çıkmıştır.

Bu dönemde ise devletin bölgeye yapmaya çalıştığı reformları incelemekte ve bunu iki döneme ayırmakta. 1865-1878 döneminde yerel ahaliyi Kürt aşiretlerin saldırılarından korumaya çalışan bir reformlar silsilesi ile karşılaşırken 1878-1890 arasındaki dönemde ise reformlar bölgenin güvenliğini arttırma emeli ile birlikte devlet görevlilerinin gözünde Kürtlerin önem kazanmaya başladığı bir dönemdir ki Hamidiye Alaylarının kurulması bunu bize göstermektedir. Bölge ise toprak özelinde ezen bir yerel eşraf ile ezilen ahali arasında bir sınıf çatışması yaşarken 1880lerin sonunda bu daha çok devletin Müslümanların toprakları ele geçirmesine göz yumması ile geçmiştir. Fakat her örnek aynı değildir. Surp Garabed Manastırı örneğinde Kürt ahalinin yaşadığı topraklardan devlet görevlileri zoruyla çıkarılması da aslında ahalinin yerinden edilince ne gibi stratejilere başvurduğunu ve kendi anlatılarını nasıl oluşturduğunu incelemektedir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to thank. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Yaşar Tolga Cora who always supported and mentored me from the first day I took a course from him. Whenever I felt depressed or wanted to talk about daily stuff his doors were always open for me. His deep knowledge on almost everything motivated me and many people. I will be grateful to him for the rest of my life. I thank Yücel Terzibaşoğlu and Uğur Bayraktar for accepting to be on my thesis defense committee. Their suggestions and critical comments were extremely helpful for the improvement of my thesis.

I am grateful to Nicole Immig, Hasan Karataş, and Edhem Eldem whom I had a chance to take classes that enriched my knowledge. I thank Yonca Köksal and Can Nacar for allowing me to be a part of their project, I developed my Ottoman Turkish skills with their help.

I thank TÜBİTAK that during my graduate studies, I have received the financial support of the TÜBİTAK-BİDEB 2210/A program.

I am grateful to Emir Karakaya, Ahmet Zahid Garip, Metehan Aldoğan, Sulhadin Öney, Mahmut Bilal Uzun, Selin Akbaş, and İsmail Şahin for their friendship throughout my life, for reading the drafts of the thesis, and for being there for me whenever I needed help. Their friendship is invaluable to me.

I am grateful to my friends, Cenk Hüner, Tutku Akın, Halil İbrahim Binici, Süleyman Taşkın, Çağdaş Salih Öztaş, Ayşenur Alper, Deniz Uyar, Yunus Emre Yiğit, Sinan Yumak, Onat Ozan Ata, Yalçın Göktaş, Sinem Arslan, and Pırıl Kadırgan for their friendship and help. I learned a lot from them and I am happy to

know them. I also thank Zeynep Bilsin for her friendship and help for 8 years. During the long hours in the library, her tea offers and discussions about everyday life were a lifesaver. I will be always grateful to her.

Finally, I want to thank the strongest person I know, my mother Aysel Çakıl. Throughout my life, she supported me in every decision I made and she believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. I consider myself lucky to be her son. My sisters Gül Çakıl and Büşra Çakıl were always there for me, their help and their understanding for the duration of the writing process of this thesis mean so much for me. This thesis would not be possible if it had not been for my family to whom I dedicate this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is an investigation of the land issue in the Muş region, especially Malazgird, Varto, Bulanık, and Muş plain between 1865 and 1890.[1] I argue that the peasants' claims on possession of the land were changed with the developments in this period and raised the importance of the land since the region had scarce resources. Therefore, the migrations into the region, the land disputes in which the Armenians were affected most, the state officials' behavior towards the events in the region escalated the ethnic violence.

The Muş region was narrated by many visitors as a source of agriculture and animal husbandry.[2] The fertile land in the Muş region, for instance, was described by Ahmed Macid, the mutasarrıf of Muş in 1909, as a "source of the gold" because of many different herbs.[3] The region was closer to the important centers in Eastern Anatolia such as Erzurum, Van, and the Russian Empire. The mountains around the plain and the Murad River became the homes of the Kurdish tribes for animal husbandry. They were pasturing in the summer season for these reasons. However, the region had compromised of Armenians, settled Muslims, and Kurdish tribes. The visitors such as Horatio Southgate who visited the region in 1838-1839, were describing the fertile lands of the Muş region however, emphasis was also on poverty;

[1] I left out Sason because in this period Sason was, first, a part of Bitlis sub-district, then became a part of Muş sub-district in 1889.
[2] "The land, which though productive was rudely cultivated, seemed for the most part to be devoted to the growth of corn, but melon and vegetable gardens were not infrequent, and many bullocks and buffaloes might be seen pasturing." Henry Fanshawe Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881), 282.
[3] "bu cesim ovanın kabiliyet-i fevkalade-i inbatiyesinden kinayeten (Muş Ovası altın yuvası) tabiri zeban-zeddir." Ahmed Macid, "Kürdistan Ahvali ve Mesele-i Islahat," *Mülkiye*, 1 September 1325, 2.

> [there are] no covered bazars, and the few stalls which bear the name are ill-furnished and mean, without regularity or display. ... The number of poor, insane, and diseased persons is astonishing. Boys and girls are seen running with a single rag, often entirely naked, through the streets.[4]

Henry Fanshawe Tozer, on the other hand, complained about Kurdish tribes in the region in 1879 because "during that season these mountaineers and their cattle are distributed among the Christian population, who provide them with everything and receive no payment in return."[5] The security in Eastern Anatolia was dependent on Kurdish beys before their demise. When the state vanished their visibility, it also turned the region into a powerless place. To prevent any harm against themselves the tribes came into the equation in terms of passage from one place to another. Therefore, one of the problems in the 1860s was to provide security in the region. The efforts however did not stop and continued until the establishment of the Hamidian regiments.[6] However, in the 1880s, as this thesis will investigate, the reforms for the security of the region as well as the protection of the inhabitants turned into a political discourse in which the state officials argued that the Kurdish tribes who were attacking the Armenians were loyal to the state. Therefore, a change in the discourse was apparent. The discourse also followed the practices. The state officials were not as cautious as the Tanzimat bureaucrats in the 1860s in terms of the safety of the subjects so it resulted in an escalation of violence. Therefore, this thesis will examine these practices such as changing the reform discourse from 1865 to 1890 as well as favoring the Muslims in political decisions in the region.

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[4] Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour Through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia*: *With an Introduction, and Occasional Observations Upon the Condition of Mohammedanism and Christianity in Those Countries,* Vol 1 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1840), 202.
[5] Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor*, 285.
[6] Metin Atmaca, ""Fermanü's-Sultan Boş Beyne'l-Ekrad": Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğusunda Şakiler, Hırsızlar Ve Batılı Seyyahlar," *Kebikeç* 45 (2018), 31.

The conflict in the region was due to the land dispute after the abolishment of the yurtluk-ocaklık lands. These types of lands were at the hands of the Alaaddinpazades, which will be examined in Chapter 2, and the Tanzimat brought changes for these types of lands. Gülseren Duman-Koç investigates the before and after the abolishment of these types of lands and how the family members claimed the land after the abolishment. The descendants of the family claimed the lands they once belong to. However, the state gave them a monthly salary, and the lands were confiscated. Duman Koç looks period of the 1820s-1870s through the elites' perspective and how they were stripped from their titles and properties. She does not give much detail about the peasants when the Land Code of 1858 was enacted and they began to claim possession of the land.[7]

While Duman Koç gave a significant account of the Kurdish tribes in Muş and their settlement process after the 1850s she did not emphasize the state officials' policy on the others such as Armenian and Kurdish people who did not have a tribe. As thesis will examine the peasants who claimed the lands after the developments in the land issue in the Muş region. The Land Code of 1858 gave an opportunity to the peasants to possess the land and this development led the peasants to get a title deed in which many of them did not have.

While the peasants were producing a surplus and sending it mostly for internal trade, the tribes who were using the pastures in the summer season aspired to own it. Therefore, in a place where the resources were not enough for the inhabitants, the conflict grew and turned into ethnic violence. The issue of who owned what, however, grew with many developments like the migration of the Circassians, as

[7] Gülseren Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire," (PhD Diss., Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2018).

well as reform attempts of the state officials. Therefore, I will investigate the ethnic conflict through land disputes. While emphasizing the importance of scarce resources in the region, I do not intend to focus on the relation of production in the region. My goal is to seek the ways in which the producers tried to preserve the resources. Their demand for justice provides invaluable information about these attempts.

1.1 Literature review

The scholars approached ethnic conflict with different purposes. For instance, many of them read the conflict from the perspective of international politics. The scholars focused on the interference of Europe as the reason for the escalation of the violence because European Powers affected the minds of the "loyal Armenians" badly. Scholars like Kamuran Gürün, Cevdet Küçük, Bayram Kodaman, and Salahi Sonyel claimed there was no reason for Armenians to rebel against the Ottoman Empire because the Armenians were wealthy who took much of the total share in Eastern Anatolia. Therefore, if the European Powers had not used the Armenians, they would not fight for freedom.[8] Therefore, the Armenians became "a tool" for a dream of autonomous Armenia, in which the Armenian Patriarchate also pursued this dream.[9]

The problem with this approach is that the Ottoman Empire and its apparatuses are ignored as if the state was not responsible for the protection of the

[8] Bayram Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdulhamid Devri Doğu Anadolu Politikası* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Arastırma Enst, 1987); Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1983); Cevdet Küçük, *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı, 1878-1897,* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1984), Salâhi Ramsdam Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians*: *Victims of Great Power Diplomacy* (London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1987).

[9] Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 39-40; becoming "a tool" in the hands of the European Powers was a common discourse in the nationalist discourse. Cevdet Küçük also used this discourse even though the Armenians had been appointed in the state apparatus. Küçük, *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı, 1878-1897*, 175.

people and providing justice as it was promised with the Tanzimat Edict. Therefore, rather than focusing on the state power and why the state officials or central administration failed to consolidate its power and fulfill the promises, the scholars focused on the interference of the European Powers in case of oppression.

The sixty-first article of the Berlin Treaty enforced the Ottoman Empire to make reforms in the provinces the Armenians inhabited.[10] To determine the population, the censuses became significant in these regions. Therefore, both the representatives of the Muslims, the state, and of the Armenians, the Patriarchate, applied to population censuses. Even though both population censuses did not match with one another, Bilal Şimşir focused on the population censuses because they were "proving Turkishness" of Eastern Anatolia where he claimed the Armenians were never a majority and the lands were not populated as the Balkans or Rumelian parts of the empire in which, non-Muslims were in the majority in the region.[11] Fuat Dündar, on the other hand, argued the population censuses were not used for measuring people but it had political implications since neither the Ottoman state nor the Armenian Patriarchate held a proper population record except exaggerated numbers.[12] Muş, in this case, is a perfect example of population censuses. In 1867, Muş became a sub-district of Erzurum then after the war Muş was a sub-district of Van province for a brief time, and eventually, the sub-district became a part of Bitlis

[10] According to the article, "The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds." "Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East: Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878." *The American Journal of International Law* 2, no. 4 (1908): 422.
[11] He claimed that the population of Balkans in which the majority of the region was not composed of the Muslim population therefore should not be mixed with the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. Bilâl N. Şimşir, ed., *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*: *(1856-1880),* vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Print. Off, 1989), XXII.
[12] Fuat Dündar, *Kahir Ekseriyet*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2013), 7.

province in 1879.[13] These changes were a part of preventing the sub-district from being claimed as an Armenian city since the reform plans contained Muş sub-province. The effect of the Berlin Treaty showed itself immediately with this example. The change of the borders of the region emphasized that if the number of Armenians were not high then there would not be an issue for reform according to the central government. While the content of the reform was changed by the state officials providing security in the region became the essential reform movement to prevent the attacks of the Kurdish tribes as well as the Armenian revolutionaries as will be examined in Chapter 4. Land disputes, however, are a more important element for the escalation of the ethnic conflict and many scholars investigated this issue.

Janet Klein and Samira Haj explain the land disputes through the expansion of the global economy in the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Klein investigates the economic activities of nomadic tribes which transformed their lifestyle with the rise of the global economy. She emphasizes Mosul and Halep as the main centers for the global markets in which the merchants from Eastern Anatolia and Muş went to or sent to their productions. Samira Haj also focuses on the global economy in Ottoman Iraq in the nineteenth century through the tribes' economic transition from animal husbandry to an agrarian landed class.[14] In both cases, the state's participation or power to negotiate, or overcome the tribe's power affected the choice. While Klein

[13] The Muş sub-provinces became a part of the Van province to "discipline the Kurds" (*Kürtleri ıslah etmek*) and to protect the subject from the attacks of the tribes. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (herafter BOA) *ŞD*. 1874-7, 17 Rebiülevvel 1296 (11 March 1879). However, the change was not successful and there were plans to return the sub-province to the Erzurum province. However, in the last months of 1879, Bitlis province was established and Muş became a sub-province of Bitlis. BOA. *MB.İ.* 57-31, 18 November 1879.

[14] Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 133, Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963*: *Capital, Power, and İdeology* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), 22–23.

and Haj pointed out this important issue, to what degree the Muş region was integrated into this global economy remains as a significant question. As Chapter 5 will show, rich people from villages in the region were sending their goods to Mosul and Aleppo, but those who could not afford to go to these centers had to be in the internal trade circle around the surroundings of the region or neighboring provinces.

Another scholar who focused on the land dispute was Yaşar Tolga Cora. He argues that to understand what happened in Eastern Anatolia it is essential to look at the class differences because what started as a class conflict between exploiters and exploited people transformed into ethnic conflict.[15] Cora acknowledges that the class conflict cannot be the sole problem or explanation of events since there was not the only emphasis, what happened in Eastern Anatolia was the amalgamation of the events and changes deeply felt by the inhabitants.[16]

Stephan Astourian investigates the land issue in Eastern Anatolia and Cilicia respectively from 1850 to 1914 where the land changed hands from the original owners. In Eastern Anatolia, the land was taken from Armenians, unlike Cilicia where the Armenians bought the land.[17] He argues that in Eastern Anatolia, the Armenians became landless peasants after the surplus was taken by the Kurdish tribes by force. Astourian believes that the migration from the Caucasus also led to the land seizures in Eastern Anatolia. However, the scarcity of sources forced the Circassians to fight with the local inhabitants in the Muş region, however, no examples are showing that Circassians forcefully seized the lands that belong to the

[15] Yaşar T. Cora, "Doğu'da Kürt-Ermeni Çatışmasının Sosyoekonomik Arkaplanı," in *1915: Siyaset, Tehcir, Soykırım*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Oktay Özel, Birinci basım (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015), 130.
[16] Cora, "Doğu'da Kürt-Ermeni Çatışmasının Sosyoekonomik Arkaplanı," 139.
[17] Stephan H. Astourian, "The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald G. Suny, Fatma M. Göçek and Norman M. Naimark (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Armenians until the end of the 1880s. Therefore, I argue that the Circassians were after these resources or surplus from the production until the end of the 1880s.[18]

Mehmet Polatel's thesis is one of the most important contributions to the scholarship. He focused on Armenians and the land question from 1870-1914. The land disputes are divided into two categories: a class conflict that took place in the 1860s and a land issue as the national struggle for the Armenians in the 1890s and onwards. The land disputes up to the Hamidian Period were mostly between powerful local landholders or state officials and peasants by both claiming that they had the right to become the owner.[19] Polatel looks at Eastern Anatolia in which the generalizations were common. As I will be investigating the Muş region, even though the findings of the land disputes in the 1860s-1870s were closer to Polatel's findings, I argue that we should reconsider the periodization. He emphasized that the 1890s were "the ethno-nationalization of the land" in which the land seizures were also begun by ordinary Muslims. However, as Chapter 2 will show, the state officials were already discussing an Islamic policy in the region for the land disputes in the 1880s and emphasis was on favoring the Muslim inhabitants.

While the scholarship on land focused on the lands that were taken from the Armenians, this thesis will present a case study in Chapter 5 that the Surp Garabed Monastery in the midst of this Islamic policy by the state officials managed to demolish a village closer to the Monastery. The inhabitants were Kurdish Muslims who asked for justice by saying that how come a Muslim could destroy a mosque.

[18] I could not find any document regarding the complaints of the Armenians about Circassians seizing the Armenians' land in my research in the archives. While being said, I do know that this is not the ultimate result of my research, however, I can claim that at least with the sources I have the Circassians were after these resources.

[19] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1870-1914," (PhD Diss. Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2017), 72.

This case illustrated that before the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments the government agreed to demolish the villages with the request of the Armenian Monastery and the land was given to the monastery. It is important to see these events as they present the differences of the region and how the Kurdish peasants confronted the Monastery as victims in this ethnoreligious conflict. Therefore, as important as Polatel's claims are, we have to agree that the study of a region in detail can provide the difficulties of the generalizations. For instance, the examples of the Muş region showed that the usurpers were supported by the state officials mainly, but there is only one case in the region; a mufti claiming to possess the land because it was inherited from his father. This study, therefore, does not support the claims that the şeyhs in the Muş region seized the lands as the evidence showed. In almost every case, the usurper was in the state apparatus or befriended by a state official.

1.2 The methodology

This thesis focused on the peasants who could not have enough power to negotiate the problems with the state except by sending petitions. However, the question is what the state or the society is? I use Joel Migdal's "state-in-society" approach. This approach criticized the idea of the state versus the society. Migdal defined the state as a "field of power marked by the use and threat of violence shaped by image ... and practices." The image or perception of the state can be regarded as the authority in the decision-making process in a specific territory. This perception has two boundaries: territorial in which there is a perception between states and social boundaries in which a perception rules between the state and society. The territorial boundary can be seen through Ottoman Empire, which was regarded as "the Muslim

empire". In social boundaries, the image of the state differs from its actors and groups since it can connect these actors and groups.[20]

The second element of the state is practice. Actors and agencies change the perception of the state by their actions, whether enhancing or weaken it. Migdal separated the practice and image from each other by quoting Bertrand Russell. He wrote that "We have, in fact, two kinds of morality side by side; one which we preach but do not practice, and another which we practice but seldom preach."[21] Thinking about the practices of the state officials in the Ottoman Empire, the peasants were aware of state officials' capabilities. The peasants asked for the "right way" even though the officials did not choose it.

Migdal emphasized the dynamic process of the transformation of the state, which is not static and changes with interactions between groups to rule.[22] While the Ottoman Empire tried to consolidate its power through establishing new practices, it engaged with the local notables or nomads for changing its image. It could signify an empty idiom to the people in Muş since the local notables were already in charge of everything at the time of emirates, but Tanzimat reforms enforced the centrality of the state, which can be considered as a not successful attempt in Eastern Anatolia. With time, during and after the immigration of the Chechens the state became visible more and more for consolidating power, and eventually, as Elke Hartmann says the state shared the power with the Hamidian Regiments or passed it to them.[23] Or

[20] Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16-18.
[21] Bertrand Russell, "Eastern and Western Ideals of Happiness" in *Sceptical Essays* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1928), quoted in Migdal, *State in Society*,18.
[22] Migdal, *State in Society*, 23.
[23] Elke Hartmann, "The Central State in the Borderlands: Ottoman Eastern Anatolia in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press; Chesham Combined Academic [distributor], 2012), 172.

practices can be changed according to the situation like the case of Girvas village where the governor and the mutasarrıf chose to expel the Kurdish villagers in favor of the Surp Garabed Monastery in a time when the anti-Armenian and pro-Kurdish discourse was increasing in the writings of the state officials. However, Migdal also examined the change in the mentality of the people living in the territorial boundaries. He claimed that even in the static boundaries the change happens as well as the perception of the state. [24] Why did the Armenians choose the rifle instead of speaking out or left their countries? Therefore, as he called, the change happens as well as the perception of the state changes. This thesis aims to look at if there was a change of the people to the state or the image of it before the state chose to give its power to Hamidian Regiments.

1.3 Sources

Even though the critique of the state is significant, we have to rely on what the state preserved us in terms of the sources. Therefore, I used petitions from the peasants mostly to see their complaints and wishes about what had to be done. Lex Heerma van Voss explained petitions as "demands for a favor, or the redressing of an injustice, directed to some established authority."[25] Yuval Ben-Bassat also defined the petition as "a plea that subjects submit to a ruler to authorize steps in an extra-judicial manner that bypasses or supersedes the regular justice system when all other avenues have been exhausted or are believed to be devoid of utility."[26] Both van

[24] Migdal, *State in Society*, 26.
[25] Lex H. van Voss, "Introduction," in Lex H. van Voss (ed.), *Petitions in Social History*, International Review of Social History Supplements 9 (2002), 1.
[26] Yuval Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan: Protests and Justice in Late Ottoman Palestine 1865-1908*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 22.

Voss and Ben-Bassat emphasized the importance of the people's choices to inform the higher-level authorities about the local level problems. One of the most important difficulties of the petitions is to differentiate when the petitioners showed their agency into the writing and when the petition writers took responsibility. Van Voss argued that even if the personal stories of the petitioners can have fictive elements, the significance is petitioners' narrative on their life. Therefore, we can catch glimpses of their lives and problems by crosschecking other evidence if there is. [27]

Ben-Bassat also explained the importance of the petitions on the relationship between state and subjects[28] in terms of their ideas, wishes, and problems they faced. The state, on the other hand, could control the petitions of the peasants in theory so the authority of the sultan, even though he did not go there, was being under control. Therefore, the petition mechanism both controlled the society and bureaucrats as proof of the state is in charge.[29] The peasants then benefited from this control mechanism, since the appointed governors or mutasarrıfs were dismissed by the state because of petitions from people. It was one of the ways that the state was consolidating its power in the region since the Muş region was already in the Tanzimat period, but the penetration of the state into the region was not completed and continued until Hamidian Regiments. Ben-Bassat also wrote that the majority of petitions from the Palestine region that was sent to the capital were written by the urban population. Peasants, on the other hand, did not send petitions frequently.[30]

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[27] van Voss, *Introduction*, 9.

[28] I follow Will Hanley's arguments about differentiation of subject or citizens in terms of Ottoman Nationality Code in 1869. He investigated the reasons for issuing a code about nationality. He claimed that the reason was to protect its subjects, and not citizens, in an age when the capitulations formed set of relations in the empire or gave new meanings to Ottoman subjects if they left their nationality. Therefore, rather than reading this law as a premise of the citizenship to the people of the empire it was an attempt to show the sovereignty of the empire. Will Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3, no. 2 (2016): 298.

[29] Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan*, 3-4.

[30] Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan*, 182.

However, it can be asked how can we measure the frequency? Since the petitioning can be seen as a representation of the problems and if the peasants had already their mechanisms, then there was no need of using them. Therefore, this thesis focused on the petitions since the peasants wanted to be heard through the petitions against "injustices" against them. By acknowledging their disadvantages like not being written by the petitioner itself mostly, this thesis emphasized the petitions because the petitions can show what they wanted for justice with different discourses.

The petitions I used were mostly in İrade and *Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliye* (*Sublime Council for Judicial Ordinances*) catalogs to examine the first years of the region until 1868 when Meclis-i Vala was abolished and *Şura-yı Devlet* (*Council of State*) was established. The documents in *Dahiliye Nezareti* (*Ministry of Interior*) showed the state's interference with the region. The archives provided a defter collection called "Ayniyat Defteri" in which the registers were copied to these defters. There are five of them from 1866 to 1879, comprising copies of orders sent to Erzurum and Van provinces. While there were few orders regarding the Muş region, these books showed the procedures of state officials. Since the focus is on the peasants, they applied to Şura-yı Devlet for the second half of the nineteenth century. Their call for justice in the documents is significant since they were the backbone of the empire in a land empire.

The petitions are not the only sources we can look at. The *Salnames (yearbooks)* of the provinces are also valuable sources. Even though the state officials did not keep a track of every province in each year, there are seven yearbooks of Erzurum province starting from 1870 to 1876 which contains information about the Muş region. While the yearbooks of Erzurum continued to be published the Muş sub-province was within the borders of Bitlis province and the

yearbook of the Bitlis province starts in 1891. The population, the tax revenues, the names of the state officials, detailed information about the geography of the region can be found in these yearbooks. Therefore, it is important for the study of the region. The local newspapers are also important but the only remaining newspaper in the region that is written in Ottoman Turkish was Envar-ı Şarkiye. The issues of the newspaper are not complete so it is difficult to use it but the remaining collection is also important for the studies.

1.4 Chapter outline

This thesis consists of six chapters including the introduction chapter. In Chapter 2, I will focus on the land disputes in the Muş region. By looking at the Land Code of 1858, I will examine how the code transformed the possession of the land. The Land Code gave a chance to reduce the multiple claims on the lands but it also produced many conflicts. The Armenians in most cases complained about the land seizures by the state officials or the people who were befriended by the state officials. The Armenians, in almost every case, claimed possession of the land but the conflict was between powerful people. It was a space of contention because both claimants always showed their title deeds. However, in the end, the Armenians were considered as the tenant for the lands they lived in. The cases started as a class conflict but at the end of the 1880s, it turned into an ethnoreligious conflict where the state gave the empty lands to the Muslims for free instead of renting the land to the Armenians.

Chapter 3 will investigate the Circassian migrations to the Muş region at the beginning of the 1860s. I focus on the Circassian immigrants because of their role in the worsening of the land issue. The scarcity of resources caused the immigrants to

resort to violence to benefit from resources. While the Circassians did not have any conflict with the Armenians in terms of the possession of the land the region's security became worse. Therefore, the state's inefficiency to control the Circassians and prevent them from attacking the local inhabitants forced the state to take temporary solutions like employment of them.

Chapter 4 focuses on the reform attempts of the state in the period of 1865-1890. The two and a half decades witnessed two different reform attempts in the region. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 changed the perception of the state officials however, before that the attention of the Tanzimat bureaucrats was to increase the security measures such as preventing the Kurdish tribes from attacking the region as well as improve the local inhabitants' well-being between 1865 and 1878. After the war, the new political system in the region turned its attention to the infrastructural problems the region was experiencing. As time passed the problems began to be ignored by the state officials and the reform attempts were slowed down. This slow progress, however, escalated violence between the Armenians and Kurdish inhabitants until the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments. During this time, the state officials turned their attention to the Kurdish population and wrote reports to the center claiming that how brave the Kurds were and they had to be in the state apparatus.

Chapter 5 will examine a case study namely the destruction of Girvas village in the 1880s by the orders of the governor of Bitlis. I argue that the people in the village, first, paid the taxes to prevent any destruction of the village, and then, when the village was destroyed, they used an Islamic discourse by emphasizing the destruction of the mosque and cemeteries in their struggle. This chapter will show that the land disputes were not centered on the Armenians becoming the victims but

the Kurdish people were also subjected to a similar treatment even if it was not common as the Armenian people were subjected to. Chapter 6will be the concluding part of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

THE MUŞ REGION AS A SPACE OF CONTENTION

The scholarship on land mainly focused on the Land Code of 1858 which paved a way for individual ownership. While the literature on the land argued the introduction of private property in the Ottoman Empire, the Land Code did not give absolute ownership to the owners. As will be seen from the examples in the Muş region, the ownership of the land was the center of the discussions by the claimants. The complaints, however, were made mostly by the Armenian inhabitants based on having a title deed and becoming the owner. The alleged suspects were mostly Muslim state officials or Circassians. The Ottoman archive did not offer much material about the events, but I found six events that related to the land disputes between 1865-1890, in which themes of the petitions were demands for justice. Their argument resembled each other since they were claiming that they were holding the title deed so they had to be the owner of the land but the alleged suspects became the owners. As the events show, the Muslims in the Muş region who were closer to the state officials did not have any difficulty seizing the land due to a class conflict in which the powerless peasants were oppressed by the Muslim aghas or tribe leaders until the 1880s. While The Armenian peasants could not achieve their wish to possess the land but they were even recorded as the tenants after the state decided to give the land to Muslims. It was a space of contention since “the tenants” encountered the local notables and state officials. However, this contention was lost to the notables. Moreover, I argue that at the end of the 1880s, the land conflict was turned into an ethnoreligious conflict in the region since the higher-level state officials hesitated to sell the land in the auctions. Their primary motive was to

populate with the Muslim population. I will first look at the Land Code of 1858 and its articles, which gave the peasants an opportunity to possess the land. The rest of the chapter will deal with the land disputes in the Muş region.

2.1 The land and the Land Code of 1858

The Land Code of 1858 was declared two years after the Crimean War ended. However, these two years witnessed a great transformation in the tax system of the empire. The reason for a change in the land code was to tax more due to the Crimean War since the Ottoman Empire struggled with the financial crisis. The state apparatus tried to find new solutions to the money shortages and the new direction was taxation as well as centralization. Started with the sheep tax, the year 1274 in Hijri Calendar (1857-1858) saw three distinct and significant changes in regulations. The sheep tax which was taken in kind was changed to cash in different parts of the empire. For instance, the tax was varied from three to five kuruş for each sheep in the Balkans and it was fixed to 1,5 kuruş in Anatolia.[31] The second change was the Land Code of 1858 in May 1858. The most important change was reducing the number of claimants for the land for effective taxation. The third change was in the Penal Code which was adopted from French Code.[32]

The most important evidence for these changes to improve the taxation system was that the members of the commission changed the sheep tax was the same as the members issued the Land Code of 1858. Eight members sealed each document

[31] BOA. *İ. MMS.* 11-468. I came across with this when I was working in Tübitak Project no: 119K310. I would like to thank Yonca Köksal for sharing this document with me.
[32] For Penal Code, see Senem Öner, "Çeviri Yoluyla Kanun Yapmak: 1858 Tarihli Osmanlı Ceza Kanunu'nun 1810 Tarihli Fransız Ceza Kanunu'ndan Çevrilmesi," (PhD Diss. Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, 2013), Milen V. Petrov, "Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864-1868," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 4 (Oct. 2004).

without any change in members.[33] Therefore, we have to think of these lawmakers as a coherent unit that changed the empire and its taxation policy in one year. The Land Code of 1858 provided articles to have more taxes since it opened new ways and lands for land use, which would result in more taxation ideally. However, the result was chaos because the owners of the land could be living outside of the region in which the Land Code would allow another person to claim possession of this land. This ownership and use of the land lead to different arguments about the Land Code of 1858. On the one hand, it was believed that this was a continuation of old kanuns, and on the other hand, it was the rupture from the old.

Roderic Davison, Haim Gerber, and Ömer Lütfi Barkan explained the Land Code as a continuation of the old laws. Davison believed that the Land Code was an upgrade of the old kanuns to keep up with the new discourse and time for control of more centralized tax. [34] Gerber's claims on the continuation of the code as the old laws followed the introduction of the çiftliks to the code. He interpreted it as the confirmation of the practices which were not mentioned before, so it was not a break from the old but rather it was accepting the practices.[35] Barkan claimed the main aim was to ensure continuity because the code allowed people to use the empty or others' lands who did not use it for more than ten years without getting punished if they paid rent.[36] As will be mentioned below, the articles of the code showed the significance of the continuation of the tax revenues. To do that, the state had to know from whom to collect the tax.

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[33] The eight members were Ahmed Cevdet, Mehmed Rüşdi, Ahmed Celal, Şevket, Mustafa Hakkı, Sami, İbrahim Edhem and Mehmed Fuad. BOA. *İ. MMS.* 11-468 and BOA. *A.} DVN. NMH.* 9-17.
[34] Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 99–100.
[35] Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East*, (London: Mansell, 1987), 71.
[36] Ömer L. Barkan, "Türk Toprak Hukuku Tarihinde Tanzimat Ve 1274 (1858) Tarihli Arazi Kanunnamesi", in *Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi,* (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1980), 343.

Huricihan İslamoğlu argued that the Code of 1858 was a process in which the Ottoman state tried to increase the capacity of the agrarian economy by changing the land relations in terms of individual ownership.[37] İslamoğlu rejected the representation of the law as the result of what has happened but it was the reason and it defined the rights and claims.[38] In this definition, the state was the sole attention in the contested domain of the land. This attention showed itself on looking at individual ownership.[39] İslamoğlu is right about reducing the claimants for the revenues but it should be asked who the state in the Muş region was. Attila Aytekin criticized this issue by saying that the goal was to see the pros and cons of the code to the state without examining the "sources of the power".[40] As will be argued in Chapter 4, the state in the region was still consolidating its power even until the end of the 1880s so without its power, the peasants in the region were at the mercy of the state officials who tried to possess lands or helped notables to seize the land from the peasants.

Uğur Bayraktar, on the other hand, illustrated the importance of seeing the consequences of the code otherwise the discussions about the Land Code would be around the statist or legalist approach. Therefore, leaving aside this motive it should be analyzed throughout the empire to see the impact of the Land Code on the peasants' and notables' lives.[41]

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[37] Huri İslamoğlu, "Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858," in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 33–34.
[38] İslamoğlu, *Property as a Contested Domain*, 8.
[39] İslamoğlu, *Property as a Contested Domain,* 3–42.
[40] Attila Aytekin, also, touched upon the issues like individual ownership, agricultural surplus, use of land rather than the circulation of the land, gender equality on the land by explaining the code in detail. E. Attila Aytekin, "Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: An Analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6 (2009).
[41] Bayraktar saw the Land Code both as continuity and rupture. The Code took old discourse with the older codes but also the transformation was seen in the code, which led to the new forms of the challenges and contentions for the land users. Uğur Bayraktar, "*Yurtluk-Ocaklıks: Land, Politics of*

Yücel Terzibaşoğlu is one of the scholars who looked at the land use and relationship between claimants in the nineteenth century after the settlement of immigrants in Anatolia and how it changed the perspective towards the land like protecting their rights and setting borders. Terzibaşoğlu looked at the Land Code of 1858 from the contestants' perspective. He wrote that this code gave new ways to the contestants to claim or reclaim the land.[42] However, by reducing the numbers of claimants the code caused an increase in claims and lawsuits. For instance, he looked at the transformation of the Ottoman miri land into individual ownership in his article "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri". This ownership in the nineteenth century changed the land relations from multiple claims on land to the use right of the cultivator.[43] Who owns what is important in terms of understanding the transition from multiple claims to sole ownership. As Terzibaşoğlu states, one of the problems in the nineteenth century was to demarcate the people's lands. People, as seen from Eleni Hatun's incident, changed, transformed, and even deleted the demarcations between one owner's land and another user.[44] The story of the inhabitants in the Muş region was similar to Eleni Hatun. While they were not as wealthy as Eleni Hatun, they used every feasible way to own the land. One way was to look into the articles of the Land Code of 1858.

The Land Code of 1858 was issued on 6 June 1858 and had 132 articles regarding miri lands. The Code explained the five categories of the land system and explained only miri lands (state lands), metruk lands (abandoned), and mevat lands

Notables and Society in Ottoman Kurdistan, 1820-1890," (PhD Diss. Boğaziçi Universitesi, 2015), 249-251.

[42] Yücel Tezibaşoğlu, "Landlords, Refugees, and Nomads: Struggles for Land around Late-Nineteenth-Century Ayvalık," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, *24*, 54.

[43] Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 4 (2006): 122.

[44] Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri," 125.

(empty lands) leaving out mülk (freehold), and mevkuf lands (waqf lands). [45] Article 10 gave the possibility to cut the ties with the multiple claims on land by writing "only the possessor profits by the grass which grows and he can prevent another from profiting by it."[46] Article 11 strengthened individual ownership by not allowing any people or animals to enter the land. According to Article 68, the owner had to cultivate the land for three years and if he would abandon his land without any reason the owner would lose the title deed.[47] Article 72 asserted also the three-year rule by saying that, if there were no legitimate reasons for leaving the land or they did not return three years after they left the village, the land would become the "right of Tapu".[48] Therefore, a three-year period for a village was an important time since the main idea for the state was constant cultivation without break, otherwise, it could disrupt the taxes.

Article 78 showed the importance of the continuation of cultivation. If a person uses the same land for 10 years, then he/she could become the new owner of the land by changing its status. The key for this was to cultivate and pay taxes and then hoping the old owners would not come for their lands. The following article also protected the invader if he paid the taxes of the land. There should not be taken from the user of the land as rent or value of the land the article wrote. Therefore, the main aim of the state about the taxes could continue.[49] As the articles stated the possession

[45] *The Ottoman Land Code,* trans. by F. Ongley, (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1892), 1-6.
[46] Article 10, *The Ottoman Land Code*, 9.
[47] *The Ottoman Land Code*, 37.
[48] "If all or part of the inhabitants of a town or village quit the place for legitimate reasons, the land belonging to them does not become the right of Tapu, but if the abandonment of the country take place without valid motive, or if the inhabitants do not return within three years from the time when the legitimate reasons which forced them to quit have ceased, and if they thus leave the land uncultivated, it shall then become the right of Tapu." *The Ottoman Land Code*, 39.
[49] "Nothing shall be claimed as rent (Ijri Misl) or as Decreased value of land (Noksan Arz), from any person who has arbitrarily taken vacant (Mahlul) lands, Mirie or Mevkufe, and has cultivated them, as is mentioned in the two preceding articles, and has paid the taxes due by the land." *The Ottoman Land Code,* 42.

of the land was important in terms of taxation and constant cultivation. As for the peasants who paid rent to the landholders this was a chance to possess the land and, therefore, the peasants claimed the possession of the land after another contestant appeared. The next section will deal with land disputes in the Muş region in the period between 1865-1890 and will analyze how to land issue changed from 1865 to 1890 by the state officials.

2.2 Land in the Muş region

The land type before the Tanzimat period in the Muş region was the yurtluk-ocaklık lands. These types of lands were popular treatments of the Ottoman Empire given to the beys in the border zones. The features of these types of lands and responsibilities of the landholders were that there could be no appointment from the central state for a change of the beys so the beys and their sons would continue to hold these lands. In return for this privilege, the beys had to take part in the case of a war. If the bey had to be changed, then the next bey would be selected from the same family. These lands were hereditary, but it was not for sale or donation. As Duman Koç shows these lands were not necessarily given because of the services but it was the "recognition of the rights" of the rules who accepted the Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century with the increased tensions with the Ottoman-Safavid borderlands as well as after the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514.[50] The fundamental difference between the Safavid and Ottoman empires during the first clashes and after 1514 was

[50] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 39-40.

to control the lands directly or give semi-autonomous rights. The Safavid Empire preferred the former, while the Ottoman Empire preferred the latter.[51]

Bayraktar, in terms of the use of the yurtluk-ocaklık system, expressed that this was neither a novelty nor a privilege given to the Kurds. It was "an imperial tradition" where the Ottoman Empire used similar methods in the Balkans, Syria, and most of the borderlands to secure the empire's security.[52] Tanzimat destroyed this type of land as well as the beys. However, this destruction was not accepted by the beys or beys pursued to claim the ownership of the lands. As Bayraktar claimed, the application of the Land Code was merely to accept the yurtluk-ocaklık lands as "closer to the mülk lands". In the case of the Zirki beys' lands, the beys became the owners of the Miri lands, which transformed to the mülk lands.[53]

In the Muş region, the land was ruled by the Alaaddinpaşazadelis from the eighteenth century onwards as the holders of the yurtluk-ocaklık lands. Before the Tanzimat, the central government always trusted the competitors of the local notables who "dared" to rebel against the central government in Muş. In the 1830s, it was the competitors of the same family Alaaddinpaşazades against the Emin Pasha. Therefore, it can be claimed before the Tanzimat in the Muş region, the local authorities heavily rested their power on the local families. If they had to create a new ruler, their choice of ruler stayed in the family.[54]

One of the first aims of the Tanzimat in Muş was to break the power of the local notables. The second aim was to collect taxes since the amount of the revenue in the region was collected by the Alaaddinpaşazades family who did not send any

[51] Bayraktar, *Yurtluk-Ocaklıks*, 48.
[52] Bayraktar, *Yurtluk-Ocaklıks*, 75.
[53] Bayraktar, *Yurtluk-Ocaklıks*, 241.
[54] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 78.

information about it. Therefore, it was decided to send a clerk for the registering of the lands.[55] After the Şerif Bey was expelled from the office, the next move for the implementation of the Tanzimat was to end the hereditary rule of the revenues of the yurtluk-ocaklıks. In return, the owners of the land, the descendants of the Alaaddinpaşazades would get a monthly stipend.[56]

One example of the claims about getting a monthly stipend was the grandsons of Murtaza Bey who was one of the yurtluk-ocaklık holders. He took lands consisting of 32 villages around the first years of the eighteenth century and after his death in 1774/75 these lands were divided into his sons Ali and Hasan. After a while, the transactions gave the lands to the Molla Hasan Banuki dargah. One of the grandsons of Murtaza, Hacı İsa, and his son Yusuf Bey, claimed that these lands were not the same lands Murtaza owned since they were in a miserable condition, they wanted to get a salary. After an investigation, it was determined that these lands were at auction 30 years ago, and starting from January 1882, Hacı İsa and his son Yusuf were given 250-750 kuruş monthly stipend for life-long.[57]

Duman-Koç claimed the yurtluk-ocaklık lands in the Muş region had "exclusive rights over the tax-revenues." The beys and mutasarrıfs of Muş no matter what claimed these lands were their "mülk" therefore she referred that " no matter these lands were officially mirî, they were used as private property in practice."[58] Before the Tanzimat, it can be claimed as private property since the state was not as centralized as to control the land and the taxes and needed the local notables. However, it changed when the Tanzimat reforms started to transform and helped the

[55] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 125-127.
[56] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 165.
[57] BOA. *İ. ŞD.* 60-3490. 29 Şevval 1299 (13 September 1882).
[58] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 167.

state to consolidate its power in the Muş region as will be discussed in Chapter 4. The state tried to consolidate the power by constructing military bases as well as state offices to increase its visibility. The peasants who used the land laid claim to the use rights of the land. The next section will deal with these claims.

2.3 Claims on the land in Muş

The petitions and documents about the land issue in the Muş region showed examples from the different types of land. For instance, tax revenues of a few waqfs showed that many Armenian people were tenants. However, not every document on waqfs is related to the tenancy. The documents regarding waqfs had examples of having a title deed and people living on the waqf land. For instance, a dargah in Tendürek village in Malazgird wanted to have an imperial deed of the grant (*berat*) on Şeyh İsmail land in which they had been using "since time immemorial".[59] The reason for asking for the imperial deed of grant was because it was burnt in the house of the provincial treasurer according to Şeyh Ahmed's petition. Therefore, a new imperial deed was needed.[60] Since there was no response to his petition, Ahmed sent another petition to ask to write an order to take care of this issue.[61]

The land that belonged to waqfs was also used by the population either by Muslims or non-Muslims. For instance, a waqf called Şeyh Zaviyesi collected hakk-ı karar tax and also money the expenses called as the paper cost for one month from 13 July 1869 to 12 July 1869 according to the waqf records in the archive. The interesting part of these records is that the users were using the land for more than 10

[59] BOA. *HR.MKT*. 536-15. 22 Şaban 1282 (10 January 1866).
[60] BOA. *MVL*. 496-116. 26 Zilkade 1282 (15 April 1866).
[61] BOA. *MVL*. 561-37. 8 Zilhicce 1284 (1 April 1868).

years, it was used without any fight or the user did not have a title deed. Ihvan and İsyo were the users and they paid 24 kuruş each as tax and expenses. Bogos, Bedros, and Verton paid 16,5 kuruş. Şahnazar and Giko paid 11,5 kuruş.[62] Another waqf in Bulanık district in Muş, Şeyh Veli waqf, also collected hakk-ı karar tax and money for the expenses from 13 October 1873 to 12 November 1873.[63] In total, the accountant collected 6,108 kuruş. From these two waqf lands, we can see that the non-Muslim population was tenants for more than 10 years. However, these documents do not offer us much about their production except estimating their wealth by looking at their tax payments.

The majority of the documents emphasized the claims on the ownership of the land. The contestants of the land, the Armenians, and the notables, claimed possession of the land. One proof for both contestants was title deeds. The cases were started by the complaints of the Armenians who claimed that even though the peasants had title deeds the accused people were intervening in the land and making a scene. However, the problem was that these accused people were mostly either notables, tribe leaders, or state officials so they were more influential than the peasants. Each of the cases mentioned below did not have a copy of the title deeds in the archives. Therefore, their claims of having one did not matter, and mostly the cases were in favor of these notables or aghas. Most importantly, these cases showed that the accused people push the state mechanism on the peasants to get rid of their claims. They wanted to become the owner but the state recorded them as tenants in registers. Thus, the cases show how the peasants lost their lands to the notables who got help from the state officials.

[62] BOA. *EV.d.* 33628. 29 Şaban 1286. (4 December 1869).
[63] BOA. *EV.d.* 22939. 1-31 Teşrinievvel 1289 (13 October 1873-12 November 1873).

The first instance was the clash of interests between the peasants and local notables. Melkon and Abraham in 1872 sent a petition to the capital complaining that the mufti of Muş Hüseyin claimed that his father was the owner of the land in Dağmarnik, or Morinik, which they had been using for more than 40 years. They claimed the land was "empty land" (*arazi-i haliye*) that had not been cultivated or there were any buildings. Therefore, people formed a village called Dağmarnik from this land by eradicating the grass. Hüseyin sued the village because of their use but Melkon and Abraham emphasized the duration between the establishment of the village to this date. The court was assembled during the time of the governor of İsmail who İsmail Hakkı Pasha was the governor for a brief time from October 1868 to January 1869.[64] Therefore, it can be claimed that the mufti started his claims before 1868. The decision was to forbid any intervention by Hüseyin Efendi and to give 25 title deeds to the village people. Abraham wrote that Hüseyin Efendi was a powerful man so by getting the help of the local government, Hüseyin Efendi intervened. To prevent a loss of the title deeds, Abraham and Melkon took the deeds and went to the capital. Since then, two years have passed and they had been staying in the coffeehouses or inns. As always, to ask for help they put forward the tax issue.

Each year the village was giving 25,000 kuruş and since the interventions started the tax was not paid. What they asked was to take the title deed and the government to order Hüseyin Efendi to stop the intervention to the land which was not settled and was in ruins.[65] After they sent this petition, it is known that they went to the Armenian Patriarchate in İstanbul because the patriarch sent a petition about this issue 17 days later. The Patriarch wrote that these people revived the village with

[64]Sinan Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali (1839-1922)*: *Prosopografik Rehber* (Istanbul: İsis, 1999), 38.
[65] BOA. *ŞD.* 2871-47. 4 Ramazan 1289 (5 November 1872).

so many hardships and they wanted the title deed. Since they do not have it and were facing problems the Patriarch asked for help from Şura-yı Devlet.[66] The Armenian Patriarchate in the 1870s was involved with the land disputes by sending two takrirs to the government.[67] While the Ottoman government did not send an official answer to the Patriarchate, it tried to solve the problems of the peasants. As Polatel argued either by the pressure of the elites or the institution itself the Patriarchate became more involved with the land dispute, however, as he showed this involvement was mostly unfruitful.[68]

After five months of waiting, Abraham and Melkon sent another petition to Şura-yı Devlet complaining about their expenses to the soil and the construction for 40 years. 300,000 kuruş were spent for the revival of the land and the payment of the tax.[69] This time they wrote that they would become miserable along with their children and to stop Hüseyin for his misbehavior. According to Şura-yı Devlet's writ, these 25 certificates were not title deeds but were given temporarily by the governor without any court order. Anton Minkov argued that the temporary title deeds would be given for a replacement to the original documents which would take months to prepare and their validation would expire with the arrival of the original tapu.[70] The

[66] BOA. *ŞD.* 2401-11. 21 Ramazan 1289 (22 November 1872).
[67] These takrirs have been examined by many scholars like Lillian Etmekjian, Stephen Astourian Mehmet Polatel. Etmekjian and Polatel focused on the changing perceptions of the Armenian elites towards the Ottoman Empire. Etmekjian emphasized that after the Ottoman Empire failed to promote reform and worsened the conditions of the Armenians by not punishing the attackers, Kurdish tribes, an alliance was formed between Armenian leaders and the Russian Empire. Polatel, on the other hand, did not attribute much on the alliance between Russian Empire and Armenian elites but focused on the division between the Patriarchate and Armenian elites. One of the reasons for the division according to Polatel was the increase in nationalism since the land "connected peasants to the lands of their forefathers." Polatel, *Armenians and the Land Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1870-1914*, 85–87; Lillian Etmekjian, "The Armenian National Assembly of Turkey and Reform," *The Armenian Review* 29, no. 1 (1976), Astourian, *Silence of the Land*.
[68] Polatel, *Armenians and the Land Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1870-1914*, 106.
[69] BOA. *ŞD.* 2874-46,1. 4 Safer 1290 (3 April 1873).
[70] Anton Minkov, "Ottoman Tapu Title Deeds in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Origin, Typology and Diplomatics," *Islamic Law and Society* 7, no. 1 (2000): 76.

reason Abraham and Melkon took the title deeds with them in order to protect it was because it was their proof. However, the writ of the Şura-yı Devlet claimed that these people were none other than tenants and for 35 years they farmed the land as a leaseholder.[71] The land was possessed by Hüseyin Efendi, Reşid, and Hasan Efendi. The reason for Melkon and Abraham's arrival to the capital was explained through fear since Abraham and Melkon believed their title deeds would be taken from them and their fear had come true.[72] When Abraham and Melkon would go to Muş they had to submit the certificates to the registry. In the end, the Marnik village people were in a place that they did not want. Now, they became intruders of the land and they had to stop their "intrusion". It is possible that as Abraham claimed Hüseyin Efendi was a powerful man to influence the decisions since the writ claimed that Abraham and Melkon said they did this job because of some people's incitements.[73]

Abraham and Melkon claimed that the land was first an empty land which they turned into a village with 40 households. This village was in their possession (*zabt-ı tasarruf*) therefore they had the certificates as mentioned above. As Article 109 of the Land Code expressed, the land that belongs to a Muslim would not be transferred to non-Muslims or vice versa.[74] The code also allowed inheriting the land to the sons of the landowners as well as the daughters. If there would be no inheritors then the land would be given to the state. However, the petitions never claimed the

[71] "35 sene mukaddem arazi-i mezkurede müsteciren sakin olarak ziraat ve hıraset etmiş olmaları maddesi olarak bu ise vahi olacağı gibi ol-suretle iddiaya kıyamlarının ba'z tahrikatından neş'et eylediğini kendileri dahi bi't-tav' ikrar etmiş oldukları..." BOA. *ŞD.* 2874-46,2.
[72] "Hristiyanlar mutasarrıfeyn-i mümileyhimin arazi-i mezkureyi tapuya rabt eylediklerini bi'l-istida müşarünileyh tarafından dahi bila-muhakeme ve tedkik koçanlarının … emr olunması üzerine ahali-i merkumeye verilmiş ise de muahharan fuzuli olduğu anlaşılıb mezkur ilm ü haberler istirdad olunmak üzere … celb olunduk da haksız … ve koçanların redd olunacağını hissetmeleri üzerine**"** BOA. *ŞD.* 2874-46,2. 17 Rebiülevvel 1290 (15 May 1873). This document was dated on 15 October 1873, however, almost one year ago this document appeared in Ayniyat defter and the date is 27 November 1872. BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 830, No: 751, p. 83.
[73] "kıyamlarının ba'z tahrikatından neş'et eylediğini…" BOA. *ŞD.* 2874-46,2.
[74] Orhan Çeker, *Arazî Kanunnâmesi*, (İstanbul: Ebru Yayınları, 1985), 62.

village was constructed with the approval of the state officers as article 103 explained. As mentioned above, Article 78 was a perfect example of this issue. The land users would be given title deeds if they approved, they would be using the land without approval from the officers. İsmail Pasha then gave these 25 title deeds to the village people as they were residing in the land for more than 30 years. However, Abraham and Melkon wrote that Hüseyin Efendi claimed it was his father's land inherited as a çiftlik and the village people were tenants. Since we see these claims from Abraham and Melkon's petitions and decision of the Şura-yı Devlet there is no evidence if this land was a çiftlik land. However, there is no evidence that the writ or documents accepted the land was a çiftlik land. The writ mentioned these people as the tenants, which Abraham and Melkon did not write anything about it. They always emphasized the "tasarruf" of the land as well as how loyal they are by emphasizing the tax payments. The writ of Şura-yı Devlet, however, wrote Hüseyin Efendi had tapu together with his uncle's sons and claimed the governor did not have a decision by the court.

Then the question of how influential Hüseyin Efendi comes to the mind. The yearbooks of Erzurum province showed the officers of the sub-provinces from 1870-1877. With the start of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877, the yearbook stopped, and eventually, Muş became a sub-province of Van province. However, during these 7 years until 1876, the officers of the different departments in the Muş sub-province were written in the yearbooks. Hüseyin Efendi was the mufti of the Muş sub-province, except for a brief change in the office in 1873. Hasan Hüsnü Efendi replaced him, but the next year Hüseyin Efendi became the mufti of Muş again.[75] It is possible that the local government froze his employment until this issue could be

[75] *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1290 (1873), p. 99.

resolved since the governor was already dismissed from the position. However, it is important to see the power relations of Hüseyin Efendi. It is not known when he became the mufti but the yearbooks give an impression that the continuity in the professions in the local councils. It explains why Hüseyin Efendi continued his behaviors towards the village people after the dismissal of the governor with the support of the local councils.[76] Even though we cannot determine who was the rightful owner of the land, the village people could have the title deeds since they claimed they were in that land for over 40 years.

Another instance about the land question was Kogan village in the Bulanıklar district. Christians wanted to create a new neighborhood in an empty place called Bozyar(?) which was 15 minutes away from their village before June 1875. These people claimed that they had title deed and been already cultivators of this village. However, the correspondences showed us this empty place was at the hand of an unknown waqf and there was no title deed entitled to them.[77] By referencing the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, it was claimed that this village can be constructed only if they would pay rent (*icare-i zemin*).[78] Therefore, it was suggested that a permit be

[76] "mümaileyh Hüseyin Efendi … mezkura hatırlı ve aza-yı meclis muavenet iltimas ederek ahali-i karyemiz fukarasını dahi birtakım taaddiyat ve tazyik ile … karyeden ihraç ve mahdumunu mahbus… böyle taraf-ı iltimasıyla karyemizi zabt ve esir etmeğe maadalet-i seniyye kail olamayacağı" BOA. *ŞD.* 2874-46. 4 Safer 1290 (3 April 1873).

[77] "Bozyar(?) tabir olunur mahallin kuyud-ı hakanisine zaferyab olunamadığı gibi mahall-i mezkur arazisiçin kimesne uhdesine tapu senedi verilmemiş…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1505-7, 4. 4 Safer 1293 (1 March 1876).

[78] "Arazi-i kanunname-i hümayunun 32. Maddesinde arazi-i emiriye üzeirnde bi'l-icab masrufi tarafından tesviye ile bina ihdas ve imali murad olunduğu halde memuru marifetiyle çiftlik ebniyesi ve değirmen ve ağıl ve dam ve anbar ve ahur ve samanlık mandıra gibi ebniye inşa olunabilib fakat mahallerine ve hasbe'l-mevki arazinin şeref ve itibarına göre öşre muadil senevi icare-i zemin takdir ve tahsis kılınıb eser-i bina olmayan ham arazi üzerine sükna ittihaz olunmak üzere müceddeden ebniye inşasıyla mahalle veyahut karye teşkili behemehal-i irade-i seniyye-i mahsusiye mütevakkıf olarak yalnız memurunun izni kafi olmayacağı mukayyid ve … ve karye-i mezkure ise kura-yı mevkufeden olub bu misillü vakf-ı arazinin dahi hükmü bu vechle bulunmuş olduğuna ve mahall-i mezkur pek karib bir mahalle hükmünde olduğu gibi tapulu arazi bulunduğuna binaen öşre muadil vakfı canibine icare-i zemin takdiriyle mahalle ittihazı halinde ahali-i merkume hüsn-i suretle iskan edecekleri ve bir mahzurda olmadığı beyanıyla ifa-yı muktezası" BOA. *ŞD.* 1505-7. 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1292 (29 June 1875).

given for construction before the season had passed. There was an order sent to Erzurum province and in this order, it was asked to investigate if these Christians were telling the truth about the title deed. If it was true then, a copy of their deed with answers to how many people were going to settle in this place, why they wanted to replace it, and what will happen to their old neighborhood would be sent to the province.[79] What happened next is unknown.

Like the Christians in Kogan village, Serkis who was working at the Italian Consulate as a butler (*sofracı*) at the time complained about the use of the land by his uncle in Koltuk village on 29 August 1875. He claimed that his father left some goods, houses, and land, and 18,000 kuruş debt. While Serkis and his brothers were paying the debt, his uncle Manok did not let them use the land. Serkis wanted his uncle to stop intervening in the land since he claimed that he held the tapu of the land, and to ensure it he asked the government for an order to be sent to Erzurum province.[80] An order was sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to investigate the issue and to take necessary action. The result is unknown.

When the notables found out a village was abandoned, they could own the land with an auction. To prevent this, sometimes people from neighboring villages or the priest would write petitions. This collective effort did not succeed in Gemig village. According to a testimonial signed by reputable people from Derek and Oran(?) villages who were inside of the village borders in December 1882, Gemig village in Muş was inhabited by the Armenians. However, these people had to flee away from their villages and settle in another place because of the oppression of the

[79] "Bozyar(?) arazisine tasarruflarını havi yedlerinde bulunması lazım gelen senedatın musaddak suretleri gönderilmeğle beraber oraya nakl-i hane etmek istemeleri ne esbaba mebni olduğunun ve bunlar kaç hane ve ne kadar nüfus olarak mesken-i kadimileri ne suretle terk edileceğinin…" BOA. *ŞD*. 1505-7, 2. 16 Rebiülahir 1293 (11 May 1876).
[80] BOA. *HR.MKT*. 893-13. 27 Receb 1292 (29 August 1875).

Hasnanlı and Cibranlı tribes. After a while, the village was sold to Abdurrahman Agha, the son of Resul Efendi, in an auction with a price of 5500 kuruş. The testimonial claimed that neither the people who fled away nor the people living in the villages around Gemig village knew this transfer. This was done by the father Resul Efendi[81] with the help of a member of the administrative council, Halid Agha. Halid Agha, like Hüseyin Efendi, was a member of the council in Muş. As the yearbooks of Erzurum wrote, he held his position until 1876 when his name was dispersed from the yearbooks.[82] The people who wrote this testimonial claimed that they were powerful men, so no one dared to complain about them and even if some people from Gemig village complained about these people, there was no answer.

There were more than 200 fields, houses, mills, and two churches in this village. Since people from Gemig village migrated to another place witnesses from other places took a step forward and testified for the possession of the village. Three years later, Gabriel who was a priest from Surp Garabed Monastery became the representative of the people from Gemig village. Gabriel claimed that since the establishment of the Bitlis province, these people were trying to get an answer but there was no solution on the behalf of the village people.[83] The churches according to Gabriel were transformed into the sheepfold. By using a religious discourse, Gabriel focused on the disrespect for the churches, and even though the sultan was the guarantor for the "safety of the religion and sect" people became miserable.[84]

[81] He was a member of Sipki tribe in Muş. Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 310.
[82] Yearbooks of Erzurum stopped at 1877 then continued in 1882. However, Muş sub-province was attached to Van province then to Bitlis province. Therefore, I do not have any knowledge whether he continued to be a member of local council or not. *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum,* 1293 (1876).
[83] The first governor appointed to the Bitlis province was in 1879. Kuneralp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali (1839-1922)*, 28.
[84] "kilise gibi emakin-i mukaddesenin hedmen … ve sefahat olunarak koyun ağılı haline ifrağ ve bunca idarat u kavanin ve nizamat-ı seniyye-i hazret-i padişahilerilyle te'min edilegelen selamet-i dîn

Therefore, Gabriel wanted the churches to be repaired.[85] After almost one year Gabriel sent this petition, the chief clerk (*Serkatip*) Süreyya Pasha ordered to investigate this issue on 17 September 1886. Süreyya Pasha wrote that if these claims were true then people were oppressed, and also since the British officers were talking about the reforms in Anatolia it was important to investigate the situation by sending an officer to the region.[86] Süreyya Pasha's concerns coincided with reform attempts by British officers even in 1886 when these attempts lost their importance in the British Empire's agenda.

The minister of the Interior, Münir Pasha, sent a correspondence to the grand vizier on 2 October 1886. According to this, the village was totally in ruins and was sold while it was escheated from Muslims. Armenians were not inhabitants of the village as the report said and the reason Gabriel wrote this petition was that he had a desire "he would purchase the village as the escheated bid with a claim that churches were in that village".[87]

Münir Pasha probably was referencing an order that was issued on 2 February 1862. According to this order, the priests of the monasteries in the Muş region wanted to become the owner of the land that the monasteries were using. The local government asked for what to do. The answer was to give the land either to the

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ve mezheb-i kaziyesi şu suretle duçar-ı sekene ve felaket olmasından …" BOA. *Y. PRK. AZJ.* 10-73. 23 Zilhicce 1302 (3 October 1885).

[85] BOA. *Y. PRK. AZJ.* 10-73.

[86] "Rivayet-i mezkure sahih ise ahali-i merkume hakikaten gadr-dide olmuş demek olacağına ve İngilizlerle Anadolu'ca ıslahat icrası sözünü ara sıra der-miyan ettikçe bunu ahval ve muamelatın vuku'ndan bahs etmekde olduklarında zikr olunan arzuhal ve mahzarda vuku'ndan şikayet olunan mevadın derece-i sıhhatinin suret-i mahsusada tahkikiyle hasıl olacak neticeye göre iktiza-yı halin ifası lazımeden…" BOA. *İ.DH.* 1002-79154. 18 Zilhicce 1303 (17 September 1886).

[87] "80 tarihinde İslamdan *mahlul olduğu* halde satılarak şimdileri hakikaten ma'mur olub hiçbir vakitte Ermenilerin sakin oldukları ma'lum olmadığı ve Caninli (Surp Garabed) manastırı rahabininden Kabriel nam kimesne pek eski zamandan kalma bir harabe eserini vaktiyle kilise olduğu iddiasıyla mahlulden satılan bedel ile karyeye malik olurum sevdasında" BOA. *Y. A. HUS.* 195-76. 3 Muharrem 304 (2 October 1886).

priests or another person with the title deed. However, the legislation department (*Daire-i Kavanin ve Nizamat*) disagreed with auctioning the land to other people, which would cause disorder around the monastery. Therefore, the decision was to give the lands to the priests with deeds if they possessed the land after they pay with a five percent fee (*harç*).[88] While it was decided 20 years ago, this possession would benefit Gabriel in order to be the possessor of the land. However, Gabriel wanted the churches to be repaired. Even though Münir Pasha claimed Gabriel wanted to become the possessor of the land, he does not explain or refer to the motives that the testimonies of the people of the neighboring villages around Gemig village. Münir Pasha also claimed that Gabriel went to courts in Muş and Van before this petition, but the decision was against Gabriel's petition.

Münir Pasha also claimed it was known why Gabriel blamed Kurds and tribes, and it was certain these claims were written by the Muş bishoprics, who were known for his mischief behaviors.[89] However, these claims are not explanatory because of the lack of details. Even for 20 years, the archives give us so many documents of attacks of Kurds on Armenians, which caused their migration. If Munir Pasha saw the sole reason for this petition as the Muş bishoprics, then why there was a testimonial from the neighboring villages. In the end, the grand vizier claimed that this investigation was closed so there was no need to send an officer to the region.[90] It seems that the investigation was closed immediately to show this petition was answered and the decision-makers would claim that there was no problem handing

[88] BOA. *MVL.* 624-64. 2 Şaban 1278 (2 February 1862).
[89] Münir Pasha differentiated the Kurds and the tribes in the correspondence. It is not known to whom he was referring to. "Daima Ekrad ve aşairin zülm ü i'tisaflarından şikayet eylemelerindeki hikmet nezd-i alide malum olub şu aralık karyelerimiz ve kiliselerimiz tahrib edilmişdir gibi bahs-dide şikayet kıyamları dahi ahval-i müfsedet-karanesi malum olan Muş murahhasasının men'-i tezviratından çıkmış şeyler olacağı" BOA. *Y. A. HUS.* 195-76. 3 Muharrem 1304 (2 January 1886).
[90]BOA. *Y. A. HUS.* 195-76. 15 Muharrem 1304 (14 October 1886).

over this disputed village since one concern was to conform to British Empire's reform attempts even though these attempts were not followed.

Gabriel, on the other hand, did not stop and sent another petition to the Ministry of Interior. The ministry sent an order to investigate this event for the second time on 22 February 1887. The answer to Gabriel's petition came almost after eight months and without any change, it was declared that Gabriel's complaint was groundless.[91] Gemig village was not the only land in the Muş region that was sold to Muslims even though Armenians requested it.

The state officials were making privileges in terms of auctioning the land. These officials' acts escalated violence since they were discriminating against the Armenians in the region. One of the acts the officials made a concession was land in the Kasor sub-district. An escheated land in the Kasor sub-district which was 2,675 acres[92] were sold in an auction for a price of 8,275 kuruş in 1890. Two to three kuruş was calculated for each acre and in this auction, the bidders were a few Armenian farmers as the governor of Bitlis wrote. The governor did not believe that the Armenians would use the land properly, so he suggested that if this land would be given to the Muslim immigrants and the land would bring more benefit if the price of the future production could be considered as the selling price of the land.[93] He rejected the claim that Armenians had been harvesting this land because of the farmers' inadequacy as one reason. The governor pursued that the grand vizierate prompted the idea of settling as many as immigrants in the Kasor sub-district in a

[91] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1458-34. 19 Muharrem 1305 (7 October 1887).
[92] Feridun Emecen wrote that 1 acre was equal to 919,302 square meter. Feridun Emecen, "Dönüm," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol.9 (İstanbul: 1994), 521.
[93] BOA. *İ.DH.* 1185-92756. 9 Şevval 307 (29 March 1890).

telegraph that was sent one year ago as a response to the situation of escheated and empty lands and Muslim immigrants, details are not stated in the document.[94]

As the governor continued, the real reason for this encouragement was to have an equilibrium of the Muslim and Armenian population since the Armenians constituted the majority of the total population in this place. This equilibrium would be done only if the immigrants would settle in these lands. However, they did not have enough money or could not give money for this land. The governor claimed that the settlers would compensate the cost of the land in the future since the products would cover it in two years.[95] The minister of Interior Münir Pasha reported to the grand vizierate that the land was not fertile as the two to three kuruş for each acre were cheap. The grand vizier, on the other hand, approved the settlement of the Muslim immigrants but excluded Circassian immigrants.[96] Then it should be asked; who were these immigrants? As will be seen in Chapter 3, there was a flow of immigrants after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 but the migration phase became a slow process in the region after the war. Since this event was 12 years later the war it is not possible to have immigrants staying as immigrant status for all these years. It is speculative but to discipline and prevent the attacks of moveable Kurds this might be seen as a chance to settle them so these "Muslim immigrants" could be Kurdish people. Or even though the local government agreed that Circassian

[94] "arazi-i haliye ve mahluleye muhacirin-i İslamiyenin celb ve iskanı istizanını havi makam-ı sami-i sadaret-uzmaya takdim olunan ariza-i kemteranemin irade-i cevabiyesi olmak üzere 17 Mart 305 (29 March 1889) tarihlü keşide buyurulan telgrafname-i ali-i nezaretpenahilerinin beyan olunan muhacirinden lüzumu kadarının bi't-teşvik nahiye-i mezkurede halî-i araziye nakl ve iskanı mukteza-yı irade-i aliyyeden bulunmağla…" BOA. *İ. DH.* 1185-92756.
[95] "Muhacirin-i İslamiyenin iskanından maksad aslı Muş cihetlerinde İslama nisbeten Ermeni ahalisi pek ziyade olduğundan oralarca İslam ile Hristiyan nüfusu arasında husul-i müvazenet için mümkün olabileceği ve arazi-i haliye ve mahlûlenin müsa'id bulunabileceği kadar muhacirin-i İslamiyenin celb ve iskanı hususundan ibaret bulunduğuna ve eğerçi bu iki nev' arazinin müzayedeye ihracile zuhur edecek taliblerin verecekleri bedel mukabilinde uhdelerine tehviz ifrağı hazine-i celilece daha istifayı mucib gibi görünüyor ise de bunların alacakları arazi kıymet-i hakikileriyle mütenasib bir bedel veremeyecekleri" BOA. *İ. DH.* 1185-92756.
[96] BOA. *İ. DH.* 1185-92756. 2 Zilkade 1307 (20 June 1890).

immigrants were not allowed they would settle in the land. “Muslim immigrants” would be then Circassians without referring to them. However, it is unknown who these immigrants were.

Almost one month after the Erzurum Incident in June 1890, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, the land in Kasor was given to Muslim immigrants by the consent of the Sultan, refraining from giving the land to Circassian immigrants. The reason even though it was strike-through was explained as not to discommode the Armenians.[97] It is interesting to see the time of the order since the rebellion took place very recently. Even though the Armenians still could not have the land the order was to prevent any disorder coming from Circassians if they would get the land. While “the incapability” of the Armenian farmers was emphasized and it was claimed that the land was not a fertile land which the immigrants could flee away from the land because of this situation.

It is significant to ask why a farmer would want unproductive land. Another point, in this case, is why the governor wanted to give the land to the immigrants free and claimed in two to three years it would multiply the cost of the land. If the land was infertile and the farmers wanted to cultivate it then it is possible that the land was already been cultivated by the farmers who wanted recognition of their usage. In that case, the government would allocate more money. However, the main aim was to settle in as many as the Muslim population in the region. Therefore, the governor followed the orders of the grand vizier for equilibrium and ignored the farmers’ requests.

[97] “…~~Ermeniler tarafından suda’ i dai i ahvale meydan verilmiş olmamak için~~ arazi-i merkumenin Çerkesden mâ’ada muhacirin-i İslamiye tahsisi…” BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1740-76. 21 Zilkade 307 (9 July 1890).

While this thesis's focus is not to cover the period after the Hamidian Regiments it is important to show glimpses of what happened after 1891.[98] During the late Hamidian Period, the land was still on demand by the Circassians, the Armenians who left their houses in the last period of the Hamidian Era felt safe to return to their house only after the restoration of the Constitution in 1908, which saw the Circassians already took their lands and houses. For instance, the deputy of Muş, Kegam Der Garabedyan wrote to the Ministry of the Interior in 1909 that 100 Armenian households left the Komis village in 1904 because of the events, and 15 Circassian households were settled in this village. When the Armenians came back to their houses, they saw the newcomers. Moreover, the Vartenis village experienced the same incident when the Circassians took over more than 2,100 acres and still wanted more than 720 acres.[99] Therefore, the Armenians wanted to take their land back from the Circassians after the calls for reform by the CUP.

2.4 Conclusion

I argued that Muş turned into a space of contention during 1865-1890. The main tension was between Armenian peasants against the local notables about the possession of the land. The Armenians claimed they were possessors of the land as they were holding the title deeds but the local notables, however, also presented their title deeds. However, in the end, the Armenians were regarded as the tenants by the state officials in most cases. Therefore, this contention showed itself between the tenants and the owners according to the state officials. The contention did not resolve

[98] For a detailed analysis of the land question during this period, see Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* and Mehmet Polatel, *Armenians and the Land Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1870-1914*.
[99] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 2851-31. 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1327 (14 June 1909).

in favor of the Armenians, the local notables and state officials favored themselves. As examined above, the higher-state officials were involved with the land disputes starting with the 1880s. There were orders for the investigation but the officials did not emphasize the problems but focused on the different aspects. The minister of the Interior blamed Armenian bishops for the role they played in the Gemig village incident. The reform attempts of the British Empire in Eastern Anatolia were discussed still in the capital and affected the behavior of the officials in 1890 since an empty land was given to the immigrants rather than Armenian farmers because the region needed a Muslim population for the balance of the population. Therefore, the contention was fostered by either government's support or the forceful behavior of the local notables. The state also approached the issue from a religious aspect in the 1880s so the land question was turned into an ethno-religious conflict in which the state officials had already an Islamic policy in their mind by refuting the claims of the Armenians in the Muş region. The next chapter will examine Chechen immigration to the Muş region which we saw an effect of this immigration on the land issue.

CHAPTER 3

SEARCH FOR A HOME: CHECHEN IMMIGRANTS IN MUŞ

In 1864 a group of Caucasians comprising many tribes but especially Chechens, Dagestanis, and Lezgis were preparing to come to the Ottoman Empire. This migratory movement was not the first and soon enough seen that was not the last one. The number of the Circassian population who migrated to the Ottoman Empire differed for scholars. For Alan Fisher, it was estimated between 700,000-900,000 people. [100] Saydam estimated the number of immigrants along with people who died in route. 1,000,000-1,200,000 people attempted to come to the empire and only 700,000 people succeeded it. [101] 4000 families[102], over 23,000 people along with their animals were part of this total number. They looked for a place to settle, and Muş was one choice. This chapter focuses on these people. First, I will look at the terms on migration and immigrants which unravel the minds of the scholars. Second, I examine the reasons for the immigration into Ottoman Empire and show the importance of Muhacirin Komisyonu. Finally, I will investigate the Chechen immigrants in the Muş region from 1865 to 1890. This chapter will show the relationship between loyalty and security in Chechen immigrants. I argue that

[100] Alan W. Fisher, "Emigration of Muslims from the Russian Empire in the Years After the Crimean War," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 35, no. 3 (1987): 364.
[101] Abdullah Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri, (1856-1876)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 91.
[102] Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky gave the list of the Chechen immigrants' departure from Russian Empire to Ottoman Empire. The list is compromised the numbers of families, male and female population as well as carts, horses, and cattle. The list can be regarded the least number of immigrants documented by the Russian Empire but the actual numbers can be more than the numbers given by the list. The 4990 families consisted of 11,833 male and 11,224 female. The number of carts was 6,919 and number of horses was 4,531 as well as 11,420 cattle. For more information see, Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, "Imperial Refuge: Resettlement of Muslims from Russia in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1914" (PhD Diss., Stanford University, 2018), 516–17.

because of scarce land, the immigrants first resorted to violence then became part of the security forces in Eastern Anatolia since the temporary solutions like employing Kurdish people did not solve the lack of security in the region permanently.

3.1 The migration and immigrants

Migrations 1864 and migrations after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 have been investigated by many scholars. The focus of the studies was to determine the reasons and how people were affected by it. This effect on people led the scholars to call the migrations and immigrants various names. Başak Kale used "forced migration" or "the expulsion of populations" interchangeably to define it. Alan Fisher, on the other hand, used the term "exodus". [103] Scholars like Abdullah Saydam and Nedim İpek called this migration "a genocide". According to İpek, who investigated the immigration from the Balkans, the idea was to create a nationalist Bulgarian empire in which a second nation/community would not have any chance of living.[104] Saydam also examined the correspondences between the Russian officers and claimed this was a needed action to destroy Circassians and as a result, the migrants considered "death was better than staying in the Russian empire."[105] Dana Sherry did not agree with the process of the change in the Caucasus happened with national urges and a destruction action but the migrations were rather a colonization and therefore a civilization project where the people in the lower hierarchy could not

[103] Alan W. Fisher, "Emigration of Muslims from the Russian Empire in the Years After the Crimean War," Başak Kale, "Transforming an Empire: The Ottoman Empire's Immigration and Settlement Policies in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 2 (2014): 253, https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2013.870894.
[104] Nedim İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri*: *(1877-1890)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), 13–14.
[105] Abdullah Saydam, "Soykırımdan Kaçış: Cebel-İ Elsineden Memâlik-İ Mahrûsaya," in Hacısalihoğlu, *1864 Kafkas Tehciri*, 107.

directly rule themselves and needed supervision.[106] If the Russians could not control them, then they simply let them go.

The immigrants were called "muhacir" in the Ottoman archives. Ella Fratantuono emphasized the use of the term "refugee" as a legal status that did not incapacitate the whole situation with migrants.[107] Muhacir was a term used by the state as a tactic to include each of the immigrants coming to the empire.[108] Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky argues the term muhacir would fit into the experiences of the Circassians.[109] Talking about experiences, it is important to note that what was happening in Russian Empire and why there were many immigrants.

3.1.1 Before the Migration

Arsen Avagyan divided the migration process of Circassians from the Russian Empire into three; starting from 1816 when the Russian Empire did not start a total war against the Circassians but a period of arresting "dangerous" people and continued until 1846. The next decade was the time when the Russian army started its slow conquest of the Circassian region, 1856-1864 was the total war period in which the assimilation and banishment of local inhabitants and settlement of Russian people. [110] Hakan Kırımlı claimed that the deportation was discussed before in

[106] Dana Sherry, "Social Alchemy on the Black Sea Coast, 1860–65," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 29.
[107] Ella Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers: Historical Analysis as a Method in Evaluating Migration Categories," *Middle East Journal of Refugee Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017):113.
[108] Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers," 99.
[109] By analyzing the term Hamed-Troyansky argued that the terms denoted a belonging to the immigrants. Since the term came from hijr which the Prophet Muhammed migrated from Mecca to Medina, it had a religious connotation but with the establishment of the Muhacirin-i İslamiye Komisyonu in 1893. It emphasized Abdulhamid's Islamist policy, however, Hamed-Troyansky sees it as evolution of the term as Pro-Ottoman. Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 5-12.
[110] Arsen Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler*: *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısından XX. Yüzyılın İlk Çeyreğine* (İstanbul: Belge, 2004), 21-22.

Russian Empire and was not a novelty. For instance, the Crimean Tatars who had sympathy for the Ottoman and allied forces were ordered to be deported from Perekop to Sevastopol during the Crimean War but its implementation would cause using the Russian army that would weaken the war stance. Using Cossack units to attack Crimean Tatars would help the army without using them necessarily. Therefore, the Tatars were put into jails, or their properties were plundered. The Tatars did not have a choice to leave the lands.[111]

As Kırımlı showed, the settlement of these immigrants to Rumelia was a success which would encourage the Sublime Porte to want more people, since the immigrants were settled in Köstence by constructing a new village that was destroyed. Kırımlı also argued the positive effect of immigration by looking at the demographic perspective. A balance would be reached between Muslim and Christian populations by settling them in Köstence.[112]

After a defeat in Crimean War, the new tsar Alexander II ordered to conquer Circassian lands. The borders were controlled in case of gun smuggling, then with a total war against Shamil in 1859, Shamil was captured.[113] His capture was the beginning of the end for Circassians, who did not want to live under the Russian Empire. From his capture to 1865, a major migration flow came to the Ottoman Empire on a large scale. On the Ottoman Empire side, the primary focus of the studies was the demographic majority. The migration of Muslims both to the Balkans and Anatolia made the Muslims a bit majority in the Empire and with the defeat of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, most of the Muslim population in Anatolia

[111] Hakan Kırımlı, "Emigrations from the Crimea to the Ottoman Empire During the Crimean War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (2008): 754–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200802315778.
[112] Kırımlı, "Emigrations from the Crimea to the Ottoman Empire," 767-68.
[113] Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas göçleri, (1856-1876)*, 60–61.

was more increased and became a Muslim empire.[114] The emphasis on security in the Ottoman Empire was another subject to be considered. As Fratantuono wrote, the settlement of the immigrants had two objectives: protecting borders and civilizing mission on tribal populations.[115] As will be mentioned below, the Ottoman Empire chose to settle the Chechens around the borders to which the Russian Empire did not agree. Nonetheless, the aim was to consolidate the state's power in the region.

As Saydam argued, Ottoman authorities welcomed the immigrants on behalf of humanity since many immigrants from different religious backgrounds were already accepted by the Ottoman Empire.[116] Ahmet Öztürk in his thesis, acknowledging the security issues, claimed that one of the reasons was nationalism since there were many non-Muslims in the region. [117] The problem with this explanation is that the number of nationalists in the 1860s was very limited. Even in 1863, the interactions between the newspaper columnist Srvandztiants and Armenian peasants showed the main issue was not nationalism but the implementation of justice promised by the Tanzimat. For instance, one Armenian told Srvandztiants "Will reading a newspaper free me from the Kurds, will it decrease my taxes, will it take me to the kingdom, will it take me to heaven...?"[118]

To keep up with the immigrants' settlement, Ottoman Empire first used Balkans to settle them, then changed the direction of the migration through Anatolia.

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[114] Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler*, 30–32.
[115] Ella Fratantuono, "Producing Ottomans: Internal Colonization and Social Engineering in Ottoman Immigrant Settlement," *Journal of Genocide Research* 21, no. 1 (2019): 5.
[116] Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas göçleri, (1856-1876)*, 76–78.
[117] Ahmet Öztürk, "Kafkasya'dan Muş yöresine Göçler ve İskan (1856-1905)," (M.A. Thesis, Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi, 2017), 89.
[118] *Artzvik Taronoy*, no. 12 (15 September 1863): 47. Quoted in Dzovinar Derderian, "Shaping Subjectivities and Contesting Power Through the Image of Kurds, 1860s. In Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian & Ali Sipahi (Eds.), *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics*, (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 2016), 99.

To oversee the settlement, the empire established an institution named “Muhacirin Komisyonu”.

3.1.2 The Muhacirin Komisyonu

One of the most important institutions for immigrants was the Muhacirin Komisyonu. For scholars, it was an agent to transform the immigrants into Ottoman citizens. [119] For the first time, the state took an active role in the migration process by establishing an official institution. Before 1865 the influx of the refugees was coming mainly from the Balkans to Ottoman Empire, like from Dobruja and Danube in 1856-1859 when the numbers were not so many and the administration of the refugees was managed better than the later influx. Georgi Chochiev and Bekir Koç emphasized the poverty of Eastern Anatolia for not settling the immigrants and directing them to the Rumelia.[120] The settlement process in Rumelia did not mean the transition of these people's new lifestyle was smooth. While cholera and plague were a dangerous component of the immigrants during the migration, the later economic problems were also important so the Sublime Porte decided to establish Muhacirin Komisyonu.[121] Therefore, on 1 January 1860, the Muhacirin Komisyonu was established after İstanbul, and people in it could not handle the immigration process without an organization. The members of this commission were Hafız Pasha of Circassian origin and ex-governor of Trabzon province, Remzi Bey, who was a

[119] David C. Cuthell Jr., “The Muhacirin Komisyonu: An Agent in the Transformation of Ottoman Anatolia 1860-1866” (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 2005), 20.
[120] Georgi Chochiev and Bekir Koç, “Migrants from the North Caucasus in Eastern Anatolia: Some Notes on Their Settlement and Adaptation (Second Half of the 19th Century-Beginning of 20th Century,” *Journal of Asian History* 40, no. 1 (2006): 83.
[121] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu*, 99-101.

member of the Commerce Department, Refik, Gürcü İsmail, and Hacı Pir Efendi in the first place and were changed constantly.[122]

In 1861, the migration route was changed with the order of Hafız Pasha to Anatolia. The migration places were also changed from western parts of the Russian Empire to the Caucasus therefore, the new route was Anatolia since the immigrants came with ships to Trabzon and Samsun ports. Balkans was a place where the nationalist movements created problems for Ottoman authorities to control the region. An influx of immigrants would deepen the problem for both communities.[123] This change of route became the center of the discussions since the population was mixed in Eastern Anatolia.

According to David Cuthell Jr, one of the reasons for using the Eastern borderland of the empire was to prevent any problem in İstanbul, where the first part of the immigrants stayed in the big mosques and shelters. This stay would become a problem since there was a chance to spread disease through the capital and a possibility of Western observation that would show a "painful reminder of Ottoman weakness" to call itself a Muslim empire.[124] However, as will be seen from below, the important issue was the immigrants' wishes. They would leave the land if they did not have any connection to their tribes. Therefore, seeing the Muhacirin Komisyonu as an entity that desired to change the demography of the empire is to give much meaning to the migration decisions. For instance, some Chechens disagreed to leave the Muş region in order to go to the Rasulayn and stayed there, even though Russian officials did not want any immigrants around the borders.

[122] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu,* 103-105.
[123] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu,* 113-119.
[124] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu,* 168-169.

The routes of immigrants were shaped by the closeness of the place to the Ottoman Empire. While many preferred to come by sea, like the case of Chechen immigrants, people were also coming by foot. However, transportation was a bit problem in terms of collaboration with Russian authorities who just wanted to get rid of immigrants on the shores. Saydam estimated the number of passengers in Spring 1864 almost as 400,000 people. The ships and small boats did not have enough capacity to carry them all, so diseases and deaths were a part of these rescue missions. [125] First, the immigrants would get kışlaks and yaylaks for the summer and winter seasons, like the settlements in Uzunyayla. Second, so-called empty lands would be given to the immigrants like the case of Ayazmend. Third, existed immigrant places were another choice and last, the immigrants were settled in local inhabitants' lands.[126]

The empire informed its subjects about the settlement process through the newspaper. *Takvim-i Vekayi* during the Circassian immigration informed people about the donations as money or clothes made by Muslims and non-Muslims. Margarita Dobreva's investigation resulted in that the newspaper did not have any intention in explaining conflicts between Russian and Circassians. As expected from the official newspaper of the empire, the details presented as only the settlement process that was explained with examples.[127] For instance, Takvim-i Vekayi, the first official newspaper in the Ottoman Empire, gave an example of the construction of the houses for the Chechens in Erzurum province in 1867. According to the news, in 1866, there were over 10,000 houses constructed in multiple provinces and sub-

[125] Abdullah Saydam, *Kırım Ve Kafkas Göçleri, (1856-1876*), 87-89.
[126] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu,* 177–78. For more information about Ayazmend see, Terzibaşoğlu, *Landlords, Refugees, and Nomads* for more information about Uzunyayla, see Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, especially Chapter III.
[127] Margarita Dobreva, "Çerkes Tehcirinin Medyaya Yankısı: Takvim-İ Vekayi Gazetesi," *Yeni Türkiye* 74 (2015): 781.

provinces which provided "wealth and security … for the immigrants in everywhere."[128] However, as will be mentioned below, this was not the case in the Muş region.

3.2 The migrations into the Muş region

Even before the Chechens migrated to the Muş region, it was a settlement place. For instance, the Muş region witnessed the immigration flow in 1861. A tribe called Yediüçgün(?) which comprised over 700 households set foot in Samsun port. However, the tribe could not fit into Samsun since it was claimed there was no place for them to farm. Two people from the tribe, Hacı Mehmed and Hacı Niyazi came to the capital and asked to be settled in Erzurum province. Therefore, an order was sent to the governor of Erzurum to help the tribe for their settlement in Muş.[129] This request from the immigrants illustrated two things, first, the immigrants could change their location if they would ask for land and second, the commission knew empty lands at least in theory.

This tribe was not the only tribe that requested to settle in Muş. Chochiev explained the settlement of immigrants as an entity rather than smaller groups with a fear of losing their customs in a completely new and alien place. The efforts to regroup can be seen much better with this fear.[130] In October 1861, Dagestani

[128] *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 852, p. 2. 21 Haziran 1283 (4 July 1867).
[129] I did not see any document related to this tribe. "… ziraat ve harasetlerine kafi oralarda vasi' bir mahal bulunmadığı misillü kendilerine müstakil haneler dahi gösterilmediğinden bahs ile Erzurum sancağına nakl ü izamları hususu kabile-i merkumeden olub Dersaadet'e gelmiş olan Hacı Mehmed ve Hacı Niyazi nam kimesneler tarafından …" BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 221-10. 22 Zilkade 1277 (1 June 1861).
[130] Georgi Chochiev, "XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kuzey Kafkas Göçmenlerinin Toplumsal Uyarlanmasına Dair Bazı Görüşler (Göçmenlerin Otoriteye Başvuruları)," *Kebikeç* 23 (2007): 409.

immigrants who first came to Biga claimed that the climate of Biga was not suitable for them. Therefore, they wanted to go to either Kars or Muş since there were already their fellow countrymen in these sub-provinces and the climate was resembling their hometown. The grand vizierate ordered the mutasarrıf of Biga to investigate if there were death or sickness because of the climate. If the immigrants were right, then their request would be accepted.[131] After the investigation, the council of Biga claimed that even though there were death and sickness, the primary reason for these immigrants was to be closer to their fellow countrymen.[132] Therefore, their request was declined because their aim was "malice thoughts".[133] The local inhabitants, on the other hand, did not appreciate the settlement of the immigrants.

The administrative council of Erzurum asked the grand vizierate to stop the immigration flow in 1861. The members of the council claimed inhabitants helped them with everything they had. They were having problems providing the lumber because of the construction of new houses for the immigrants. In return, the immigrants attacked these inhabitants and did not settle. Therefore, the members of the council wanted the grand vizierate to stop a flow to the province and settle them in Trabzon since they were gathering there.[134] One consequence of this request can be seen from a memorandum from the grand vizierate to Muhacirin Komisyonu in 1863. According to this memorandum which contained a summary of a telegraph of

[131] "Biga'da iskan olunan Dağıstan muhacirleri oranın ab ve havasıyla imtizaç edemediği ekseri telef ve kalanlar dahi na-mizac olmakda olduklarından ve ekser hemşehrileri Erzurum eyaleti dahilinde kain ve bilad-ı kadimelerinin havasına … olan Kars ve Muş sancaklarında tavattun olunmuş olduklarından…" BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM*. 237-74. 16 Rebiülahir 1278 (21 October 1861).
[132] "…adem-i imtizac-ı ab ve havadan olmayıb mahzen Erzurum ve Muş sancaklarında olan hemşireleri yanlarına gidib iskan etmek daiyesinde ibaret bulunmuş …" BOA. *A.} MKT. UM*. 550-10. 24 Ramazan 1278 (25 March 1862).
[133] "… ab ve havasıyla adem-i imtizacdan naşi olmayıb baz efkar-ı fasideden ibaret bulunduğu anlaşılmış" BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 558-6. 24 Şevval 1278 (24 April 1862).
[134] "elzem olan haneler için muktezi olan kerestenin tedariğinde dahi hasbe'l-mevki' müşkilat olduğundan" BOA. *A.} MKT. NZD.* 385-59. 18 Cemaziyelevvel 1278 (21 November 1861).

the governor of Erzurum, 222 households of immigrants that had been sent to Muş were sent to Pasinler and the rest to Sivas.[135] However, these examples were not the only examples. As mentioned above, 4000 households began their migration. The Chechens[136] as the documents referred to the Caucasian tribes that were coming to the Ottoman Empire as a whole were waiting to be settled in the empire in September 1864.

The officials' first choices for these people were Erzurum, Kars, Muş, and Van. However, the winter was close, therefore the primary aim for the officials was to start the settlement process and the provincial governments were notified.[137] Russian Empire did not send Chechen immigrants without a supervisor. While the immigrants were going to enter the Ottoman Empire through Kars, the Russian officers came with them. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire hired a clerk who knew French and Russian with a payment of 600 kuruş as well as his traveling expenses.[138]

The Russian officials did not happy with the idea of the immigrants being settled at the borders of the Russian Empire. The settlement officer Nusret Pasha wrote that the Russian officers did not agree with the arranged places for the immigrants since the destination was agreed on the desert part of the Diyarbekir province namely in Rasulayn and Muş and Van were not in the desert part. Since the Russians' claims were against the settlement decision of the Ottoman state, Nusret

[135] BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 277-101. 9 Rebiülahir 1280 (23 September 1863).
[136] For a list of tribes settled in Ottoman Empire and the list of Circassian villages in Muş see, Ahmet Öztürk, "Kafkasya'dan Muş yöresine göçler ve iskan (1856-1905)." He focused on the Chechens and how they caused problems. However, in terms of Armenians who complained about the immigrants he claimed that the reaction of Armenians to the immigrants was political. Armenians, he wrote, was complaining about being majority in the region, however, as can be seen from the first phases of the immigration even the council members whose majority was Muslim members than the Armenians disagreed with the state that the immigrants should not be settled in the region. Öztürk, *Kafkasya'dan Muş Yöresine Göçler*, 110.
[137] BOA. *MVL***.** 685-67. 5 Rebiülahir 1281(7 September 1864).
[138] From Nusret Pasha to the grand vizier. BOA. *İ.MVL.* 532-23885. 21 zilhicce 1281 (17 May 1865).

Pasha wanted to warn the government because the settlement process was in the Ottoman territories and a foreign country should not interfere with this process.[139]

Saydam claimed the refusal of Chechen immigration to Van, Kars, and Erzurum by Russian authorities could be explained by opposition towards the Ottoman Empire in "international conjuncture" as well as decreasing the number of experienced people with the war against future Armenian movements. Saydam argued that the British ambassador in Istanbul supported the immigrants to be settled in Eastern Anatolia to secure the newly built Trabzon-Erzurum Road against the Russian claims.[140] However, as can be seen from these times, there were not any specific events in 1865 that could turn the European Powers against the Ottoman Empire in terms of immigrant settlement. Sarah Rosser-Owen emphasized the British interests in trade routes as Saydam argued but she claimed that this immigration process had a positive effect on the British Empire because of the "humanitarian element" but it would within 10 years as the Berlin Treaty showed.[141] Therefore, it should be asked which conjuncture Saydam was talking about and which years he

[139] "Muhâcirin-i vâridinin hududa karib mahallerde iskan olunmayub Kürdistan ve Harput ve Van ve Muş ve Sivas ve Si'irt taraflarında tavattun ve ivaları ta'limat- seniyye ahkamından bulunmuş olduğu halde muhâcirini teslime memur olan rusya komiseri hududa karib mahallerde adem-i iskanlarıyla beraber birtakım sözler ile muhacirinin Muş ve Van taraflarında dahi iskanlarına razı olmamakda ve komiser-i mümaileyh yalnız teslim-i muhacirine memur iken bu tarafda ikametle mevad-ı iskaniyeye dahi karışmakda bulunması … Rusya sefâreti canibinden mersul komiser-i mümaileyhin yerinde bulunan ta'limatda Diyarbekirin öte tarafında ya'ni çöl tarafına iskân olunacakları ta'biri sarahaten bulunduğu iddi'asıyla Van ve Muş sancakları ise men-cihetü'l-coğrafya Diyarbekirden biri de olmasıyla oralara iskân olunmasını protesto etmekde ve çakerleri dahi Çeçen muhâcirlerinin Muş ve Van sancaklarında Diyarbekir semtine müsâdif mahallerde iskân olunmuş ta'limat-ı seniyye ahkâmından olmasıyla muhall-i mezkurenin devleteyn hududuna pek çok ba'id olduğu i'tibarına mebni dahil mukavele ve ta'limat bulunmuş idüğü beyanıyla ita-yı cevab olunarak ikna' kılınmış ise de ber-vech muharrer mevad-ı iskaniyeye müdahale eyledikleri suretde devlet-i aliyyenin iskân-ı muhacirince ittihaz buyurmuş olduğu politikaya su'-i tesirâtı olacağından … devlet-i aliyyenin dahil mülkünde icra etmekde olduğu mevad-ı iskâniyeye ecnebiyye veya hususi Rusya devletinin müdahale eylememesi hususunun beyan-ı alice iktizasına hususunda ve herhalde emr-i ferman hazret-i men lehül emrindir." BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 341-27. 10 August 1865.

[140] Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas göçleri, (1856-1876)*, 101.

[141] Sarah A. S. Isla Rosser-Owen, The First 'Circassian Exodus' to the Ottoman Empire (1858-1867), and the Ottoman Response, Based on Accounts of Contemporary British Observers," (M.A. Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2007), 47.

emphasized. Moreover, predicting an Armenian movement 20 years before the establishment of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation is a very unrealistic approach to explain it. The only acceptable reason why Russia declined this settlement would be that they would not want to fight against these immigrants who resisted for a long time to Russian Empire. Like an empire that fought three times against the Ottoman Empire starting from the beginning of the century, a new war was never out of question. Therefore, the Russian Empire's refusal on settling the immigrants surrounding the borders is feasible. However, it is interesting to see the proposal of the British ambassador, since the key problem in ten years would be Circassians in which the British Empire forced Ottoman Empire to reform the eastern provinces.

Even though the Russian Empire rejected the immigrants to be settled in eastern provinces, the immigrants settled in these regions. The Ottoman Empire was still sending many of them to Rasulayn district, but the immigrants did not want to leave these places. The governor of Erzurum, Mehmed Emin Pasha, informed the grand vizierate about the settlement issue. He started this correspondence with his journey from Trabzon to Erzurum since he was appointed as the governor, and in the report, we can see the patterns of settlement issues. He saw the city having problems in terms of municipal organization and "civilization" and possible reform.[142] An interesting part about his account is that after an attack on a caravan by Kurds he asked 10 zaptiyes in Erzurum and only three of them came. The reason fewer officers came was that others went to help the settlement of Chechen migrants. The

[142] "Trabzon'dan hareketle hudud-ı vilayetden Erzurum'a gelinceye kadar esna-yı rahde mesmu' ve meşhudum olan ahval-i isfa(?) iştimal ile nıfsı Erzurum'un esvak ve pazarında ve ekrad-ı ahali ve sekenenin hal ü heyet ve müşaverilerinde nezaret-i(?) belediyeye ve şiar-ı medine(?) bi'l-külliye mübayin görünen fenalıklar hayret ve eski(?) müeddi olmasıyla beraber her nasılsa sevabıkda ıslahat-ı mümküneye dahi asla itina olunamamış olduğu…" BOA. *A.} MKT.MHM.* 344-94, 4. 26 September 1865.

relationship between the loose control of the region and immigrants was emphasized throughout his memorandum. For instance, the zaptiyes were helping the immigrants by asking wagons from the local inhabitants. five zaptiyes were helping the immigrants for each immigrant convoy. The "bandits" took advantage of this loose control and many robbery incidents arose.[143]

The governor also gave an approximate number of immigrants in Erzurum, Muş, and Hasankale. There were 8,000 immigrants in Erzurum and 15,000 people were gathered in Muş and Hasankale. When the immigrants were set to go to Diyarbekir and Harput, they refused to leave and came up with many excuses. Eventually, "the excuses made the local people suspicious, and they wanted and asked for to get rid of the immigrants immediately."[144] He wrote that there were many petitions about the fights between immigrants and local people and Kurds in general, so if the precautions were not taken place the issue would grow. Therefore, he immediately wanted to send Nusret Pasha[145] to Muş, but this move was not fruitful because of the expenses and the governor asked for 40 zaptiyes for Erzincan

[143] "kuvve-i zabıta-i mahalliyeye bi't-tab' za'af tarı olmuş olduğu ve bu hal şurada burada sirkat vuku'na ve taaddiyat-ı eşkıyaya fırsat vermiş olduğu…" BOA. A.} MKT.MHM. 344-94,4.
[144] "canlarına minnet bilmiş olduklarından karar-ı ahiri adem-i kabul ile ahir taraflara gitmemek efkarına sapub dürlü ta'allül ve tas'yibat iraesine kalkışdıkları ve bu hal dahi ahali-i kadimenin zihinlerini tahdiş ederek muhacirin-i merkumenin buralardan bir kadem akdem te'bidi istirham ve istidasıyla sızlanmağa başladıkları anlaşıldığından ve arz u beyana hacet olmadığı üzere şayet bu muhacirlere kış basmaksızın mahall-i ivalarına(?) sevk ve izam olunamayıb da buralarda kalmak lazım gelir ise Maazallah hal-i ez-her cihet müşekkel ve bi'l-ahere hatr u vehameti muceb…" BOA. *A.} MKT.MHM.* 344-94,4.
[145] According to the governor, Nusret Pasha did complain all the time about either not having enough travel expenses or not going after the Kurds. Eventually, the governor sent some money for the expenses. He admitted that he could not stand him and his wishes in the letter. "bu Nusret Paşa'nın bir çaresi bulunmadığı takdirde tahammül edemeyeceğim ve kendisinin şu ahval-i nabercası belki müşarünileyh İsmail Paşa hazretlerinin dahi caki' olacak arz u ifadesinden ma'lum-ı ali-i hidiv-i azimileri buyurulacağı ve Erzurum'un ise ıslahat-ı mütenevvi'aya …ihtiyacı semaen müsellem bulunduğu…" BOA. *A.} MKT.MHM.* 344-94,4.

and there were none according to the response. Eventually, he asked for help from Colonel Mustafa who was already in the region "to discipline" Kurds.[146]

As mentioned above, the immigrants came with their animals and also brought their weapons with them. However, it was a problem for the region and it was given orders to collect the immigrants' weapons. From the "Çevirme" village to Muş, an army was sent which were comprised of 300 cavalries and one cannon. The army was taking the immigrants' weapons at each stop where the immigrants were located. However, the immigrants were not willing to give their weapons. For instance, in one of the clashes between the army and immigrants, one man died, and many were wounded. The Karabulak tribe, which comprised 700 households, became a significant problem for the army, that's why Ali Kemali Pasha needed one battalion of infantry, three squadrons of cavalry, and 500 Kurdish "equestrians" at the head of the colonel Mustafa Bey. Since the immigrants' guns were taken away, the need for protection arose.[147] Therefore, a patrol around the immigrants was constructed to protect them and their animals. The telegraph of the governor shows us an interesting account concerning the discourse on Kurds. The governor divided the Kurds into two categories; those who fought alongside the Ottomans and the brigands who were attacking the local people. These brigands, according to the governor, had the possibility to attack the local people, so the order was to protect them against these brigands.[148] Interestingly, the Ministry of Interior called this take

[146] "ahir dürlü çaresi düşünüldük de eğerçi Muş tarafı için ol-havali Ekradının terbiyesi memuriyetiyle mukaddemce bir tabur asakir-i şahane ile ol-havalide bulunan miralay Mustafa Beğin bir göz karaldısı olmak üzere birkaç bölük ile nıfsı Muş'a gelmesi muvaffak-ı hal göründüğünden" BOA. *A.} MKT.MHM.* 344-94,4.
[147] "bir tabur piyade ve 3 bölük süvari ve 500 Kürt atlısı ile iki toplar dahi Miralay Mustafa Bey refakatiyle" BOA. *İ. DH.* 543-37764. 17 Cemaziyelahir 1282 (7 November 1865).
[148] BOA. *İ. DH.* 543-37764.

away of the guns with ease and the "measure of intimidation".[149] As mentioned above, the zaptiyes could not protect the region since many of them were helping the immigrants. By demonstrating a "show" the local government tried to secure it by threatening the immigrants. In a place where the state was still building its authority, the measures were quick and not permanent. This selective interference of the government showed itself during this event because it was becoming an unsolvable problem.

The immigrants' situation during their dispatch to the districts was not good, as we see from the governor's letter. Immigrants were so poor that they did not have money to shoe the horses. The pasha was given orders to do the shoeing process.[150] While being said, the governor also wrote that the poor immigrants did not return the carriages that were collected from the local inhabitants. The inhabitants, therefore, complained about the issue since the time was to farm the land.[151]

Hamed-Troyansky claimed the banditry in Circassians started because of a failure of providing land and prosperity. Then they started banditry.[152] Indeed, the problems with settling, or more precisely, not having a coherent process, turned them

[149] "Reviş-i iş'are nazaran bu babda ittihaz olunan tedabir-i tahvifiye ve teminiye ile muhacirin-i merkumenin eslihaları bi's-suhule alınarak mahall-i iskanilerine sevki ve ıslahat-ı mukteziyenin istikmâli şu günlerde reside-i hüsn-i hitam olmak üzere bulunmuş… muhacirin-i merkumenin mahall-i iskanlarına sevki ve ta'addiyatlarından canları yanmış olan ahali-i kadimenin ve eşkıya-yı ekradın melhuz olan tasallutlarından muhafazası emr … itina olunarak her taraflı tedâbire teşebbüs olunmuş ve bunun dahi 5-10 gün içinde hüsn-i tesviyeleriyle Erzurum'a mu'avedet olunması" BOA. *İ. DH.* 543-37764.

[150] "hayvanat-ı mezkurenin füruht olunması ve bununla beraber muhacirinin kendi malları olan esblerinin nalları pek fenalaşdığından ashabının çoğu fukaradan bulundukları cihetle mücerred sevk ü izamlarını teshiliyle medar olmak üzere bir cemiyle olarak bunların hayvanlarının dahi canib-i miriden nallandırılması…" BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 344-94,4.

[151] "muhacirin-i merkume ise gerek selef-i çakeri devletlü İsmail Paşa hazretleri zamanında ve gerek zaman-ı acizanemde defaatle köylerden öküz ve araba celbiyle sürat-i azimetleri teklif olunmuş iken taallülat-ı vahiye ile harekete kıyam etmeyib ve giden kafileler dahi ahalinin araba ve hayvanatını iade etmeyerek bayağı zabt eylemiş oldukları tevatüren rivayet olunmakda ve şu aralık mevsim-i hasad olmak cihetiyle ahali-i kura ve zira' taifesinin hizmetleri meydanda kalarak sızlanılmakda bulundukları…" BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 344-94.

[152] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 304.

into bandits. However, carrying guns was a problem for the local inhabitants since they faced some of them before 1861. Chechen immigrants, on the one hand, were trying to settle into their new houses and, on the other hand, they were making problems for both the local people and also for Armenians who came to visit the Surp Garabed Monastery. Although the details are unknown about these attacks, it is known that these Chechen immigrants were living close to the monastery until the spring of 1866. To prevent any attack on local people or visitors, an order was sent to Erzurum province to ban the settlement of the Chechen immigrants without knowing their intentions or their actions.[153] This attack on the monastery was not the only attack. Like in the Muş region, they killed a bishop at Madnavank church in Ahlat and some attacked the town.[154]

The local government, after the first months following the settlement, recruited the immigrants like Mikail to the police stations. Mikail was wounded from his right leg with a bullet after a fight. Therefore, he was given 80 kuruş as a salary.[155] Mikail was not the only immigrant stationed in the Muş sub-province. In one clash between the Hasenan tribe and zaptiye, Halef b. Faris and Afüvv(?) b. Faris, killed captain Reşid Bey in Bulanık around 1868-1869. The reason for the clash was to bring the brothers Halef and Afüvv to the government place. Reşid Bey along with the sergeant Fettah Bey, and Mustafa from Morea, and İbrahim from Dagestan, went to the village to put them into custody. In the end, the brothers were

[153] "…ol-bahara kadar müsaferet suretiyle orada ikameleri umur-ı zaruriyeden olan Çeçen muhacirlerinin netice-i hal ve hareketleri anlaşılmadıkça ve mevaki'-i iskaniyelerine sevk-i vakıa olunmadıkça ba'd-ez-in muhacir kabulüne mesağ verilmemesi muvaffak-ı maslahat…" BOA. *MVL.* 1051-11. 2 Receb 1282 (21 November 1865).
[154] Troyansky found this document in Tbilisi which showed the Russian Empire investigated the situation in this period. A similar document is in the Ottoman archives however the summary and the details do not match. See, BOA. *MVL.* 1051-11. Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 401.
[155] BOA. *MVL.* 1051-20. 14 Şaban 1282 (2 January 1866).

sentenced to spend 15 years in Erzurum as a penal servitude.[156] It is not known the criteria for the employment of the immigrants however, even in the first years of their permanent settlement in the Ottoman Empire, these people found jobs to deal "with the troublemakers", like in this case, Kurds.

Like the state affected the society, the Circassians wanted to be a part of the army even though they were exempt from the conscription for 25 years, which was reduced to 10 years.[157] Interestingly, the state asked for both soldiers and people for securing their homelands so in a way admitted that the state could not help the people in a case of problems with the volunteer regulation. Mehmet Beşikçi emphasized the state's word of choice in terms of voluntary or compulsory service. While the immigrants were exempt from the conscription, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 was called jihad so the Muslim people had to take part in the war.[158] Even though I could not find any petition the immigrants in the Muş region sent regarding conscription, Georgi Chochiev, by looking at the petitions the immigrants sent, wrote they were enthusiastic about conscription since the military could provide benefits that they could not have if they were peasants. Therefore, they were the "warriors of the Sultan" for their new land.[159] However, Beşikçi claimed the conscription of Circassians into the Ottoman army was a bargaining issue in which it could provide benefits to them and was not "an absolute loyalty."[160] Zaptiye institution was another institution Circassians applied and found jobs. Hamed-Troyansky argued that a kind of failure of distribution of the land to the immigrants led immigrants to work as

[156] BOA. İ. DA. 8-159. 16 Muharrem 1287 (14 April 1870).
[157] Beşikçi wrote that it was 25 years for the immigrants who came right after the Crimean Wars but it was changed to 10 years. Mehmet Beşikçi, "Başıbozuk savaşçıdan 'Makbul' tebaaya: 1877-1878 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunda Çerkez Muhacirler," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, *23*, (2015), 94.
[158] Beşikçi, "Başıbozuk savaşçıdan 'Makbul' tebaaya," 106.
[159] Chochiev, "XIX. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda," 414.
[160] Beşikçi, "Başıbozuk savaşçıdan 'Makbul' tebaaya," 87.

zaptiyes and soldiers as well as created problems with the local communities if the land was given to the muhacirs.[161] Using immigrants as a security force was seen as an envisioned proposal of the state since the conflicts between local inhabitants and immigrants lasted from the start of their arrival to the twentieth century.[162]

Hamed-Troyansky explained the issue of security forces as a form of "divide and rule" policy and claimed that this policy was used to check the other inhabitants by "hiring minority communities."[163] I claim to look at the Kurdish forces to understand the use of the immigrants in terms of the security issue. The immigrants had already been exempted from conscription. On the other hand, Kurds have already been in use for the state like the incident in Çevirme village and Muş. There was "kır serdarı" in the village. The kır serdarı was employed by the state in Western Anatolia in 1806 as a protection measure during the War of Russo-Ottoman 1806-1812. Throughout the nineteenth century, the institution was applied in most of Anatolia as a temporary solution. The time limit for them changed according to the help the local government needed. The duration changed but there were cases the kır serdarı was used by the government from 3 months to 10 months. They were hired temporarily and had to be cavalry and mobile.[164] Therefore, the problem with the security was apparent since the temporality of the jobs did not secure Kurdish people the money also there were risks of dying while following "the bandits". However, there were also risks of Kurdish people not doing their jobs by following the bandits.

It is understandable to think why the immigrants applied for the security forces. If the immigrants could manage their living conditions barely, a chance to

[161] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 55.
[162] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 266-267.
[163] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 307.
[164] Murat Gökhan Dalyan, *Bir Osmanlı İç Güvenlik Teşkilatı: Kır Serdarlığı- Osmanlı Geçici Köy Koruculuk Sistemi*, (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2016), 35-38.

make their livings would be an opportunity for them. In terms of the local government, the temporary security would not bear a success. Therefore, the collaboration between the immigrants and the government on security issues was a way for the state to consolidate its power.

Chechens, specifically, were not the only tribes to set to be settled in the Muş region. 155 nomad households, over 700 people, from the Kahaber tribe who were living in Hemşin in Lazistan sub-province were set to settle in Hasanova land in the Muş region in 1871 without explaining the real reason for migration to Muş. The plan was for the tribe to come from Kars and the soldiers were assigned to prevent any attack coming from the immigrants. However, the representative of these households, the imam Mehmed Efendi, wanted to settle in Batum by giving up their nomadic lifestyle, which was accepted by the Trabzon province, and the settlement decision was withdrawn.[165]

Daghestani immigrants were also in the Muş region for the settlement. The government wrote in 1873 that the representative of immigrants, Hacı Mehmed, by complaining about not being able to settle in the territories with the 60 households, wanted to be settled in Hacıbey and Zirek villages immediately because the native people in these villages were not over 8-10 households and had enormous lands.[166] However, after three years passed, the request was not completed by the government. Therefore, the settlement process was transferred to the zaptiye institution in 1876.[167] In August 1876, again another Daghestani immigrant group who were comprised of

[165] "Aşiret-i merkumenin tavattun ve iskanları Trabzon vilayetince mukarrer olmasına ve Hasanova'ya Kars'dan hicret eden 155 hane muhacirinin iskanı kararlaştırılarak ekserisi sevk olunmadığı beyan kılınmasına nazaran aşiretin Hasanova'da iskanlarına dair sebkat eden işarın bi't-tab hükmü kalmayıb…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1503-55. 22 Cemaziyelevvel 1288 (9 August 1871).
[166] BOA. *BEO.AYN.d.* 831, No: 4283,p. 287. 16 December 1873.
[167] BOA. *BEO.AYN.d.* 832, No: 5059,p. 85. 23 August 1876.

eight households were staying in the Anh(?) village temporarily. However, both the representative of this group, Mehmed Ali, and the government wanted to settle this group immediately. The more temporary their stay was, the more the expenses became. The problem with the temporary stay was that they could not find a place to farm if they were farmers. Therefore, both the treasury and the immigrants wanted to solve this problem quickly.[168]

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 started on 24 April 1877, when Russians attacked both from Rumelia and Eastern Anatolia. Russians' objection to settling these immigrants on the borderlands was proved right when the Ottoman Empire recruited soldiers from tribes and Caucasian immigrants in Çarsancak and Muş just before the war. According to a document dated 1 April 1877, 30 battalions of infantry and five regiments of cavalry were recruited and it was decided to be given 30 drachmae(?) of bread and barley to cavalries' animals in each day they served.[169] Beşikçi estimated the Circassian volunteers in every step of the army in Eastern Anatolia as over 50,000 people.[170] Because of the defeat in the war, the immigrants came to the Ottoman Empire, so the state gave exemptions to them. The immigrants who came after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 were exempted from income tax (temettu') for two years, tithe tax for three years, the military exemption for 6 or 10 years after the date of their settlement, sheep tax was not specified but after the immigrants started to earn their livings, the taxes would be collected from

[168] BOA. *BEO.AYN.d.* 832, No: 135, p. 80. 6 August 1876.
[169] The army could not give any dishes to the soldiers they were on the roads or in the district centers and the duration of this bread and barley was limited to 5-10 days. "…asakir-i mezkureye kaza merkezlerinde ve yollarda bulundukları müddetçe evani-i nuhasi ve levazım-ı saire tedarik etmek ve suret-i mazbuta ve matlubede tayin vermek mümkün olamadığından bu müddet için asakir-i redifenin celb ü cem'i esnada icra olunan muamelata tevfikan asakir-i muaveneye dahi yalnız nan ve hayvanlarına arpa itası umur-ı zaruriyeden ve bir de 5-10 güne mahsus idüğü bedihiyatdan olduğundan…" BOA. *İ.DH.* 774-60859. 17 Rebiülevvel 1294 (1 April 1877).
[170] Beşikçi, "Başıbozuk savaşçıdan 'Makbul' tebaaya," 103.

them according to immigrant's settlement whether they came before the war or not.[171]

Chechens who were settled in various places maintained the connection with each other after the war. The Bitlis governor Arif notified the ministry of Interior about the Chechens who were settled in Rasulayn in Haleb and started to come to the Varto district in 1883. These 49 households of Chechens and Lezgis come to Tepeköy and other villages in Varto; some came three-four years ago and some seven-eight years ago, and in these villages, they settled themselves. However, this process and its aftermath were not a simple transition. These newly settled immigrants, along with the old-settled immigrants, started to cause problems. For instance, people from these two groups killed three men and were arrested, but while zaptiyes with captured criminals were on their way to Muş, these groups killed two zaptiyes and freed the criminals. These types of activities in a place settled with immigrants, the governor wrote, influenced the immigrants who settled in the first place during the migration flow badly and it was decided that these newly settled immigrants go back to Rasulayn. Since the Rasulayn was the prescribed place for the Caucasian immigrants, these newly settled immigrants settled themselves with no government order. The governor, therefore, wanted these people to send back otherwise they were capable of harming people.[172]

The Varto district was not the only place that Caucasian immigrants became a problem. In the Bulanık district, these immigrants were settled in the villages but according to the Armenian Patriarchate, they were harming the Armenians by destroying the lands, pasturelands, robbing the animals. The local people complained

[171] İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk göçleri*, 220–23.
[172] BOA. *ŞD.* 1875-23. 5 Muharrem 1301 (6 November 1883).

to the local authorities, but it is apparent that authorities did not solve this problem and the local people wrote to the Armenian Patriarchate. Therefore, the patriarchate wanted the government to stop these immigrants and their oppression.[173] The government sent a memorandum to the Bitlis province to investigate the claims of the patriarchate and apply justice.[174]

As mentioned above, these two Chechen immigrant groups living in various places were coming to the Muş region. Even in 1888, 15 households of immigrants from Rasulayn came to Muş and asked to be settled in this region. The reason for their re-settlement was shown due to its harsh weather. We do not see the aftermath of their petitions, but it is interesting to see the Ottoman authorities changed in the status of the immigrants. It was 22 years ago that the first settlements in Rasulayn started so they turned from "old immigrants" to "the native population" in these years.[175] The perception of the immigrants in the Ottoman Empire, in this case, was to embrace them as soon as possible to make them an Ottoman subject.

One of the interesting events that the Chechens and inhabitants of the Muş region interacted was an investigation process that lasted four months from 20 June to 18 October in 1888. Şeyh Mehmed and his three merchant friends, Derviş Mehmed, Musa, and Mehmed Ali were attacked by one of the Kurdish bandits Foti and his 11 companions in Hınıs. Only Şeyh Mehmed who pretended to be dead was wounded while the other three merchants were killed. After the Chechens learned this incident, they immediately searched for the perpetrators and captured six Kurdish people. Interestingly, the Chechens were not a part of the zaptiye but they

[173] BOA. *DH.MKT.* 1345-73. 10 Zilhicce 1301 (1 November 1884).
[174] BOA. *DH.MKT.* 1345-95. 24 Zilhicce 1301 (15 November 1884).
[175] "…bunların ahali-i kadime hükmüne girmiş(?) atik-i muhacirinden bulunmaları cihetle…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1566-45. 16 Rebiülevvel 306 (20 November 1888).

were people living in Akpınar village in Muş. Ömer b. Hasan, Ali b. Abdi, Sofi b. Seyran, Mehmed Reşid b. Faris, Haydo b. Evso, Ali b. Hasan were arrested around the Murat River and taken to Akpınar village in Varto to the Şeyh Mehmed's side to identify as perpetrators.[176]

After one night of the identification process, the Chechens gave them to Selim Agha who was the leader of a gendarmerie battalion. The arrest and identification process were not painless, as the interrogees explained. Şeyh Mehmed in this identification process resembled Ali b. Abdi as one of the perpetrators. Therefore, to be certain that Ali was one of them, the Chechens made him strip in which Ali did not mention in his interrogation. Even though not a person talked about how the Chechens were able to capture them, both sides had their weapons on themselves. After the interrogation phase paused, these 6 people were put into jail for one month but eventually, they were released and the interrogation report was not accepted. However, it is important to see the clashes between local people as Kurds and as Chechens did not resort to the local government but they wanted to catch the perpetrators. The result showed us that these six people were not the perpetrators but then it should be asked what if they were the perpetrators? How could this issue be solved?

The ministry of Interior interfered and sent an order to Bitlis province on 30 November 1890. According to this order, a police station, a barn, and a hayloft were to be constructed for 10 cavalries of zaptiyes' stay in Akpınar village. The total expenditure including an inspection for a place was 7700 kuruş, and it was ordered this expenditure to be included in the budget of R. 1306 (1890-1891). The identities

[176] BOA. *ZB.* 703-28, 2-5.

of the zaptiyes would not be known in the case of a possible Circassian zaptiye but this incident in 1888 must have been considered as an example. Therefore, this incident and construction for security measures transformed a village's surroundings. Even though 10 zaptiyes cannot be considered as adequate measures, their representation of the state is more important than the quantity of the zaptiyes. Therefore, placing zaptiyes in 1890 in a Chechen village is a sign of the state to protect the region before the Hamidian Regiments.

On the other hand, to go back to the interrogation, it is significant to display the word choices. The interrogators could not decide which term to refer to the Chechens. The dead merchants were referred to as "the Circassians" at the beginning, then the attribution of these people changed into "Lezgis" who were among immigrants in 1864. As the interrogations proceeded the merchants were referred to as "Chechens".[177] The confusion on Circassians is clearly seen from one document. It can be argued that the interrogators in four months became acquainted with the tribes and their names since the Circassians became an umbrella term for the tribes.

3.3 What happened during the migration period?

Each side in this period was affected differently. For instance, many Chechen immigrants were returning to the Russian Empire by claiming that they never left Russian citizenship because they did not want to become an Ottoman subject in 1865. There were talks to take them back to the Russian Empire. Some of the

[177] "...üç Çerkezin katl,", "Lezgilerin adamlarını öldürdüğü halde," "bu Çeçenlerin katl olunduklarında…" BOA. *ZB.* 703-28, p. 1,4, 20.

immigrants who compromised over 2,500 people argued "they would die or change their religion" not to return to the Ottoman Empire in Arpaçay River. The river was a border between two empires and a place to enter the Russian Empire. The Ottoman army, to prevent any problem in the border, fired cannonballs at them and the immigrants left the region.[178] Moreover, the lands in Russian Empire were filled with different ethnicities like Armenian and Georgian immigrants. Sherry showed that this replacement was not a successful transition since these people either left the land in the first years or became robbers or bandits which was not the result that the civilization project needed.[179]

As seen from scholars, the outcome was seen through the advantages the immigrants provided. For instance, David Cuthell Jr. investigated the role of the immigrants in the Ottoman Empire since they helped economically and became a part of a security force, which turned them into a "loyal Muslim population".[180] He argued that the identity of the immigrants changed with the help of nationalist discourse that Ottoman bureaucracy used and transformed non-Ottoman Muslim identities into the Turkish Muslim community.[181] Like Cuthell Jr., İpek saw the result of the influx of immigration as a success for the later period since the immigrants helped the improvement of agriculture as well as the increased number of soldiers in the Ottoman Army. The immigrants' lifestyle in Anatolia with the Turkish inhabitants, as İpek called, became the backbone of the national Turkish State during its foundation and the Independence War.[182] This nationalist discourse was then

[178] Hamed-Troyansky found plans of the settlement plans in the archives for these returnees designed by Russian Empire but it was never implemented after the cannonballs. Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 401–5.
[179] Sherry, "Social Alchemy on the Black Sea Coast, 1860–65," 29.
[180] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu,* 4.
[181] Cuthell Jr., *The Muhacirin Komisyonu,* 16-17.
[182] İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk göçleri*, 238–39.

combined with the loyalty of the immigrants to the empire. The loyalty was created through first land and second jobs. The land, as mentioned in Chapter 2, was not generally empty as the government hoped or acknowledged. Therefore, what created loyalty resulted in a fight between inhabitants and immigrants even with the first years of the settlement. While their guns were taken away as a precaution, the result was to plunder the villages sometimes. As mentioned above, the settlement of immigrants in Eastern Anatolia to stabilize the region led to also instability.

Chochiev and Koç wrote about three advantages of the settled immigrants in Eastern Anatolia; they helped to increase the agricultural productivity in empty lands, clashes with nomads, and demographic equilibrium. [183] Even though they are partially right about these advantages, the land was at the heart of all these issues. How the number of the empty land was calculated was not shown. Was it like Eleni Hatun and her olive garden or was it like the empty land in Kasor village where the state interfered to stop the Armenians to use the land? However, one thing is clear: the deliberate choice in the late 1880s of having an equilibrium showed itself in each discourse via the officers in the capital and the local region. They claimed the problems caused by Circassians that resulted in putting their names in Article 61 in the Berlin Treaty slowed and "ceased" in the 1880s and 1890s. They explained this thorough Circassians becoming peasants with time. However, this was not the case. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Kegam Der Garabedyan gave a list of lands seized by Circassians in 1909. The time was also the rise of Kurdish bandits like Musa Bey therefore, the attention of the European Powers would shift to the people who caused the problems the most.[184] Chochiev and Koç claimed that there was a balanced

[183] Chochiev and Koç, "Migrants from the North Caucasus in Eastern Anatolia," 103.
[184] Chochiev and Koç, "Migrants from the North Caucasus in Eastern Anatolia," 100.

relationship between local inhabitants and immigrants in the Muş and Bitlis region without explaining in detail. However, the examples they gave showed the balanced relationship was to protect "state given *Lebensraum*".[185] Then the Akpınar village is an example of this balanced relationship since they were armed and could detain people for one day and had a village that the inhabitants were mostly Circassians.

The negative outcomes of migration can be separated into three: debt, the immigration process, and slavery. The debt of the Ottoman Empire increased with expenditures for immigrants. During 1878-1914 the expenditure was 215 million kuruş closer to the total debt taken from the European Powers.[186] Second, Saydam criticized the behavior of the Ottoman Empire in terms of not reading the situation after the Crimean War. The Russian Empire's attention to Shamil and his resistance resulted in migration. As rightfully, Saydam believed the Ottoman authorities did not have enough conversations within themselves about the Russian Empire's attack on the Caucasus. For instance, the state abolished Muhacirin Komisyonu in 1865 when thought was the immigration process ended but the settlements of Chechens were already in effect. However, the members of the commission distributed and re-distributed with the immigration waves after 1865 and in 1878 it became a permanent directorate.[187] Therefore, Saydam believed the source of the problems with the local inhabitants and immigrants was this unpreparedness.[188] The events in Murat River and Akpınar village supported Saydam's claim about the unpreparedness. The state could not help every person so the immigrants could use everything they had even the banditry was taken into account. Third, slavery was an

[185] Chochiev and Koç, "Migrants from the North Caucasus in Eastern Anatolia," 96.
[186] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 487.
[187] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 62.
[188] Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri, (1856-1876),* 186.

important asset of the immigrants in which the Ottoman Empire tried to destroy this kind of relationship in the empire (even though the name changed but the practice continued) so most of the petitions focused on this relationship and problems regarding the status of the "slaves".[189] I did not encounter any petition regarding slavery in the Muş region. Hamed-Troyansky analyzed the state's and immigrants' role in the settlement and how the main narrative of placing the Muslim population to balance the Christians in which it was looked after 1878 War did not explore the economic conditions of the immigrants. They lost their primary wealth with slavery and land, even had conflicts with different immigrants.[190]

3.4 Conclusion

The immigrants changed the Muş region even in the first phases of the immigration. The Chechens coming from Russian Empire tried to settle in the border zones which the Russian Empire did not agree with it. The Ottoman Empire designated a new place for them to stay in Rasulayn. Some went and some of them stayed. This stay whether the state officials approved it or not happened. The Circassians, even before the Chechens, were already settling in Muş since they resembled Muş to their homeland. However, the settlement process was not smooth. The interactions between the immigrants and the army, as well as Kurdish tribes, emphasized the importance of security measures. The studies on immigration to Anatolia claimed to have loyal subjects against non-Muslims. However, as the examples showed us, the main issue in the settlement process was the immigrants' wishes. Their aim and resistance to the state officials changed the region as well. The immigrants that

[189] Chochiev, "XIX. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda," 417.
[190] Hamed-Troyansky, *Imperial Refuge*, 110.

carried guns became zaptiyes and members of the army. They replaced the Kurds, who were temporary recruitments in the region against the Kurdish tribes. However, since the job was not permanent, it showed its inefficiency for the region. Then the immigrants entered in a time that the land was a scarce source. Therefore, land issue was linked to the security measures. There were villages comprised of Chechens who were armed and lived in the region became a part of the landed peasants in the 1880s. The examples of the Kasor village and other villages that were seized by Chechens, which was examined in Chapter 2, became a part of the problem. The land issue developed itself into a security issue in which the Circassians became “the loyal subjects” and were given the lands that Armenians held.

CHAPTER 4

THE REFORM IN THE MUŞ REGION

With the help of the local government in the Muş region in the period between 1865-1890, the provincial government began reforming the region in order to control it better as well as to address the problems of the local inhabitants. While changing the administration of the Muş sub-province, these reforms also attempted to protect the subjects of the Empire from attacks from the Kurdish tribes. However, due to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 and pressures from Europe to reform in the region, the direction of the reforms shifted to favoring Kurdish tribes against the Armenians. In the period of 1865-1878, the purpose of the state was to improve the lifestyle of the Armenians by protecting them against the attacks; however, there was an escalation of violence in the next period between 1878-1890, thus changing the state officials' attitude towards the reforms and their implications. What separated the first period from the period of 1878-1890 was the efforts to provide the basic rights of the Tanzimat, including safety, property, and equality; for instance, the case of the Muş reforms in 1869 was an example of these efforts, as well as the participation of the Armenians in the local government and reform movements. In the period between 1878-1890, the officials put an emphasis on the Kurdish people who were Muslim. Thinking of the Hamidian regiments, which were established in 1891, the emphasis on the religion of Kurds in the 1880s exposed the attitude of the officials and how they contributed to the establishment of the regiments. This chapter focuses on the reform movements. In the first section, I will look at the application of the Tanzimat reforms in the different parts of the empire, and then, I will be focusing

specifically on the Muş region. The rest of the chapter will deal with the reforms split into two periods. In the first period, I will investigate the reform attempts of 1865-1878, and in the second period, I will focus on the escalation of violence and how the state officials chose to favor the Kurds in which the reforms the first period was done against them.

4.1 The Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire and the Muş region

The proclamation of the Tanzimat Edict brought changes all over the empire. While these changes, or reforms more precisely, began immediately in some parts of the empire, the provinces in Eastern Anatolia experienced the reforms later. The reforms began in 1844-1845 in the Kurdistan and Erzurum provinces with two aims: having more authority in these regions and collecting more taxes. The actions of the state officials were centered on these two objectives, even though the practices differed from one another. For instance, Yonca Köksal focuses on the Tanzimat reforms in Edirne and Ankara, which were closer to the center of the empire and showed that even though the reform practices were similar, the results were different in terms of how they affected central bureaucracy, local infrastructure, and taxation.[191] Köksal explains the difference within the dense connections between the elites; the more the elites were engaged with other actors, the more the state had to interact with both these local elites. In Edirne, the elites were connected with many other actors irrespective of their religion; these connections made the reforms smoother, as local elites assisted the state in their implementation. Since the different groups and those

[191] Yonca Köksal, "Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization: A Comparison of the Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Ankara and Edirne (1839-1878)," (PhD Diss. Columbia University, 2002), 20.

they were connected to had to win the support of the state, the reforms were encouraged by the local elites. However, the elites in Ankara connected with other actors on the basis of religion, so the ability of the state to implement the reforms was made more difficult than the reform attempts in Edirne.[192] The collaboration of the local elites was necessary in Edirne because the more local elites there were, the more a clash of interest for the state seats could have seen. To prevent this clash, the local elites aligned themselves with other elites to have an advantageous position. To achieve this aim, they also had to collaborate with the state and spend money, unlike Ankara. The number of local elites in Ankara was not as abundant as Edirne so there were fewer clashes and less spending money for the elites. However, not every elite or governor would refuse to collaborate with the state.

As Maurus Reinkowski shows in the cases of Montenegro and Lebanon, the reforms in the Tanzimat period differentiated according to the characteristics of the region and its governability. The ability of the local notables and their roles, as many scholars have investigated, led to different stories and results. Exiles, tax deductions, sending the army to the "rebel" regions, forgiving practices, and most importantly negotiating with the notables were tactics employed by the state to deal with the elites. The examples in the Eastern Anatolian provinces were not different, as these practices were also employed.[193]

[192] "I do not limit the definition of dense connections to civic associations. There were civic associations in the form of trade organizations, literary guilds, aid societies and agricultural cooperatives, especially in the province of Edirne. However, what I mean by dense connections does not only include associational life, but it also embraces patronage relations among local elite and economic transactions among trading partners." Köksal, *Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization*, 20-23.
[193] Maurus Reinkowski, *Düzenin Şeyleri, Tanzimat'ın Kelimeleri*: *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Reform Politikasının Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırması*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017), 256-261.

By focusing on Kürkçübaşı Agop who lived in Erzurum and was a prominent member of the local notables, Tolga Cora shows the tools the central government used to diffuse the power of the ayans in the Tanzimat period. The state destroyed the old system in which non-Muslims were financially sponsoring the ayans and could not move independently without them and created a "new imperial order," as Cora calls it, in which non-Muslim traders became an important player in the regional politics as well as state administration. Agop's rise in Erzurum showed how the state and lesser notables negotiated with each other in times of turmoil like the Crimean War. He provisioned the army during the war by becoming a contractor. In a way, the state, as Cora shows, tried to control the region with people who agreed to have lesser power during the Tanzimat period in Erzurum.[194] As mentioned above, the goal was to create a tax resource, and the yurtluk-ocaklık lands in Eastern Anatolia were an invaluable source for this. Therefore, the Tanzimat reforms were also focused on the confiscation of these types of lands, which was a regional practice. For instance, Özok-Gündoğan investigated the yurtluk-ocaklık and hükümet lands and their abolishment in the Tanzimat period. While the main aim was to control the land, taxation and getting rid of the hereditary rulers were important points that the state officials discussed. One measure to address these two issues was creating larger administrative districts; by doing this, the state aimed to pay less for the müdirs like the case of Çıldır who had 13 yurtluk-ocaklık sub-provinces. Another example is the case of the Bayezid sub-provinces and the Muş sub-province, in which the beys in the sub-provinces were be granted money from the lands that they

[194] Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Transforming Erzurum/Karin: The Social and Economic History of a Multi-ethnic Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century," (PhD Diss. The University of Chicago, 2016), 157-162.

claimed that to be theirs.[195] Eventually, the strategy of confiscating land was applied in many places in order to gain more control in Eastern Anatolia.

The Tanzimat in Hazro included a population survey as well as the establishment of gendarmerie and administrative councils after 1845. Like the Muş sub-province, the reforms in Diyarbekir focused more on improving people's lives and focused on the importance of education and judicial reforms. However, as Bayraktar argues, these reforms would not have been able to be done without the cooperation of the local notables even though the Kurdish emirates in 1847 were destroyed.[196] The old beys of the yurtluk-ocaklıks were some of the important candidates for the new role the Tanzimat offered. Like the case of Rüstem Agha, a relative of the treasurer of Kurdistan, and Said Bey, a member of the local dynasty, the government rejected their appointments to Hazro and Hani as müdirs in 1857. However, five years later, Sadullah Bey, the son of Hüseyin Bey, became the müdir of Lice but later was dismissed. He was asked to become the müdir of Lice once again after the governor of Kurdistan wrote about the importance of the local notables for the sake of Tanzimat reforms.[197] As the focus of this chapter is on the Muş region, the next section will look at the Tanzimat period in the region.

Even before the Tanzimat Edict in 1839, centralization efforts were considered by the central government. In 1834, there was an order to establish a reserve army (*redif*) in Muş. To compensate for the expenditures of this army, an inquiry was sent to the governor of Diyarbekir, Reşid Mehmed Pasha, and he responded to it. It was claimed that the center did not get a penny from Muş because

[195] Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, "Ruling the Periphery, Governing the Land*:* The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in Kurdistan, 1840-70," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *34*(1), (2014): 163-164.
[196] Bayraktar, *Yurtluk-Ocaklıks*, 178–80.
[197] Bayraktar, *Yurtluk-Ocaklıks*, 187.

the local governors did not permit to send money since they believed they were the owners of the land. So, Emin Pasha, a member of the Alaaddinpaşazades, became mütesellim again after agreeing to register the land for taxation and establish three squads to control the region.[198]

The Tanzimat reforms started in Muş after they were introduced in the Erzurum province in 1844. The first objective was to collect taxes. Before the Tanzimat, there was no income survey; therefore, the tax was collected according to the pre-Tanzimat records. According to Duman Koç, the tax was 2,200 purses before the Tanzimat, which was reduced to 1,500 purses with the introduction of the Tanzimat in the sub-province. Four years later, it increased to 2,000 purses, which was less than the previous tax before the Tanzimat. Secondly, to get to know the province of Erzurum better, the state asked for a group of representatives from the region consisting of two Muslims and two Armenians. Thirdly, a new kaimakam was sent to the Muş region that did not have any links with the ruling household, which was done with the aim of diminishing the power of this family. The inhabitants of the region used the terminology of the Tanzimat to express their problems as Duman Koç shows in the case of İbrahim Efendi who was punished for the abuse of the tax farming in 1844.[199] The central government made the yurtluk-ocaklık owners district governors and gave them salaries as a precaution for the potential problems these old beys would create.[200] Fourthly, the settlement of the tribes became an important issue. Therefore, their settlement in the Muş region had two aims: turning the tribespeople into farmers or traders in order to be able to tax them, and stopping the

[198] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 97-100.
[199] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 129-135.
[200] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 137.

attacks of the tribes against the inhabitants.[201] While the Hasenanlı tribe settled in the region, the Sıpki tribe that was given the land for the settlement in 1856 later settled in Bayezid.[202] Therefore, the success of the settlement dependent on the tribes, the region suffered when the seminomadic tribes came and used the region as a place solely to live in summer rather than to settle in, as will be shown.

The first decade of the reforms focused on controlling the issues of the region's taxation and settlement of the tribes. After making progress on these aims, the emphasis shifted to the people and their troubling lives. The period between 1865-1890 can be divided into two periods according to the responses of the state officials to the events, attacks, and requests of the people.

4.2 Reform attempts in the period between 1865-1878

Before and after the Tanzimat, the Muş region was subjected to the attacks of Kurdish tribes either coming from the Diyarbekir province or living in the region. The state officials in this period insisted on more progress on protecting the lives of the inhabitants by stopping the threats. The tensions, however, continued. For instance, the Vardapet Mıgırdiç Khrimyan wrote that the population decreased drastically from 80,000 to 25,000 because of Kürkçübaşı Ohannes and Manas as well as the Kurdish bandits in 1865.[203] If these numbers are closer to the real numbers of

[201] Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 267.
[202] One of the reasons for change was that the Hasenan tribe was already living in the decided lands so the villages were divided between two tribes. However, this brought ineffective results. Duman Koç, *Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire*, 274.
[203] BOA. *MVL.* 462-55. 16 Şaban 1281 (14 January 1865). I could not find original petition written by Mıgirdiç Khrimyan.

migrants, then it is shown why the Muş region was selected as a place to migrate and settle.

Complaints about Kürkçübaşı came into prominence after the Crimean War. As an army provisioner, he purchased grain from local inhabitants and did not pay them back. Cora provides details on this by showing that Kürkçübaşı's debt and actions led to the increase in the price of tobacco and tithe. Mıgirdic Khrimyan claimed that the tax farmers led people to migrate on various occasions.[204] According to another document, people from the Muş region sued Kürkçübaşı because of his oppression. These people decided to write a petition as a community, which the local government did not want. The real reason is not known, it is significant to see these people assembled their complaints and did not want to select a representative. Even though the local government wanted them to have a representative, the complainants refused this offer and as the document reveals, the officials claimed people "used brigandage language" (*lisan-ı şekavet*). To enforce the measures, the local government wanted four squads of soldiers.[205]

In another petition, it is seen that more than 10,000 people from Muş migrated even to the capital. Halil and Hüdaverdi who signed the petitions as "the representatives of the aforementioned people" claimed that sarrafs were giving money with interest rates of more than forty of fifty percent in this region for more than 10 years. Those who could not afford to pay their debts were either selling everything they had or leaving the region because these sarrafs were pushing the local government to have the debtors imprisoned. Halil and Hüdaverdi wanted to

[204] Cora, *Transforming Erzurum/Karin*, 202-205. For more information about Kürkçübaşı, see Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Providing Services and Bargaining Over Loyalty: The Crimean War and the Armenian Elite in the Ottoman Empire," *Archiv Orientální*, 87-3 (2019): 421-444.
[205] BOA. *MVL.* 705-62. 16 Ramazan 1281 (12 February 1865).

have a commission to be sure that the sarrafs do not break the law anymore.[206] Thus, the conditions of the local inhabitants were worsening with all these problems, which eventually pushed people to migrate from their houses in the region. In turn, this would go on to affect the amount of the taxes collected in the region, as well as the agricultural surplus.

While the local people were having problems with one another, outsiders were also creating trouble for the local inhabitants. For instance, the Bekiranlı tribe was coming to Muş every summer to use its pastures, but the local people suffered from their arrival each year. Therefore, to stop this, the local government sent soldiers to remove this tribe from Muş, leading the tribe to assure they will no longer come to Muş. However, the tribe members did not keep their promises and started attacking the region, and Mehmed Reşid, the governor of Erzurum, wrote to the governor of Kurdistan to stop them.[207] It is apparent that the local administration in Kurdistan did not succeed in stopping them even though the soldiers clashed with the tribes, as the soldiers' actions did not produce any result. Therefore, the new governor of Erzurum, Ahmed Pasha, requested an increase in the number of soldiers in Muş immediately before the season was to be over.[208]

On the issue of why the Muş region had tension, the governor of Erzurum İsmail Hakkı wrote:

> the Muş Plain has more than 200 villages and in the south of Muş, Kurdistan is there. Its location is suitable for people to run away to everywhere, so it

[206] BOA. *MVL.* 476-77. 8 Safer 1282 (3 July 1865).
[207] BOA. *MVL.* 1052-46. 21 Rebiülahir 1283 (2 September 1866).
[208] "daha ne mikdar kuvve-yi askeriyeye lüzum-ı hakiki görünüyor ise dikkat-i gaib edilmeyerek ve mevsimi geçirilmeyerek hemân istihsab ve icabına göre sevk ve a'mâl edilmek için dördüncü ordu-yı hümayun müşiriyeti kaymakamlığına dahi emr ü talimat ita buyurulması" BOA. *ŞD.* 1504-27. 9 Zilhicce 1284 (2 April 1868). The governorship of Erzurum replaced very quickly in these years. For more information see, Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkan ve Ricali*, 30.

> became a place for tribes to be. Mischief happens and the local people are being oppressed.[209]

One precaution to decrease the tension was to catch and exile the tribes. For instance, this precaution was used to decrease the harm against the local people, and it aimed to punish people without giving them a chance to go to court. For instance, the Cibranlı tribe and its leaders were set to be sent to the capital with their families to be sent to Rumelia in 1866.[210]

One of the most significant exile cases happened between 1868-1872 when Vardapet Mkhitar, a representative of the Apostolic Patriarchate of Bitlis, sent a petition on 15 December 1868. The complaint was about Kurdish attacks on women, and churches and how they were plundering villages. The governor of Erzurum, İsmail Pasha, wanted to conduct an investigation to find the perpetrators. The Mush investigation, as Cora named it, had a commission compromised of the local notables in the Erzurum region, Ispanakçızade Osman Bey, and an Armenian named Daniel Kharajyan Efendi. Khrimyan considered the members of this investigation—a Muslim and an Armenian—to be equal partners, but as Cora explains Osman Bey was dismissed due to possible inactivity on the investigation. Therefore, the investigation Daniel Kharajyan Efendi might have conducted as the primary authority, in which the Armenian counterparts considered him as an equal authority. However, what is emphasized is still important for the perception of this investigation, so Cora emphasizes the "effect of Ottomanism" in which the motto was equality to all. The investigation lasted for four to five months.[211] However, according to a document sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Erzurum

[209] BOA. *İ.DH.* 597-41609. 25 Rebiülahir 1286 (15 August 1868), for the transliteration of the quote see Appendix A, 1.
[210] BOA. *MVL.* 1052-59. 13 Cemaziyelevvel 1283 (23 September 1866).
[211] Cora, *Transforming Erzurum/Karin*, 320–24.

province, the investigation commission was postponed because the perpetrators were found and were waiting to appear in court.[212] It is apparent that the ministry was not informed clearly since the commission was actively working to exile the perpetrators.

While the investigation process was ongoing, it transformed into a bigger reform movement in the region. Therefore, the year 1869 can be regarded as the year of the Muş reforms. For instance, the mutasarrıf of Muş Haydar Pasha was dismissed from his position in January 1869. The reason for the dismissal was Haydar Pasha's misconduct and tolerance towards Kurdish leaders. Therefore, on short notice, Haydar Pasha was replaced with Ahmed Bey who was the district governor of Alaiye because the local people were running away from their houses even before they started to cultivate the land.[213]

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[212] "komisyonun irsali şimdilik te'hir olunmuş olmağla ve marrü'z-zikr gazetenin müdericatı ihbarat-ı sabıkayı mü`eyyid görünmekle ve saye-i asayiş-vaye-i hazret-i şahanede her sınıf teba' ve zir-i destanın her yüzden mütemetti'(?) niam-ı huzur ve rahat olmaları ve arz-ı 'adalet hasr cenab-ı cihanbanide hiçbir ferdin diğere isal-i cevir(zülm) ve hasar edememesi kat'iyyen matlub ve mültezim-i ali bulunmağla halat-ı merviye hiç ise failleri kemal-i dikkat ve sürat ile tecessüs ve tefahhus olunarak ahz ü kürfet(?) olunması ve usulü vecihle istintak ve muhakemelerinde ifa kılınması ile ta'yin edecek cinayet ve kabahatlerine göre mücazat-ı kanuniyye ve aliyyelerinden icrasına…" BOA. *HR.SYS.* 2929-141. 27 Zilhicce 1285 (10 April 1869).

[213] "…ahali-i Hristiyaniyenin terk-i diyar etmek isteyenler bu sene ziraatdan bile kifayed ettikleri cihetle şimdiden çaresine bakılmaz ise ileride önü alınamayacağından kış geçmeksizin ele geçirilmeleri eshel olacağından mutasarrıfın hemen tebdil ve azimiyle icabının icrası … iş bu fenalıklar mümaileyh Haydar Paşa'nın su-i idaresinden ve rüesa-yı ekrada yüz vermesinden neş'et etmiş olduğundan vilayetin inhası üzerine mümaileyhin azl ve tebdili derdest idüğünden … ol-havalide meskun ve mutavattın olan Ermeni taifesinin eyadi-i(?) ekrad bağiyeden serian tahsiliyle şu muhaceret maddesinin kemali sürat ve ehemmiyetin önü alınması hükümetçe pek elzem olub bu dahi harekat-ı şekavetkaranelerinden bahs edilen Ekraddan her kim ne yapmış ve ne gibi şeyler gasb etmiş ise tahkikat-ı mukteziye ile beraber meydana çıkarılıb faillerinin te'dibiyle hasıl olacağından ve bu suretin icrasına kuvve-i mevcude-i mahalliye kifayet edemez ise dördüncü ordu-yu hümayun müşirliğiyle bi'l-muhabere asakir-i nizamiye-i şahaneden bir fırka-i müfrezenin oraya sevk ve irsali kabil olabileceğinden Erzurum valisi devletlü paşa hazretleri bi'z-zat azimetle şu … derece-i vecibe varmış olan te'dibatının icrasına ve ahali-i muti'nin taht-ı temine alınarak muhaceret maddesinin men'i esbabının istihsaline sarf-ı mukadderat … rüesa-yı ekradın bila-muhakeme Rumeliye iclası sureti der-miyan olunmuş ise de böyle bila… ile adem-i nefsi kaide ve nizamın haricinde bir muamele olduğundan tecviz olunamayacağı gibi bundan her dürlü su-i istimalat tevellüd edebileceğinden cela-yı vatan cezasının … iken bir mahkeme-i nizamiyeye istinad ettirilmesi lazım geleceğinin…" BOA. *ŞD.* 3219-13. 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).

One month later, to prevent the migration of the Armenians, the government gave them promises to strengthen the order in the sub-province. As the order sent to the Erzurum province wrote, the main effort was to stop "the pests" from using force against the "obedient people".[214] Therefore, the needed reforms aimed at preventing the harms of these brigand tribes against the Christians had to be carried out without delay. In terms of reforms and precautions, the orders were to investigate and catch the people who harmed Armenians, whether from the Kurdish tribe or the leaders of the clan. If the army was needed, the local government was free to call and use the army. After the perpetrators were caught, the court had to interrogate them. The practice of sending these people to Rumelia was not accepted according to an order sent to the Erzurum province.[215]

Another reform in the region was to create two new directorships: one in Handırıs the other in Kasor in 1869. The governor explained the need to establish these directorships "to protect the local people from bandits and Kurds and to satisfy the Christians."[216] Yusuf Efendi, the director of Adilcevaz, became the director in Handırıs. His salary was 1,000 kuruş and his deputy Tatyos Agha who was the former examiner in the Council of Judicial Appeals made 600 kuruş. The former director of Mutki, Mehmed Efendi, was appointed as the director in Kasor; his salary was 1000 kuruş, and his deputy Vartan who was the former member of the administrative council in Muş made 750 kuruş. Each directorship would have one secretary and the deputy would get as many soldiers as possible.[217] İlber Ortaylı

[214] BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 829, no. 949, p. 76. 11 February 1869.
[215] To the province of Erzurum. BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 829, no, 952, p. 77-78. 21 February 1869.
[216] "seyyar hükmünde olarak ve daima memuriyetleri dahilinde geşt ü güzar ederek hem ahali-i kurrayı dest-i tasallüt işkiya ve ekraddan vikaye eylemek ve hem de ovada Hristiyan'ın vesile-i tatmin … olmak…" BOA. *İ.DH.* 597-41609. 25 Rebiülahir 1286 (4 August 1869).
[217] BOA. *İ.DH.* 597-41609; the government was ordered to appoint for these directorships. "To the province of Erzurum" BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 831, p. 132-133. 10 September 1869; *Envar-ı Şarkiye*,

wrote the requirements for the appointments of the directors of the sub-districts. These directors had to be more than 25 years old, literate, from the Ottoman nation, and without a criminal record. Their responsibilities were to help the state officials to collect the taxes and report crimes. They were the heads of the sub-district councils but could not involve themselves in the responsibilities of the headmen and village councils.[218] As the scheme of new directorships in Handırıs and Kasor showed and as Cora writes, the success of this investigation laid with Daniel Kharajyan Efendi whose connections with Mıgirdic Khrimyan, one of the most prominent Armenians in the empire, and their cooperation with the governor helped. However, with time, the deputy of the directorships who were Armenians at the beginning was left out from the office as the yearbooks show.[219]

The yearbooks of Erzurum show the appointments to these sub-districts from 1870 to 1876. In the first year, Vartan Agha from the Kasor sub-district was the only official to keep his position. The director of the Kasor sub-district became Osman Agha in 1870 and the director of Handırıs became Süleyman Agha; his deputy became Artin Agha who replaced Tatyos Agha. In 1871, Tatyos Agha returned to his duty while the others kept their position. The directors of Kasor and Handırıs changed again in 1872. Mirza Bey became the director of the former and Hacı Ali Efendi became the director of the latter. Until 1876, the directors continued their jobs unlike the director of Kasor Mirza Bey was replaced by Ahmed Şevket Agha.

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no.105. 25 Rebiülahir 1289 (4 August 1869). The newspaper wrote that these people were known for their merit and capability. I thank Yaşar Tolga Cora for sharing this newspaper with me.

[218] Interestingly, the scholarship tells us that in 1876 there was a regulation about sub-districts. According to this regulation in which Ortaylı claimed it was proclaimed after the pressures by Russian and Austrian empires. The director would be from the majority of the inhabited population and his deputy (muavini) would be from other population. The director would be changed per two years and other responsibilities proclaimed in 1871 continued. Ortaylı argued that if the regulation was implemented then Balkans would become semi-independent. İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat devrinde Osmanlı mahallî idareleri (1840-1880)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2018), 100.

[219] Cora, *Transforming Erzurum/Karin*, 328.

Interestingly, between 1873 and 1876, the names of the deputies were never written in the yearbooks.[220] Either the Armenians left the job or the Armenians were pushed out from becoming the second man in the sub-districts. The second option is more feasible since the people who were appointed to this position changed, but in the later years, a deputy was not even mentioned.

The next step in this reform was to prevent the attacks of the Kurds coming from neighboring provinces. The government sent one battalion to Muş from Van and wanted three companies to stay in Muş in the winter season.[221] The government ordered the construction of a pass with four gates to inspect the region for 18,450 kuruş. Moreover, it employed sergeants, cavalries, and soldiers for the duration of their employment. Four sergeants were employed for 160 kuruş, as well as three temporary cavalries for 120 kuruş and 25 soldiers temporary for 80 kuruş; additionally, four permanent cavalries were hired for 120 kuruş, as well as 19 permanent soldiers for 80 kuruş.[222] For this stay, the local government asked for the construction of a barrack and a stable in the sum of 1,086,660 and a half kuruş.[223]

The military precautions were followed by an effort to improve the lifestyle of the native people. There were already established directorships in Handırıs and Kasor, but also two people were notorious among the local people for their actions: Karabet Efendi, who gave money at a 100 percent interest rate, and as a result, was taking the lands of the people, and Hasan Agha, who also took part in this crime.

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[220] *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1287 (1870), 76; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1288 (1871), 75; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*,1289 (1872), 78; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1290 (1873), 101; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1291 (1874), 87; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1292 (1875), 97; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum*, 1293 (1876), 84.
[221] To the province of Erzurum. BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 829, no. 280 p. 89. 9 September 1869.
[222] To the province of Erzurum. BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 831, p. 129. 24 August 1869
[223] To the province of Erzurum. The aim was described as "to underlie Kurds and pests to the hands of the army's force". BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 829, No. 91, p. 107. 2 October 1870.

Karabet and Hasan were sent to Erzurum to be disciplined. Moreover, taking provisions from the surplus of the tithe was banned, as well as giving interests. It was also decided to construct elementary and junior high schools with the aids that were collected.[224]

In total 83 people were questioned, and their punishments varied. It was decided that 14 people were to be sent to Sinop until they rehabilitated (*ıslah-ı nefs*). Three of them escaped and one of them died. Seven people were sentenced to be in hard labor (*kürek cezası*) and 29 people from the Cibranlı and Hasenanlı tribes were sent to Rumelia. However, those who were to be in hard labor were not sent because they did not have a trial.[225] The members of the commission, the governor, the member of the administrative council in Erzurum, the provincial treasurer, and also Daniel Kharajyan, wrote that their crimes were countless and that reforms were needed both materially and spiritually since they would bring many advantages and get rid of many local problems.[226] However, the members did not discuss the different reforms that had been already been implemented. When stating that material and spiritual issues needed to be fixed, they could have been referring to the exile of these people, but it is unknown.

[224] "…ahaliye birebir faizle para verilerek Karabet Efendi tarafından bi-gayr-i hakk ve fuzuli zabt edilen tarla ve meraların istirdad ve yataklık gibi muamelat-ı kaziyeye(?) cüret eden Hasan Ağa'nın dahi merkez vilayete i'zam kılınmasını ve mültezimlerin adamlarına öşrden fazla olarak verilen zehairin men'iyle giyah öşrü ve zahair icraatı ve ortakçılık ve faiz hususlarının ıslah ve imha edilmesi gibi vaki' olan icraat-i hüsneleri ve menfaat sandıklarının küşadıyla olunan ianeden bir rüşdi ve bir de sıbyan mektebinin inşasına mübaşeret ettirilmesi…" BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 831, p. 138. 23 October 1869.

[225] BOA. *İ. MMS.* 38-1574.

[226] "eşhas-ı merkumunun mürtekib ve mütecasir oldukları enva' mezalim ve taaddiyat ve katl ve ihrak-ı nüfus ve hetk-i ırz ve namus misillü halat derecat ve keyfiyetini vasıta-i kalem ve kırtasi ile beyan haric-i daire-i imkan olarak arz olunan ahval ise efal-i reddiyelerinin aşr-i miş'arı derecesinde bile olduğundan ve bu suret-i ıslahat-ı vakıanın muhtac-ı ilahi olduğu gibi maddeten ve manen enva' fevaidi cami' ve mahazir-i mahaliyeyi dafi' olacağından şu hale göre ifa-yı muktezası" BOA. *İ. MMS. 38-1574.* 10 Cemaziyelahire 1286 (17 September 1869).

After the completion of the investigation, these 83 people were sent to Yotbaşı(?) in the Maçin district in the Ruscuk sub-province, to the Sinop sub-province, or the prison in the Erzurum province as a result of the Muş investigation. The exiled people did not want to be in that place so they were staying in inns while complaining about not being told why they were exiled in that place. Their families did not come and eight of the exiles died in the Maçin district, which led the exiles to depression.[227] Therefore, they wanted to go back to their houses. Two of these exiled people are known. Sofi Agha[228] from the Hasenanlı and Ali Agha from the Cibranlı tribes were ordered to be exiled since they were among the prominent people in Muş that were harming local people. Therefore, even before the Muş investigation, the Armenians complained about them. In return, except for Ali and Sofi, many people were exiled and some of them went to Erzurum and others to another place. However, with the Muş investigation, the decision was for them to be exiled to Rumelia, and their wish to return to Muş was a problem since the local government guaranteed the native people that they would be exiled. Since Ali Agha helped the government in Fırka-i Islahiye along with other people from the sub-province, he must have thought this action could forgive his acts. However, it was decided that they should not come back to their houses and this decision was delivered to the Erzurum province.[229]

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[227] "…mahal-i mezkure gitmekden bi't-tab iştibah ederek elyevm Ruscuk'da han köşelerinde ikamet etmekde ve oraya nakl olunmalarının esbab-ı mucibesi kendilere tebliğ edilmemesinden dolayı herbar sızlanmakda oldukları gibi vilayet-i mezkurece dahi buna dair malumat olmadığından ve merkumlar ise oranın ab ve havasıyla imtizac edemediklerinden dolayı sekiz neferi telef ve diğerleri bir hal-i buhran içinde olduklarından" BOA. *ŞD.* 2079-24. 15 September 1871.

[228] He owned land and animals and considered to be one of the notables from the tribes in Malazgird district in 1880 so he eventually returned to his homeland. BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 9. 20 October 1880.

[229] "…Rumeli tarafına nakllerine dair olan hükm mütefessih olmuş ise de gerek bunlar ve gerek emsali ağalar Muş sancağınca teferrüd ve efrad-ı ahaliye tagallüb etmiş ve ale'l-husus Ermeniler haklarında dürlü su-i muameleye alınmış adamlar olduğu dahi bundan çend sene mukaddem liva-i mezkur ahali-i gayrimüslimesi taraflarından Bab-ı Aliye şikayat-ı azime arz olunması üzerine yazılan vesayaya mebni merkez vilayetden bir tahkik komisyonu vasıtasıyla hal ü hareketleri tedkik ve bir

The exiled people continued to ask for forgiveness in the following months. The decision to exile them, however, was not a result of court; rather they were sent with the order of the former governor of Erzurum İsmail Pasha. The exiled people wanted the government to investigate this issue because there was no official verdict. Therefore, the government asked the Erzurum province to investigate the cases of these people and consider the possibility of them to be returning to their homeland.[230] Like the case of Sofi and Ali, some were exiled without a verdict, or some were punished according to the laws. Since these people rehabilitated themselves, it was decided they were no threat to the reforms in the sub-province and the government allowed these people to return to their lands in 1872.[231] Therefore, what started in 1869 as an investigation was concluded with the return of these people to their homelands. The efforts to bring order to the region were left with this decision. However, these reform attempts showed the immense importance for the government to emphasize the importance of the well-being of the local inhabitants.

While the returnees were in the region, the Armenians were still sending petitions about the oppression brought by the Kurdish tribes in 1873. The government confirmed that the Kurds were taking money and goods from the Armenians every year, which can be considered as khafir,[232] so it was necessary to

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daha oralara ayak basmayacakları dad-ı sitede(?) ahali-i merkume te'min olarak cümlesinin merkez vilayete kaldırıldığı ve birtakımı şuraya buraya nakl edilerek yalnız mümaileyhimanın kaldığı buraca ma'lum ve muhakkak bulunduğundan Ali Ağanın fırka-i ıslahiye maiyetinde hüsn-i hizmeti farz olunmasa bile anın Sofi ağanın Muş sancağına iadesi daha oralarca memuriyetde istihdamları halinde te'minat-ı sabıka-i resmiyenin hükmü kalmayarak şikayat-ı meşruha avdet edeceği …" BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 831, p. 192. 23 October 1870.

[230] BOA. *BEO. AYN.d*. 829, no. 603, p. 124. 3 January 1872, and BOA. *İ. MMS.* 113-5698. 22 May 1872.

[231] Even some of them who were in Erzurum returned to their lands. BOA. *İ.MMS.* 113-5698. 9 August 1872, and BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 829, No. 4328, p. 138. 23 August 1872.

[232] Khafir tax was given to the Kurdish aghas, bey or şeyhs for protection basically. Since our knowledge is limited on khafir scholars like Gülseren Duman-Koç questioned this tax to be continuation of the kışlakiye tax which is the payment to the tribes for sheltering their stay as well as their animals. However, Tolga Cora gave an example of khafir tax which included 20 sheep, 15 chicken, 6 rope, 60 shovels, 8 okka of wools, 15 shalwars. Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Osmanlı Taşrasındaki

stop this action. However, the document does not provide details about Armenians' payments. Therefore, though the investigation of this issue was requested, the results are unknown.[233]

Forgiveness was a common theme for these returnees and many other people who asked for it. The aim was to be forgiven and the best way to ask for it was to write how loyal the person was to the government. The petitioners could be the people asking for forgiveness or at other times, other people would ask for forgiveness for someone else. For instance, on 10 November 1875, 50 village headmen sent a petition to the Şura-yı Devlet. They wanted their leaders to be pardoned and to return to their houses. In order to strengthen their request, they introduced themselves as a nomadic tribe living in the mountainous region in Muş and that settled with the help of the governor of Kurdistan, Esad Pasha, and the general of the Anatolian Army Gözlüklü Mehmed Reşid Pasha thirty to forty years ago. Moreover, as ideal subjects who were the taxpayers of the empire as well as soldiers of the empire, they wanted to be considered as loyal to strengthen their request. Therefore, more than 700 people in the village fought alongside the Diyarbekir governor İsmail Hakkı Pasha[234] for the religion and state in the Kozan War. Even though one of the leaders of the tribes died in the battle, four or five

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Ermeniler Üzerine Olan Tarihyazımında Sınıf Analizinin Eksikliği," *Praxis,* 39, (2015): 28-29, Duman-Koç, *Governing a Frontier*, 280-281.

[233] "…taife-i merkumenin her bar millet-i mezbure üzerine tasallut birle mal ve can ve ırz ve namuslarına isal-i dest taaddi ve hasar etmekde oldukları der-miyan ve beher sene Kürdlere vermekde oldukları akçe ve eşya ber-vech-i müfredat ta'dad ve beyan olunub asayiş-i umumi aleyhinde cüzi vekili hadasat ve harekatına meydan verilmemek hükümetin en mühim vazifesi olduğu gibi Kürdlerin Ermenilerden böyle mu'tad hükmünde her sene akçe ve saire aldıkları sahih ise bunun da tedkik-i esbab ve keyfiyatıyla men' ü ıslahı lazımeden bulunmuş idüğünden bu babda tahkikat-ı mukteziye ve kafiye icrasıyla Ekradın oralarca galeyan ve takibatı sahih olduğu halde hemen def'-i şekavet ve muzırratlarına ve saye-i meali-vaye-i cenab-ı padişahide muhafaza-i emn ve asayiş-i sekeneye himmet ve itina ve bu babda vaki' olacak tahkikat…" BOA. *BEO. AYN.d.* 831, no. 2743, p. 283-4. 21 October 1873.

[234] İsmail Hakkı Pasha was one of the officers in Fırka-i Islahiye mission in 1865-1866. For more information see, Mehmet Süreyya Bey, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, ed. Nuri Akbayar and Seyit Ali Kahraman, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1996), *3*: 826.

months later, the leaders were sent to Erzurum and put into prison. The village headmen claimed that the leaders had done nothing wrong, but since then they were held in Erzurum. The leaders as well as the people in the village suffered and were continuing to suffer without their leaders to be able to rule the area. Therefore, the village headmen wanted these leaders to be released from prison.[235] These headmen did not specifically write their leaders' names so it is difficult to find their identities but they expressed their case with how loyal they were.

The reforms in this period were mainly done to improve the well-being of the peasants. The dismissal of the mutasarrıf, catching the perpetrators in the region and exiling them to distant provinces, creation of new directorships in Handırıs and Kasor, construction of the four gates as well as stationing the army in the region were all parts of this reform plans. Even though the results were not permanent this period showed the importance of the protection of the subjects in the region. While the situation in the region was starting to change the war came near the Muş region and the Russian Empire attacked Erzurum in 1877. The Russian Empire did not attack or control the Muş sub-province; however, the aftermath of the war changed the region forever.

[235] "Kürdistan valisi Esad Paşa hazretleri maan birlikde Muş kazalarından Malazgird kazasının ahalisini cebelden cem' edüb mecmuan Malazgird kazasına cem' edüb bi'l-külliye rençberlik ile meşgul ve saye-i şahanede … ve çift sahibleri olub işimizle meşgul ve devlet-i aliyyemizin her bir umur ve hususuna ve tekalif vergimizi de ve her bir irade-i aliyyeleri boyun verüb ve aşiret ağa bendeleri mesele-i zailde bin süvari ile beraber muharebeye kıyam edüb Kozan muharebesinde yine hala Diyarbakır valisi İsmail Paşa hazretlerinin maiyetlerinde hayat siperane yedi sekiz yüz süvari ile birlikde din-i devlete hizmet eylediklerinden maada aşiret ağa bendelerinden bir ağamız bendeleri vefat ederek böyle hizmet-i devletimizde bulunduğumuzdan bu tarihden dört beş mah mukaddem aşiret ağa bendelerini birkaç adamdan ibare(t) Erzurum'a celb ve asakir-i şahane kışlasına mahbus edüb…" BOA. *ŞD.* 2884-54. 11 Şevval 1292. (10 November 1875).

4.3 Aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878

During the war, the region was in turmoil. In 1878, probably after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, a secret report about the events in the Muş region was sent to the capital. In this unsigned and unfinished report, the writer listed events that the Muslim and Christian populations engaged in after gathering information by visiting the region at an unknown date. This report showed the incapacity of the local government by saying that "those people like the naib of the sub-province, our birdbrain accountant, and officers Arif, Halid, and Selim Aghas who could not understand the politics and changed the situation" in the region. Therefore, the inefficiency of the officials encouraged the people who tried to harm the inhabitants.[236]

This report listed many events that the local inhabitants suffered during the war. For instance, the Kurds were attacking the monasteries like Surp Garabed Monastery whose goods and animals were stolen three times. The people in the villages also suffered from the attacks; for example, an Armenian girl was kidnapped, but the author of the report wrote that no investigation was conducted. Moreover, the tribes coming from the Diyarbekir region to the Muş region were burning the trees as well as grass. While it is unknown how the mutasarrıf learned about the content of this report, he praised the arrests of the Kurdish bandits who were around the region for the attack.[237] All in all, the report was written against the

[236] "… naib-i liva ile kuş akıllı bizim muhasebeci efendi ve Arif ve Halid ve Selim ağalar gibi memurin ve fırsat-ı küzeden(?) ve menafi-i zatiyelerine tevaffuk etmeyen icraat-ı hükümetden … ve devran eden politikayı fehm ile ana göre ta'dil-i hal ve sıfat etmeği bilmez bir takım zevatın dahi efkarına verdikleri kuvvet-i badi-i cesareti olmakda olduğu anlaşılmış…" BOA. *HR.SYS.* 2941-89. No date.

[237] One of the attackers was Mehmed of Boğlan tribe. He was living closer to the Surp Garabed Monastery and as will be mentioned in Chapter 5, the governor of Bitlis, Edhem Pasha considered him the guardian of the "beggars" surrounding the monastery's land. The mutasarrıf wrote that as a perpetrator of this incident his son Mehmed was arrested. BOA. *HR. SYS.* 2941-89. 19 October 1878.

state officials who were not doing their jobs. The report also included some kind of secret meeting between the bishops and priests from Surp Garabed Monastery and other monasteries in the villages of Arak and Sekari(?) for a discussion of the independence of the Armenians.

As an attendant to this meeting, Ohannes who positioned himself as a "loyal subject to the eternity" of the Sublime Porte claimed that the secret meeting happened with the orders of the Armenian bishop Grigoris. There were many Christian notables and the reason for this meeting was to discuss the "bad dream" of the creation of an Armenian principality.[238] The oppression of the Kurds and the soldiers were also discussed in this meeting. Ohannes complained about the bishop's language during the meeting. According to him, the bishop used "the language of violence and damage".[239] The bishop, Ohannes continued, connected his resignation to the losses of 200,000 Armenians who were continuing to suffer. Ohannes, in the end, claimed the meeting was a mistake since the government was trying to reform the region; thus as a loyal subject, he warned the government about this "bad dream".[240] Grigoris, on the other hand, was rewarded a year later with a Third-Class Order of Mecidiye because of his loyalty and service to the Ottoman Empire.[241]

[238] "Muş Ermeni milleti murahhası Kerkoris Efendi tarafından olunan davete icabetle murahhashaneye 'azimet ve muhasalat-ı çakeranemde … birçok ilerü gelen ahali-i hristiyaniye celb ve ihzar ve bir kıt'a mahzar-ı … bu davet-i cemiyyet ise mücerred asya-yı Osmanî'de vaki' Ermenistan kıt'ası sekene-i Hristiyaniyyesine Rumeli Bulgarları gibi bir emaret ve imtiyaz istihsali hülya-yı fasidesinden ilerü geldiği dahi" BOA. *HR. SYS.* 2941-89. 16 September 1878.
[239] "Kürdistan kıt'asında meskun olan bunca Ermeni fukarası taht-ı zulm ve esaretde kaldığı politika-ı hazıraya dokunur bir lisan-ı şiddet ve muzırrat kullanmış ve hususile Muş sancağı ile mütecavir bulunan mahallerde mutavattın zükur ve inas 200,000 nüfusa karib Ermeni mazlumlarının güya rey' ve müstemirren sefk heder olunmakda olan kanlarına acıyıb dayanamadığı cihetle murahhas-ı mumaileyh mecburen istifa' eylediği tefevvühatı dahi tarif olunmaz bir mugalataya ilaveten derç olunmuş idi." BOA. *HR. SYS.* 2941-89. 16 September 1878.
[240] BOA. *HR. SYS.* 2941-89. 16 September 1878.
[241] BOA. *İ. HR.* 275-16767. 4 Zilhicce 1297 (7 November 1880).

Therefore, it is most likely that the authorities did not accept Ohannes' claims about the bishop.

The mutasarrıf, on the other hand, responded to this unknown report negatively. The mutasarrıf did not accept the writer of this report's claims and even wrote that he was ready to be on trial in order to be acquitted. The mutasarrıf confirmed the attacks on the monasteries by saying that "the bandits who stole the sheep or attacked the Surp Garabed Monastery three times were found by my efforts" even though the attacks occurred five or six years prior.[242] Even though the mutasarrıf refuted the reporter's claims, he did not elaborate on the other claims like the kidnappings, the investigation of the killing of Christians, or the incapacity of the officers. Therefore, his main claims are built on only what he accomplished. As this report showed, the tensions and the sufferings of the people continued in the period between and after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. The conditions of the people were worsening in 1880.

1880 was an important year for Eastern Anatolia because of the famine. Zozan Pehlivan investigates how the global climate affected Ottoman Kurdistan as a result of natural events.[243] From the winter of 1879 to 1893 there were droughts or cold weather every five to eight years (1879, 1887-1888, 1891-1893). The frequency of the unfortunate weather conditions became a problem since the scarcity of crops followed a recovery period that was not a long enough amount of time for the peasants. The animals were also affected since they could not be fed due to the extreme climate events.[244] The drought in 1879 was felt from the plateaus to the

[242] BOA. *HR. SYS.* 2941-89. 16 September 1878.
[243] Zozan Pehlivan, "El Niño and the Nomads: Global Climate, Local Environment, and the Crisis of Pastoralism in Late Ottoman Kurdistan,"*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, *63*(3), (2020): 336.
[244] Pehlivan, *El Niño and the Nomads*, 338.

mountainous areas in the Kurdistan region. The people complained about the problems they were having like the scarcity of food to feed the animals or their deaths. In Diyarbekir for instance, pastoralists were trespassing the peoples' farms to find a piece of food in 1880.[245]

The local government's first plan was to send provisions to famine-affected places the most. However, in some cases, the districts that the provisions were stored were also experiencing famine so people did not want any of the supply to be sent to another district. For instance, an order was sent to the Muş sub-province to send provision to the Van province in 1880. However, the local inhabitants protested and the provisions were not sent. The mutasarrıf of Muş claimed the "provokers"[246] were Halil Agha Selim Agha, Hacı Mehmed, Abdullah, and the teacher at the junior high school, Abdulrahman. The idea for the punishment for their role in rebelling against the decision was to exile them to either Erzurum or Diyarbekir province for three to four months. It was accepted that their behavior was caused by the famine, but when choosing between showing mercy and punishing them, it was decided that this punishment would amend their behavior.[247] However, the authorities disagreed to punish them without any proper trial because it would not be fair to them. Therefore, the decision-makers in this process were the courts and it became more and more clear that no one would be expelled without a trial.[248]

The year 1880 is also important because the government ordered a report from the Bitlis province including information on various subjects. This report was

[245] Pehlivan, *El Niño and the Nomads*, 342–44.
[246] "ahalinin mihrek ve müşevvikleri" BOA. *A.} MKT.MHM.* 485-57. 16 Nisan 1296 (28 April 1880).
[247] "kahttan ne'şet etmiş bulunduğuna nazaran fiiliyat ile cezayetinde nisbet-i adile bulunarak himem-i siyaset içinde eser-i adl ve şefkat gösterilmek ve hem de harekat-ı vakıalarının cezasını görüb ıslah-ı nefs etmek…" BOA. *A.} MKT.MHM.* 485-57,1. 17 June 1880.
[248] BOA. *A.} MKT. MHM.* 485-57, 2-3. 24 June 1880.

collected after the establishment of the Bitlis province, most probably to see what was happening in the region. Starting from 1876, this report comprised the population census of these years, the total number of deaths and births, the number of soldiers and gendarmeries, the reported criminal activities, and the local notables who owned money and land.[249] This report's significance is that due to both the war and the disorder in the region, the local government focused on how to improve the lives of the people in the region.

The aim of the report was explained by the governor of Bitlis, Arif Pasha, who wrote that there was an order to investigate "the provocative activities or statements by the British consul and consuls from other countries."[250] The order was executed by the local authorities. The district governors, the Muslim and Armenian members of the administrative council, and the deputy abbot were present for this census, which lasted for three months. As the governor of Bitlis claimed, the tribes were not included in this census since there were no records about them. The inadequacy of the doctors in the province led to solely an estimate of the numbers of deaths and population. Arif Pasha also wrote that the consuls were not present in the Bitlis province unlike the Van, Erzurum, and Diyarbekir provinces; however, the consuls in these three provinces were traveling to the province. The governor said the information could be gathered about their actions, so the government kept its eyes closely on the consuls.[251] The results showed the needs of the region for improvement or civilization.

[249] The report do not show the quantity of these peoples' assets. BOA. *Y.PRK.UM.* 4-10.
[250] "…İngiltere devletiyle düvel-i sâire konsolosları tarafından ahâlî hakkında bir-gûne tahrîk ve ekâvîl vukû' bulmakda olub olmadığının sûret-i mektûmede bi't-tahkîk arz ve izbârı…" BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 22. 14 Zilhicce 1297 (17 November 1880).
[251] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 22.

In terms of the reforms, the governor wrote about the need for schools for the children. Even though there was a junior high school in the Muş sub-province, primary school was not the main concern. The governor underlined the use of the old techniques in agriculture and thus, the main crops produced the most in the province were wheat and barley which "lacked the agricultural science".[252] Therefore, the governor asked for a man who knew the new agricultural techniques. Another problem in the province was the roads. As will be shown, the local administrators, as well as the governor, emphasized the importance of the roads. To construct the roads, the governor asked for an engineer whose payments would be paid from the tithe tax.[253]

The roads and postal services were emphasized both by the governor and by the members of the administrative councils. The roads were important for the centralization efforts to unify the regions, or as Fulya Özkan writes, to create "a unified imperial market and geography".[254] While railways were beginning to be constructed in the empire, the eastern regions did not have railroads because of the issues like attacks on people. Therefore, the roads were the most important and, in many provinces, the only transportation system that people would use. In this context, people wished for the construction of the roads since they provided the connection and trade between the provinces.[255] İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin claimed that the construction of roads was indicative of the emergence of capitalism in Anatolia. However, they also questioned the degree of the entry of the capitalist relations, in which they concluded it was not adequate to spread it throughout the

[252] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 22.
[253] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 22.
[254] Fulya Özkan, "A Road in Rebellion, A History on the Move: The Social History of the Trabzon-Bayezid Road and the Formation of the Modern State in the Late Ottoman World," (PhD Diss. Binghamton University, 2012), 3.
[255] Özkan, *A Road in Rebellion, A History on the Move*, 30.

empire.[256] Rather than thinking of the roads as proof that the region provided goods to the global market, as Fulya Özkan writes, the internal trade of the region with its neighboring provinces was more important than global trade.[257] Therefore, the need for the roads was actually intended for the development of the region.

In terms of postal technology and telegraphy, Roderic Davison emphasizes the accessibility of telegraphy in the distant provinces, which contributed to the centralization efforts and allowed the orders to be sent easily.[258] Nesimi Yazıcı also focuses on the monopoly of the Ministry of Post and Telegraphy on cheap transportation for the local inhabitants and foreign citizens in the empire as well as the protection of the country. [259] Therefore, the emphasis on the roads and telegraphy was mostly due to the improvement of the people's lives and state functions.
The needed reforms were different according to their locations. The administrative council in Malazgird was composed of nine members: three Armenian and six Muslim members. This commission generally wrote about the problems related to the roads. New bridges had to be built on the Murad River because the old ones were in ruins as well as the Sencar River, which was in the middle of the Malazgird Castle and Bulanık. People, as well as their animals, had difficulties passing these rivers and a small raft was used but, in the end, people and animals still died while crossing. It was said that it would also be beneficial for people to construct two or three inns, two bakeries, and a few shops in Malazgird.[260]

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[256] İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ondokuzuncu Yüzyılda Araba Teknolojisindeki Ve Karayolu Yapımındaki Gelişmeler," in İhsanoğlu; Kaçar, *Çağını Yakalayan Osmanlı!*, 440.
[257] Fulya Özkan, *A Road in Rebellion, A History on the Move*, 33.
[258] Roderic Davison, "The Advent of the Electric Telegraph in the Ottoman Empire," in *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 147.
[259] Nesimi Yazıcı, "Posta Nezaretinin Kuruluşu," in İhsanoğlu; Kaçar, *Çağını Yakalayan Osmanlı!*, 43.
[260] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 10. 8 Teşrinievvel 1296 (20 October 1880).

The mutasarrıf of Muş, Mehmed Ali, listed the needs of the people and the sub-province. The construction of highways from Erzurum to Diyarbekir would benefit people since they were having problems with transportation. He proposed the construction of eight post stations on the road from Bitlis to Erzurum since there were problems with the transportation of letters and the construction of the telegraph office in each district, (Muş, Bulanık, Varto, Malazgird) and their expenses would be covered by the people through monetary donations. The bridges were repaired with wood which would not last long and every three to four years, the repair process would repeat itself; thus, he wanted the bridges to be constructed with stone. The mutasarrıf also talked about the importance of the schools and how the parents did not want children to go to school. Therefore, the mutasarrıf insisted on sending children to schools even if the parents did not allow them to by building new schools and appointing new teachers to these schools.[261]

Varto's needs, on the other hand, were more urgent. People in Varto were in bad condition already, since due to the famine, they were forced to sell their goods to live. Since they had no seeds, their conditions were worsening. Therefore, the members of the administrative council in Varto that was composed of one Armenian and seven Muslims decided to ask for 1,000 bushels (*kile*) of wheat and barley to boost agriculture in the district.[262] Moreover, at the end of the census, like the Malazgird district, the need for the construction of the roads was apparent. The roads would allow people to go to Erzurum and sell their goods. The bridge on the river in Varto was also in ruins so repair would also help people for their businesses.[263]

[261] BOA. *Y.PRK.UM.* 4-10, 16. 20 Teşrinievvel 1296 (1 November 1880).
[262] BOA.*Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 13. 8 Teşrinievvel 1296. (20 October 1880).
[263] BOA.*Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 13.

As mentioned above, the report did not only investigate the needed reforms but also the number of dead people, reported crimes, and the number of soldiers and gendarmerie during the period of 1876-1880. As mentioned above, the Varto district was experiencing famine but also during these four years, fever and variola were major causes of death in the Muş sub-province as well as Malazgird, Bulanık, and Varto. The approximate number of deaths caused by fever is only known in Varto. As is shown in Appendix B, in Varto around 135 people died from fever and 10 people also died from hunger.[264] The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 also affected the number of deaths. For instance, 375 Muslims from the Malazgird and Bulanık districts died during the war and 103 Muslims from Varto were martyrized during the war.[265] As the governor wrote, the lack of doctors makes these numbers incomplete as many people migrated temporarily because of the war. However, at least these numbers suggest the effects of the war on the Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Most non-Muslims deaths that took place during the war were probably as a result of the attacks of the Kurdish tribes. Again, the number of Muslims that died increased during wartime, and especially in the Sason and Muş districts; thus, the death toll of Muslims was 751.

The reported crimes in the sub-province and districts made up a total of 150 cases. The types of crimes in the sub-province are divided into nine categories; These categories were rape, defloration, ef'âl-i şenîa, kidnapping a girl, burning grass, burglary, usurp, wounding, and murder. [266] As is shown in Appendix C, the highest number of reported cases was in 1878. Since the Ottoman Empire was trying to negotiate after the defeat of the Russo-Ottoman War, turbulence in the eastern

[264] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 20. 30 Zilkade 1297. (3 November 1880).
[265] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 20.
[266] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 18.

province was visible. This year saw an increase in the number of crimes from 13 cases to 94 cases. Burglary was in first place with 52 cases and murder followed with 18 cases. The next year, the number of cases decreased to 34. Then, it would be an important question to ask was this turbulence due to the lack of the police force, or was there another reason? The Bitlis province gave the number of soldiers and gendarmerie. As is shown in Appendix D, the Muş sub-province gave the exact number of these forces but the numbers for Varto, Bulanık, and Malazgird were estimated.[267] In the Muş and Sason regions, the numbers of gendarmeries were close to 300 and in 1876 and 1878 it was again around 300 gendarmeries.

The number of soldiers, on the other hand, increased during the war in 1877 and decreased from 272 soldiers to 141 soldiers in 1878, which can be related to the peace negotiations that were started. From 1879 onwards, the numbers of gendarmeries decreased and the report wrote that there were no soldiers in the Muş and Sason regions after the war. In terms of the numbers of gendarmeries, it was estimated that there were no gendarmeries from 1877 onwards in Varto, Malazgird, and Bulanık, and in a brief period of 1876, there was a total of 10 gendarmeries in the region. On the other hand, the numbers of soldiers fluctuated, which is understandable since the numbers were estimated. Although the numbers of soldiers in Varto, Malazgird, and Bulanık decreased with the start of the war, the number of soldiers increased during the peace negotiations and afterward. After 1879, in the Malazgird and Bulanık regions, the number of soldiers increased from 140 to 173. In Varto, the numbers decreased from 180 to 132 soldiers. The difference in these districts in the numbers of gendarmerie and soldiers is significant. The Tanzimat Edict brought changes in the security forces. The zaptiyes, then gendarmeries, were

[267] BOA.*Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 8-12.

established by the state to infiltrate the provinces in the 1840s.[268] Nadir Özbek calls the aim of establishing the gendarmerie institution as the "colonization of the countryside".[269] Özbek explains the security system in Eastern Anatolia as a "three-tiered security system" which included the army, the gendarmerie that consisted of migrants, and the Kurdish tribes with the Hamidian Regiments. However, the tribes had already been used in the Tanzimat Period. The period between 1865-1891 is one example that shows this system was already three-tiered, but the last tier changed in 1891.[270] The 1860s showed a transformation in security forces. The irregular forces began to be replaced by the army centered in Eastern Anatolia. However, this transformation was not immediate since the irregular forces were still in use like in the case of kır serdarı that is mentioned in Chapter 3.[271] However, Özbek does not focus on the activities of the gendarmerie during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 or how the gendarmeries along with the soldiers, protected the countryside. He also does not address if there were any differences, for example, if the region had different demographics like if the Armenians made up the majority in some of the regions or if the number of Armenians was much less than that of Muslims.

As mentioned before, the non-Muslim population was in the majority in Muş and Sason, which doubled the Muslim population. Therefore, these numbers show that the attention of the local authorities was turned to places with a mixed population. Even though the numbers were estimated, the number of the gendarmeries in Varto is significant. The Muslim population made up the majority of Varto. Therefore, the motive behind having no gendarmeries in the district could be that the soldiers would

[268] Nadir Özbek, "Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the Late 19th-Century Ottoman Empire (1876-1908)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008): 47, doi:10.1017/S0020743807080087.
[269] Özbek, "Policing the Countryside," 49.
[270] Özbek, "Policing the Countryside," 61.
[271] Özbek, "Policing the Countryside," 52.

solve the problems in Muslim neighborhoods easily unlike in the Muş sub-province. As a police force, the gendarmerie combined with soldiers tried to control the mixed-population places during the war. Since the increase in criminal activities is known it is feasible to say that the practice of using the gendarmeries with soldiers failed.

4.3.1 Escalation of Violence

> For some time past, he said, the Kurds from the neighbouring mountains -not those of the Dersim-had been accustomed to descend on to the plain, and bum the crops, and rob and murder the inhabitants. To some extent this was going on still, and quite lately in one village the newly-gathered harvest had been what the Government did under these circumstances. 'Now and then,' he replied, 'a man is caught, and is imprisoned for a year at Erzeroum, but that is all.' 'But are there no Turkish soldiers,' I inquired 'to restrain the Kurds?' for we had passed a squadron of regular cavalry, who were encamped outside the town. 'Yes,' he said, 'but their behaviour in the villages is still worse, for they take the opportunity of violating the women.'[272]

Henry Tozer visited the Muş region in August 1879 and quoted a man in the region for what he described as the maltreatment of the local government in dealing with the Kurdish tribes. While the visit was after the war, the theme in the region was the same: the acts of the Kurdish tribes towards the Armenian inhabitants. In the region, the 1880s was a chaotic time after the Armenian teachers, priests, monks were trying to organize the local inhabitants against the Ottoman Empire.[273] The maltreatment of the tribes as well as the behavior of the government officials changed the region deeply.

The tension never stopped in the region from the 1860s to the 1880s. The documents labeled these actions as mostly oppression being done by the Kurds before, yet the state officials called the "oppressors" as the "bandits" in the 1880s.

[272] Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor*, 284–85.
[273] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 10-87. 20 Rebiülevvel 1305 (6 December 1887).

While the term "bandits" was used in the 1860s, it was attributed to the leaders of the tribes like in the case of Ali and Sofi Aghas who were the leaders of the tribes, as mentioned previously, yet now the term applied to individuals as well. The petitions and correspondences sent to the Ministry of the Interior showed a frequency in the use of the banditry in the documents. For instance, a bandit named İsmail was arrested in Kars and the stolen goods were given back to their owners. Like İsmail, other bandits, Tufan, Hüseyin, and Musa were located in the Malazgird district and it was reported to the Bitlis province so that action could be taken.[274] The infamous bandit Derviş and his nephew Halil were oppressing the people from the Rindani village. Abdullah sent a petition as a representative of the village to get justice for what Derviş did. However, it is unknown whether the Derviş was really a bandit or what type of oppression the village people experienced.[275] In October 1886, the Muş government released another "bandit" Rıza, who killed Bayezidli Süleyman. Therefore, Hacı Ali and his friends wrote a petition about Rıza's brigandage and the crimes he had done and asked for justice.[276] Again, a bandit's crime of murder was listed in the documents, but this bandit was still released, in turn stirring up trouble.

In the 1880s, new political movements came to the Muş region. The distribution of pamphlets for the "provocation for revolution" (*tahrikât-ı ihtilâl*) as written in the Ottoman documents became a new instrument for the separatist Armenians.[277] Natanyan Margos was one of the Armenians in the region for distributing the pamphlets in Van, Bitlis, and Muş. Sapan Mıgirdıç was another distributor of these pamphlets who distributed them in Dersim, Bayezid, and

[274] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1357-43. 9 Şevval 1303 (11 July 1886).
[275] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1358-22. 25 Şevval 1303 (27 July 1886)
[276] I could not find the original petition. BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1374-48. 24 Muharrem 1304 (23 October 1886).
[277] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1387-19. 26 Rebiülevvel 1304 (23 December 1886).

Erzurum. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in charge of banning these pamphlets and investigating these people.[278] Natanyan was eventually arrested and sent to exile in Yemen.[279] In 1887, the governor of Bitlis, Edhem Pasha, complained that the teachers from Armenian schools, the monks, and the priests were visiting Ahlat, Bulanık, the Muş Plain, and the neighborhoods Armenians lived in and "advising them to harm and poisoning their mind[s]."[280] The Armenian revolutionaries were not the only actors that helped the violence to escalate.

Around a similar time in the 1880s, a new actor, Musa Bey, emerged in the region. Musa Bey is known mostly for the kidnapping of Gulizar in 1889, yet kidnapping was not his only incident in the region. Even though it was not the first time his actions were heard of, Musa Bey increased this behavior towards the end of the 1880s. Musa Bey was a prominent person in the region with his connections to the local government such as the members of the administrative council of the district like, Necmeddin Efendi and others in the state apparatuses. Moreover, he had in his command 1,100 people with arms. The number of local zaptiyes in the Muş region in that period was 520.[281] The numbers show how powerful the Musa Bey was in the region. He prevented any possible attack from the local government so that in case of any event related to Musa Bey the local government would need to seek help from the army. However, Musa Bey also made sure that the local government never ask help from the army. Therefore, this inefficiency of the local government as well

[278] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1387-19.
[279] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1423-10. 5 Ramazan 1304 (28 May 1887)
[280] "baz Ermeni mekteb-i hâceleriyle papaz ve rahiban mekulesi bir mahalden diğer mahale gitmek vesilesiyle Ahlat, Bulanık, Muş ovası ve Ermeni ahalisinin meskun bulundukları sair mahalleri gezib dolaşmakla menviya-ı muzırralarını telkinat bed-hahı ile icra etmekden ve tesmim-i ezhan ilkaatından gayrı hali bulundukları bedihidir." BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 10-87. 20 Rebiülevvel 1305 (6 December 1887).
[281] Musa Şaşmaz, *Kürt Musa Bey Olayı, 1883-1890,* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2004), 52.

as becoming friends with the members in state offices, showed how Musa Bey prevailed being precautious and protecting himself.

Ohannes, the bishop of Armenians in Muş, talked about Musa Bey's actions towards the Armenians in a telegraph dated 23 February 1888. As a nation who lived under the Ottoman realm, he wrote, the Armenians had been living loyally but some noxious people and the officers from local authorities were trying to make up a reason to punish the innocent Armenians as though they were the local citizens (*Tebaa-i Ermeniyan*) to the empire. For instance, Ohannes wrote that the officers investigated one of the churches, Arak Church, but did not find anything, which showed the loyalty of the Armenians one more time.[282] Musa Bey was mentioned again in Ohannes's telegraph. According to Ohannes, a church in the village of Hars was burned due to the provocation of Musa Bey. Thus, Ohannes claimed that the suspicion towards Armenians was growing in the Muslim population. Therefore, he wanted the government to restore the "dignity of our nation and welfare of the comfort" and as well as to punish the responsible people.[283] Again, the priest focused on the ineffectiveness and misuse of the power by the local authorities against the non-Muslim population but also, he was warning the government about Musa Bey one year before he kidnapped Gulizar, demonstrating his warning was going to come true.

The first months of 1888 passed with complaints about Musa Bey. While the details were not explained in the correspondences, Musa Bey was the main actor in

[282] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1491-108. 10 Cemaziyelahir 1305 (23 February 1888).
[283] "Hars karyesinin kilisesini eşkıya Musa beğ tahrikiyle ateşe verilmiş bu hal-i pürmelalimize ma'deletin … buyurulması intizarında iken işbu zanniyat ve taharriyat vuku'su İslam vatandaşlarımızın fikirlerimizin teşviş birle ihlal-i rahatımıza bais olacak mevaddan olacağı buna ise maadelet… razı olmayacağı derkar olduğundan şu hal esef-i iştimalden teba-i sadıka-i şahanelerini bi'l-ihlas milletimizin iade-i haysiyeti ve refah-ı rahatımızın te'min…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1491-108. 10 Cemaziyelahir 1305 (23 February 1888).

the region. In one of the correspondences, the Ministry of Interior ordered the investigation of a petition written by Miro and sent from the city center of Muş, which was about the attacks of Musa Bey on 50 villages in the region. As the representative of the numerous villages, Miro asked for justice from the ministry since their requests to the local authority were fruitless.[284] One month after Miro's petition, the ministry sent another correspondence to the Bitlis province about the situation with Musa Bey. The local people were concerned that the sub-province officers were protecting Musa Bey since he was released after his arrest.[285] However, the interesting part of this document is the perception of Musa Bey. The clerk first described Musa Bey as "şaki" (*brigand*), but he crossed out this term and wrote instead "şahıs" (*person*).[286] Even though it is a tiny detail, it can be thought that even the clerks or the government officials did not decide which category to put Musa Bey's actions in despite the Armenians insisting that the government take action against him.

The Armenians' plea for justice was affirmed and according to a document, it was said that Musa Bey was forced to live in Bitlis after he asked for mercy from the government in 1888.[287] However, Musa Bey was still residing in Muş in 1889. It was suggested to move Musa Bey to another place that did not have a Kurdish population or send him to do hard labor. If Musa Bey were to stay in the current place, then the region would not have public order. The problem with Musa Bey was that his followers were caught which showed his involvement with the banditry. Therefore, it was not acceptable for the local government to allow him to stay in the

[284] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1490-109. 14 Cemaziyelahir 1305 (27 February 1888).
[285] BOA. *DH.MKT.* 1498-108. 2 April 1888.
[286] "Musa beğ namında ~~bir şakinin~~ bir şahsın kura…" 2 April 1888 and "Musa Bey namında birinin…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1507-60. 7 May 1888.
[287] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1605-84. 14 Receb 306 (16 March, 1889).

region after he asked for mercy for his actions. As a result, it was decided that Musa Bey had to come to İstanbul for residence.[288] However, from the petitions sent to Şura-yı Devlet, it is clear that his followers were still acting like bandits. His followers burned the village headman of the Arkovan village alive. However, they did not stop there and killed the father and kidnapped the wife and her sister. The plain of Muş suffered from their acts as claimed by Parsih, Miro, and six other people.

> Not a single bird is flying, all of us are starving… for how many years we became incapable of doing anything except we cry out to the offices with the telegraphs…If the government of the law continues to ignore us then there won't be any power for retaliation against these brigands. The aforementioned brigand continues to destroy a village daily and if the family of this brigand and his followers will not be disciplined then it will not be possible to maintain our order. We have to migrate which will affect the treasury of the state badly. There is a countless number of people migrating…please mercy to expel these people and his brothers with his family and maintain the order. Or for the love of God please save our lives and our dignity for the people who were burned alive and find a solution in the name of justice and humanity.[289]

The telegraph, which was formed by these eight people, clearly shows the acts of Musa Bey. Musa Şaşmaz believes Musa Bey was a scapegoat in the region after he was a suspect in an attack of two American priests in 1883. Later, an Armenian girl Gülizar was kidnapped by him. For Şaşmaz, the Armenians, British consulates, and missionaries made Musa Bey a "target". In order to exonerate him, he details every misconception and problem of the interrogee during the interrogation. He creates a myth around Musa Bey by claiming that if he had been imprisoned, then the Muslims in Eastern Anatolia would be suppressed. However, this narrative jumped from 1883 to 1889 by skipping the events Musa Bey and his men were involved in. As Şaşmaz

[288] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1605-84.
[289] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1617-42. 8 Şaban 1306 (9 April 1889), for the transliterated text see Appendix A, 2.

writes, the court was in İstanbul and many victims did not or could not come to the interrogation, which left the trial incomplete. He believes that every one of the Armenians had a desire to participate in the establishment of an Armenian state but did not ask if these Armenians really pursued this desire.[290] Therefore, what happened in the region was interpreted as political by ignoring Musa Bey's actions.

The Armenians became more and more desperate to find peace after these events at the end of the century. All in all, from the start of the 1860s, the calls for peace and maintaining order by Armenians were not addressed. The inefficiency of the local government and, in the case of Musa Bey, the protection of the bandits also did not solve the problem but hardened the relationship between Kurds and Armenians. Therefore, Armenian parties presented themselves as fighters against these bandits, becoming bandits themselves in the region and purchased weapons. The Armenians were not the only purchasers of weapons, but also Kurds were buying them from Russia. The Fourth Army searched the houses to collect the weapons but this did not bear productive results, so the general of the Fourth Army asked the serasker to prevent the flow of the weapon trade with Russians and native people.[291] Owen Miller claims that the Musa Bey incident resulted in taking the guns of the Armenian peasants in the Muş region between 1889-1890. Before that, they could have firearms. This resulted in the increase of the power of the Armenian revolutionaries in the region as the sole Armenian gunbearers.[292]

The Musa Bey incident increased the tension in the region after he was acquitted from the charges. As Miller writes, the investigation of the weapons in the

[290] Şaşmaz, *Kürt Musa Bey olayı, 1883-1890*, 271.
[291] BOA. *Y. PRK. ASK.* 61-70. 1 Zilkade 1307 (19 June 1890).
[292] Owen Miller, "Sasun 1894: Mountains, Missionaries and Massacres at the End of the Ottoman Empire" (PhD Diss. Columbia University, 2015), 50.

region also extended to the monasteries. This search sparked a reaction from the Armenians in Erzurum in 1890.

In this incident, or known as the Erzurum Incident, the state officials inspected a church in Erzurum in case the Armenian revolutionaries were hiding weapons in it on 19 June 1890. According to the narratives by the Turkish historiography, the Armenian inhabitants who heard about this search closed their shops and gathered in front of the church the next day. On 21 June, the Armenians protested the search by claiming that the Muslims can attack the church; the members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation provoked the Armenian inhabitants. Eventually, the guns fired and eight Armenians and two Muslims died along with many injured people.[293] While local government suppressed the events, the result was fear among both Armenians and Kurds.

After the Erzurum Incident in 1890, the Muslim population became more hostile to Armenians as well as feared by the Armenians. Bitlis government wrote that the Armenians in the Bulanık district were purchasing weapons to prevent any possible event resembling to the Erzurum Incident. Muslim inhabitants in the district started to become fearful since the population in this district was lower than that of Armenians. Therefore, the mutasarrıf of Muş ordered that a battalion be sent to the area for protection from outside of Muş while the battalions in Muş were not moving in case of an event.[294] However, the Muslims were not the only population who were afraid of the others, the Armenians were also afraid. Even though the Erzurum Incident was suppressed, the increase in weapons being purchased showed its effects

[293] Zeynep Cumhur İskefiyeli, "Ermenilerin İlk Büyük Ayaklanması Erzurum Olayı (1890)," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 5 (19), 2005: 108-112.
[294] "Hadise-i malumeden Bulanık kazasınca hiss ü şaiya vuku'yla silah mübaya'a ve teminat edilmekde ve bu halden kabail ve aşair-i İslamiyede fevkalade hal ve heyecan müşahede olunmakda olduğundan…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1739-110. 19 Zilkade 307 (7 July 1890).

because there was an increase in the fights between the population of Armenians, settled Muslims, and Kurdish tribes. The Patriarchate presented some cases that were sent by the monasteries in Muş to the grand vizierate. For instance, Kurdish people killed Markar and Artin who were two guides of the Surp Garabed Monastery, and from then onwards the monastery was no longer accepting visitors since the order was not maintained. Moreover, the Armenians also attacked these Kurdish people to take whatever was stolen from the guides back but five of them were arrested. The Patriarchate emphasized the role the people in the Vartenis village played in the lawsuit against Musa Bey; therefore, Kurds attacked the Vartenis village for retaliation.[295] Even though the village headmen were trying to complain about the Kurds, they were arrested, and then the soldiers went to the Vartenis village and arrested 65 Armenians without explaining the reason for their arrest. Moreover, the Badigan and Bekiran tribes that were spending the summer in the pastures attacked the Armenians and Circassians stole eight horses and burned the stocks of wheat and barley. Therefore, in the end, the Patriarchate explained the actions of the Armenians as self-defense since there was no order for the Armenians to continue to live in the region, so he wanted reforming acts from the Sultan.[296] After looking at the events that happened in almost two months, it is easy to tell that the actions of the Kurds and as well as the Circassians changed the perception of Armenians. They must have thought to protect themselves after looking at the actions of the Kurds and Circassians. They bought weapons, attacked the Kurds for retaliation, and were

[295] "Vartinis karyesi Ermenileri Musa Bey aleyhinde şikâyet ve davaya kıyâm etmiş olmaları hasebiyle bunlar aleyhinde Kürdlerin arz ve husûmetleri derkâr iken şu vukû'âtdan dolayı emniyetleri büsbütün münselib olarak dağılmışlar" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1739-110. 9 July 1890.
[296] BOA. *Y. A. HUS.* 237-97. 21 Zilhicce 307 (8 August 1890).

attacked again. On the other hand, the Bitlis government detailed the events when the Patriarchate claimed that there was no information about what happened.

According to the Bitlis government, the Armenians in the Vartenis village went to a Kurdish village and killed five people, and to prevent retaliation these people were arrested. To calm the region, 100 zaptiyes were brought to the region in case of an event. This attack, said the government, started with the entry of a priest who was expelled from the region in the first place. The priest entered the region disguised in a bride costume and covered his face, yet the Kurds recognized him. As a result, the Armenians started shooting.[297] While they were sending 100 zaptiyes, the Bitlis government wanted to increase the number of zaptiyes to a number higher than that.[298] This increase must have been a result of the fear that the events would continue since the two sides were armed and attacked each other.

The Kurdish tribes were not only having problems with the Armenians but also having problems with rival tribes. For instance, the Hasenanlı tribe in Muş attacked Hınıs and Antab so the ministry ordered the Erzurum province to stop these attacks and maintain order. However, the Sepki tribe in Bayezid stole goods and money from the Hasenanlı tribe because the government could not help them with this issue.[299] Therefore, the Sepki tribe saw the Hasenanlı tribe as a perpetrator and punished the Hasenanlı tribe without any court instead of punishing the government. However, these two tribes became members of the Hamidian Regiments that were established three years later. Thinking that these tribes were already troublemakers for each other and the local people, the choice of the tribes being in the regiments could explain the motives for establishing the Hamidian cavalries. These tribes did

[297] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1743-57. 30 Zilkade 307 (18 July 1890).
[298] BOA. *Y. A. HUS.* 237-3. 2 Zilhicce 307 (20 July 1890).
[299] BOA. *DH.MKT.* 1629-40. 18 Şevval 306 (17 June 1889).

not change in three years and continued to distrust the local government. However, they became members of an institution that played a significant role in the massacres of 1894-1896. Therefore, as Elke Hartmann writes, the establishment of the Hamidian cavalries was an option to share the power.[300] The Hamidian Regiments were the vital force, but before they turned the region upside-down, the reform ideas were still in the heads of the state officials in the 1880s. The next section will look at the reform discourse and how the state officials argued for it.

4.3.2 Reforms in the 1880s or favoring the Kurds

Mehmed Asım, who was the judicial inspector of Trabzon district[301] and traveled through Van, Hakkari, and Bitlis as the judicial inspector of Van province for 21 months, wrote one of the most important reports on this subject. He wrote about the situation in Van, Hakkari, and Bitlis provinces, the relationships between the local people, and the population of the districts in 1881 to provide some general information. He first explained the reason for the establishment of this judicial inspectorship. He argued that the European Powers made the Ottoman Empire establish this judicial inspectorship to control the situation in these districts and implement the "Anatolian Reforms".[302] However, according to Mehmed Asım, the

[300] Hartmann, "The Central State in the Borderlands," 185.
[301] Mehmed Asım was not the only judicial inspector in the region. Ferid Bey was sent to Diyarbekir province in 1880. For more information on Ferid Bey's mission, see Abdulhamit Kırmızı, "1880'de Diyarbekir Vilayetine Gelen İlk Adliye Müfettişinin Sergüzeşti," *e-Şarkiyat İlmi Araştırmalar Dergisi* VII, 2012: 73-90.
[302] Mehmed Asım was referring to the reform attempts of the European Powers in which the Ottoman Empire promised with the Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty. "Avrupa devletlerinin bir suret-i mahsusada iltizam etmelerinde mer'i olub gavail-i mezkure cümlesinden biri de *Anadolu ıslahatı namıyla afaka münteşir* olan mes'ele-i mahalliyeyi suret-pezir icra etmek maksadıyla Avrupa'nın gösterdiği tehalük tam olduğundan Avrupa hey'et-i mütemeddinesinin tevcihine mazhariyeti nazarlarda orduca ehemmiyetli görünen mes'eleyi…" BOA. *Y.PRK.AZN.* 1-50.

establishment of this mission was not due to the importance of improving the lifestyle of the inhabitants but rather that Europe was pushing for the reforms.

His report has documented the prejudice against the Armenians and how the Armenians were trying to get rid of the Kurdish inhabitants. In these 21 months, he investigated the Armenians and Kurds and their lifestyle in these districts. For instance, he commented on the Kurdish economic lifestyle in regard to the animal trade and the dispensability of the pastures for them. According to him, the Armenians were trying to have the Kurds banned from using the pastures for their safety. Although this was a legitimate wish, the use of the pastures was "a matter of life" for the Kurds and they would be miserable without their use.[303] Mehmed Asım, in this report, acknowledged the problems Armenians had but he tried to display that the Kurds were not the real problem-causers by giving the rates of Armenian and Kurdish prisoners. For instance, he said if there were 10 people accused of murdering someone, four of them were Armenians and the rest were Kurds and people from other millets. According to the report, the Armenians committed most of the crimes, but they were complaining to European countries and framing themselves as the victims.[304] However, he only gave one example of Armenians as the perpetrator. One night, a major had to spend a night in an Armenian village with his money but the village people attacked and wounded him and his family. Mehmed Asım did not give any specific details about this event but his narrative does not answer why a village

[303] "Ermenilerin teminat-ı mahsuslarından biri te'min-i asayiş bahanesiyle Kürdlerin mevsim-i sayfda yaylaklara gitmelerini men' etmekdir. Vakıa temin-i asayiş arzusu bir iktiza-yı ictimanın ifadesi olduğu derpiş olunduk da meşru' görünüyor ise de Ekradın mevsim-i sayfda …nişin olarak yaylaklarda bulunmaları mücerred sermaye-i ticaretleri olan koyunları ra'y etmek için olduğuna mebni bu kaziyenin Kürdler için bir mesele-i hayatiye demek olduğu ve ra'y-ı ağnam edilecek olur ise Kürdlerin mahrur-ı perişan olacakları bedihidir." BOA. *Y. PRK. AZN.* 1-50.
[304] "Nüfus-ı İslamiye'ye nisbetle Ermenilerin akliyeti pîş-i nazaran meane alındık da vukuat-ı cinaiyenin ekserisini Ermeniler tarafından ika' olunmuş olduğu sabit olur iken yine Ermeniler bir takım isnadat ve mübalagat ile Avrupa nazarında kendilerini şimdide sitem-dide göstermekdedirler." BOA. *Y. PRK. AZN.* 1-50.

folk attacked the major even though the Armenians would have guessed the gendarmeries would be sent to their village. It is clear that he is hiding some details, such as if did the major want to take money from the village because, in previous times, the expense of a military person would have to be compensated by the village. However, I could not find a document from the archives about this event so this event is suspicious.

Mehmed Asım also claimed the crimes that Kurds were being accused of were an exaggeration. He continued by saying that the Kurds were being victimized because of their illiteracy, so even if the Kurds were right in the courts, the Armenians would be free because the Kurds did not have any defense other than saying "You know it!"[305] Mehmed Asım's suggestion to raise the literacy rate was to establish more schools available for the Muslim population. With these, they would be able to defend themselves in the courts and Armenians would not complain to the European countries. Even though Mehmed Asım claimed the crimes of Kurds were an exaggeration, the second half of the 1880s reflected the opposite as mentioned above.

While focusing on the reforms, petitions of the people pointed out the inefficiency of the local government to their problems. For instance, the governor of Bitlis, İbrahim Edhem in 1887, acknowledged that while the Kurdish tribes and other tribes were attacking the Armenian population, it was known that a plea to the local government would not bring any solution to their problems or to prevent these

[305] "Mesela bir Ermeninin iddiası üzerine mahkemeye ihzar olunan bir Kürd isticvab olunduk da "sen biliyorsun" sözünden başka suretle müdafaaya muktedir olamayıb Ermenilerin tezviratı ile mazlumiyetini isbat edecek yerde maznuniyetini şiddetlendirecek kadar hukuk-ı şahsiyesinden bî-haber olduğu ekser-i vakıadır." BOA. *Y. PRK. AZN.* 1-50.

attacks.[306] When the local inhabitants realized that the local authorities would not help them, they tried to find a solution in other districts. For instance, people from the Kasor sub-district in 1888, complained about the people who oppressed them.

The oppressors were ordered to be arrested by the Bitlis province. However, the zaptiyes in Muş did not arrest them because "they did not pay attention to the judicial treatments." [307] After that, people from the Kasor sub-district went to the Van Court of Appeals to report the mistreatment from the zaptiyes. From there, this issue went to the Ministry of Justice and with the help of the Ministry of Interior, correspondence was sent to the Bitlis province to inform the zaptiyes of the content of their jobs and to help if needed. As this case showed, what the state officials did affected the people in terms of their livelihood.

İsmail Bey, the district governor of Bulanık, did not agree with what the Armenians claimed. According to him, these telegraphs were wrong since they claimed that the local government did not act in favor of maintaining order. As a matter of fact, he wrote, "Even before the central government asks for something the local government was already doing that thing and the local government asks for everything from the central government." [308] Therefore, the idea of improving the

[306] "Eğerci Bitlisin etraf ve eknafı daire-i medeniyeye henüz takrib edebilemeyen akvam ve kabail-i müteaddide ve muhtelife-i aşair ve ekrad ile mal-a-mal olub bunların ahali-i mut'i ve bî-tahsis Ermeni ahali-i kurrasına bazen vuku'bulan taarruzlarından dolayı ahali-i merkumeye hükümet-i metbularına müracaatla ifade-i hal ve iştikaya hakk-ı u mecburiyet verebilir ise de ne çare ki Ermeni ahalisinin müracaatları matuflarının gayri mahallerde aksi etmek kendilerinin fikrlerinece pek de selameti isbat edemez" BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 10-87. 20 Rebiülevvel 1305 (6 December 1887).
[307] "Muş kazasına tabi' Kasor nahiyesi ahalisine icra-yı zulm ve ta'addi eden eşhasın celb ve ihzarları hakkında verilen müzekkereler ahkamı Muş zabıtasınca icra edilemediğinden naşi vilayet-i behiyyelerine icra-yı tebligat olunmuş ise de vilayet ve mülhakat zabıtalarının mu'amelat-ı adliyeye kat'a ehemmiyet vermedikleri ve bu hal tedkikat-ı adliyeye sekte iras eylemekde olduğu Van istinaf mahkemesi müddei umumiliğinden bildirildiğinden…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1524-28. 7 Zilkade 1305 (16 July 1888).
[308] " mesalih-i mülkiye ve resmiyenin matlub-ı aliye takribi ve ahalisinin ıslah-ı efkarı ve te'min-i ahvali pek çok himmete pek çok tedbire mütevakkıf olub bu suretlerin mevki-i husüle konulmasına taallük edecek tedabirin derece-i ehemmiyetle mevki'in çakerlerince ma'lum olan ehemmiyet ve hususiyet vakıası bi'l-muvazene teşebbüsat-ı lazımeye devam olunmakda ve nevakıs-ı livanın

Bulanık district was not a good act because the local government was already improving the sub-province and province. Even though the district governor did not give any detail about the improvements in order to maintain order, the construction of a police station was one precaution in the region to stop the attacks.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the authorities investigated the killing of three Chechens and wounding one of them by interrogating Kurdish people in 1888. The investigation could not be finalized, but there was an order to construct a police station in the village.[309] Chechens in the village were armed and detained Kurdish people by themselves in case the suspected Kurds were the perpetrators. Six months later, this order to construct the police station came out which shows the limitation of the use of arms for the Chechens since the Chechens chose to detain the Kurds close to their village.

The reform movements now became a problem for the region. The Armenians became visible with the pressure of the European Powers and the Armenian revolutionaries were taking an active role in fighting in the region. The attitude of the state officials changed and began to praise the Kurds. Mehmed Asım's efforts to exonerate the Kurds against the blames of crimes were continuing with the efforts of the higher-level state officials. For instance, at the end of the 1880s, the tribes who were attacking the villages were still coming to the Muş region. The Ministry of Interior, however, did not accept the accusations but wrote that the Armenians wanted "Kurds to be crushed with the help of army forces and to prove their claims about Kurdish oppression", essentially that Armenians framed the

keyfiyeti ve esbab-ı ıslahiyenin derecatı anlaşıldıkça huzur-ı ali-i vilayetpenahilerini ta'cizden geri durulmamakdadır." BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 15-133. 3 Cemaziyelahir 1307 (25 January 1890).
[309] BOA. *ZB.* 703-28 and BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1690-3. 24 Cemaziyelevvel 1307 (16 January 1890).

Kurdish people.[310] The ministry also ordered the Bitlis government to send an order to the mutasarrıf of Muş to stop Kurds' ignorant behaviors like stealing animals because they were "the brave Muslim tribes".[311] These brave tribes, as the ministry called them, were also mentioned in the report written by Mehmed Salih, the mutasarrıf of Muş and Siirt and who was in Bitlis province for eight years and illustrated the general situation of the district, but specifically the Muş region.

Mehmed Salih claimed the total population of the Bitlis province, of which two-thirds of the population was Muslim while one-third was non-Muslim, and the numbers might be even miscalculated since some of the tribes and neighborhoods were not included. Therefore, he believed that the total population of the district was composed of 80 percent of Muslims and 20 percent of non-Muslims. He depicted the Kurds as brave and loyal even though they did not go to school. He claimed to be taking part in stopping the fight between Kurdish tribes like Reşgutan, Hasenanlı, and Sason.[312] Now, the tribes became loyal to the orders of the sultan. According to Mehmed Salih, the Armenians could not dare to make a plot because of the existence of the Kurds. However, people who went to the schools were highly effective at influencing Armenians "who would not dare to rebel against the state."[313] Therefore,

[310] "…işbu fezahatın mütecasirleri Ermeniler olduğu halde bunun Ermeniler tarafından Kürtlere isnad olunması kuvve-i cünudiye ile Kürtleri ezdirmek ve Kürtlerin mezalimi hakkındaki vâhi iddialarını haklı göstermek maksadına müstenid olduğuna…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1768-14. 22 Safer 308 (7 October 1890)

[311] "…cengaver olan aşair-i islamiyenin celb koluna(?) çalışması ve tedricen harekat-ı cahilanelerinin izalesi zımnında muş kumandanlığına tebligat-ı lazıme icra…" BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1768-14.

[312] He claims the reason of the fights between the tribes was the ignorance. BOA. *Y. PRK. AZJ*. 17-116. 13 November 1890.

[313] "Ermeniler Kürdler ile karışık bir halde ve hatta sülasi mikdarı Ermenice bilmeyerek Kürdce mütekellim bulunmalarına binaen bunlar kendi hallerine kalmış olsalar hiçbir zaman ahval-i isyana ve efkar-ı muzırraya mütecasir ve alet olamayacakları derkar ise de bunlar meyanında biraz maarif görmüş öteye beriye gitmiş olanlar daima ahlakı bozulmamış olan Ermenilere birtakım tatmi'at ve teminat ile ilkaatdan hali kalmamakda ve bu hallerine saika-i cehaletle o gibi Ermeniler üzerinde tesirat-ı muzırrası görülmekdedir." BOA. *Y. PRK. AZJ.* 17-116.

as mentioned above, Natanyan Margos, Sapan Mıgırdiç, and the bishop Kirkor were exiled to various places.

The most important contribution of this report was that a state official in the region was populated by Armenians and Kurds saw the Kurds as a barrier to the anti-state acts by Armenians. Mehmed Salih claimed "Armenians could not resist even one hour against the Kurds" because the Kurds were loyal Muslim people whose contributions to the state were known and majority in the region. [314] Therefore, what needed to be done was to refrain the leaders of the tribes from being reprimanded. Otherwise, if the Kurds would see the traces of any such action, then, they would come together with the Armenians, which would be a problem for the government.[315] Regardless, two units of cavalries were permanently patrolling the Muş region, one in Kasor and the other in Handırıs, so the security was increased in the region.

Mehmed Salih's report is important since it was written almost one year before the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments. Favoring the Kurds was the main motive of the report because of their religion. Mehmed Salih, on the one hand, saw the Kurds as making up the majority of the region and the powerful entity. On the other hand, he feared the possibility of the Kurds helping the Armenians. Therefore, the mentality of the local officer was to incorporate the Kurds into the

[314] "Tafsilat-ı maruzadan muhat-ı ilm-i ali-i hidivileri buyurulacağı vechle Kürdlerin rüesa ve efradı nur-ı maarifle pek de hisse-mend olamamışlar ise de devlete aid ubudiyet ve sadakat ve taassüb-i İslamiye ve gayret ve hamiyetleri derece-i kemalde bulunduğu ve nüfusça da Ermenilerin 4 misli ziyade oldukları cihetle Maazallah-i Teala hilaf-ı marazi-i ali bir guna hal vuku'nda bunlara karşı Ermeniler hükümsüz ve kati'yen hükümden sakat olarak savlet-i Ekrada karşı bir saat bile mukavemet edemeyecekleri şübhesizdir." BOA. *Y. PRK. AZJ.* 17-116.

[315] "…rüesa-yı aşayir ve ekradı müvahaza ve kesr-i nüfuz ve haysiyetlerine teşebbüsden ol-mertebe mütevakki ve mücanebet olunması feraiz-i umurdandır. Çünkü bunlar Ermenilerin ifadat ve ilkaatının nezd-i hükümetde müessir olduğunu hiss ü teferrüs eylerler ise hükümete mukarenetden mübaadet ve ika'-i müşkilata mücaseret ve birtakımı da Ermenilere müracaatla hüsn-i şehadetlerini celbe müsaberet ederek bu suret ise oraca pek muzırr olur. Hükümet-i mahalliye sahihen iltizam-ı adl ve hakkaniyetle rüesa-yı aşair ve ekradı te'min-i vecdi suretde tehdid etmesiyle Ermenileri taaddiyat ve şikayatdan muhafaza etmiş olacağı şüphesizdir." BOA. *Y. PRK. AZJ.* 17-116.

state apparatus. Although he did not write that directly in the report, he indirectly advocated that the government could be more respectful against them.

4.4 Conclusion

The period between 1865-1890 can be regarded as the era of reform attempts in the region. These years can be divided into two in terms of the purpose of the reforms. In the first period, the reforms were directed against the Kurdish tribes who used force and attacked local inhabitants. As comprehensive reforms, the Muş reforms that were tied to the Muş Investigation in 1869 produced various efforts to stop the attacks of the Kurds. However, the results were not satisfactory and the attempts continued. The breakpoint was in 1878 when the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 forced the empire to make reforms in the region once again under European pressure. While the possibility of the reforms in the region was investigated the reform attempts changed to favor the Kurds, which escalated the violence in the region. The state could not or did not stop the violence because the mindset of the state officials was centered on the Pan-Islamic policy of the 1880s which resulted in the Hamidian Regiments. The ideas of these state officials helped the state to establish the regiments. The reforms, on the other hand, slowed down because of favoring the Kurds. They claimed that the Kurds were illiterate, so the Armenians would benefit from this situation like in the case of Mehmed Asım, or as Mehmed Salih claimed, that the favoritism of Kurds was important for the region because they were restraining the Armenians. Even before the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments, the state officials were underlining the importance of the Kurdish people. Therefore, the contribution of the state officials in terms of incorporating the Kurds into the state apparatus is also as

important as the regiments being created. State officials' decisions could affect the higher-level officials but also peasants. The next chapter will examine a case study on land dispute between Surp Garabed Monastery and the peasants in Girvas-ı Ûlya village. The governor's decision changed the events entirely so I will focus on how the peasants and monastery acted.

CHAPTER 5

HOW COME A MUSLIM CAN DESTROY A MOSQUE? THE DESTRUCTION OF GİRVAS VILLAGE

On 13 November 1881, a priest named Vartan son of Agob, a representative of Surp Garabed Monastery, appeared on the Muş Court of the First Instance (*bidayet mahkemesi*) to end a dispute between the peasants in Girvas-ı Ûlya village and the monastery. Vartan and members of the village were present in the court. The dispute was about who possessed the land, the peasants, or the monastery. This dispute continued from 1881 to 1892 until the Şura-yı Devlet decided the monastery was the possessor of the land. This dispute is examined by Rıza Beroje and Mehmed Mahfuz Söylemez, both of whom claimed that the land was given to the peasants.[316] While Beroje highlighted the impartiality of the Ottoman courts during the court process, Söylemez emphasized religious tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims.[317] Söylemez claimed that this dispute did not result in a fight and how tolerance was widespread in the region.[318] However, unlike both researchers' emphasis, this dispute in the region showed neither impartiality nor tolerance. This event already falsifies "tolerance" discourse by showing how the peasants in the village, Kurds, attacked the monastery or destroyed its possessions.[319]

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[316] Mehmet Mahfuz Söylemez, "Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Arakonak (Gırvas) Beldesi," *II. Bingöl Sempozyumu*, (Bingöl: Bingöl Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2009), 251-261 and Rıza Beroje, "Muş Surp Garabed Manastırı," (M.A. Thesis, Dicle Üniversitesi, 2019).
[317] Beroje, *Muş Surp Garabed Manastırı*, 133.
[318] Söylemez, *Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında,* 253.
[319] Metin Hülagü and et la. claimed that the "tolerance" in the Ottoman Empire was in harmony until the European Powers "poisoned" the Armenians and made them return their back to the "tolerant" Ottomans. This discourse does not focus on the state and its capacity but the main problem was the Armenian revolutionary movement as well as European Powers. Metin Hülagü, Süleyman Demirci, Şakir Batmaz, Gülbadi Alan, (eds.), *Hoşgörü Toplumunda Ermeniler*: *Osmanlı Toplumunda Birlikte Yaşama Sanatı: Türk Ermeni İlişkileri Örneği* (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2007), viii; for a critique

However, this dispute also cannot be considered simply as a case of the deteriorated relationship between Kurds and Armenians. As will be showed, this dispute was not centered on the relationship between the monastery and the government officials but instead, it was the peasants' strategies against the latter. Therefore, I argue that the peasants used the payment of the taxes and Islamic discourse to show their loyalty to the government and own the land and gain an advantage against the monastery and the government officials who sided with the monastery. I will first underline the village's characteristics and why there was a dispute after all, and by focusing on government officials who were involved in this case, I will examine the relationship between the government officials, the peasants, and the monastery. Finally, I will show the use of the Islamic and "savagery" discourses by the officials, monastery, and peasants. In this case, the land issue was centered on an Armenian monastery, which tried to get rid of a Kurdish village surrounding its land. This case showed that Kurdish people also suffered from the decisions and it should not be claimed the only victims in the land issue were Armenians, but the peasants in the region as a whole became a part of the issue.

5.1 The first case

Vartan went to the court to get the disputed land on the behalf of the monastery in 1881. The land, according to Vartan, comprised 100 acres of meadows and fields and 1000 acres of pasture, and the monastery has been the possessor of this land for 100 years. Vartan claimed that 30 years ago, Senco bin Hamo, Muso bin Yaşar, Ahmed bin Osman, Reco bin Resul, Ömer bin Sofi Yusuf, and Mehmed bin Ömer who were

of this tolerance discourse, see Uğur Bayraktar and Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Sorunlar" Gölgesinde Tanzimat Döneminde Kürtlerin Ve Ermenilerin Tarihi," *Kebikeç* 42 (2016).

members of Boğlan tribe from Genç district came to the disputed area and Kasım bin Mahmud also joined them five or six months ago. By destroying the meadows and fields, these people constructed houses and used pasture with force. There was an investigation about the disputed land two years ago, according to Vartan, and the monastery acquired a title deed concerning the land. Vartan wanted the houses to be destroyed, banning these people from coming to this land, and pastures and fields to be given to the monastery.[320]

On the same day, the court listened to the defendants whose names were mentioned above. The defendants claimed that in that land there were 21 houses, and the monastery did not have any rights on these lands because, for 200 years, they were the possessors of the land. While the defendants had nine witnesses for their claims, Vartan brought six witnesses and added that there were other witnesses who were not present at the court. [321] Vartan's witnesses agreed that Senco and Muso fought with their neighbors 33-35 years ago then they came to this disputed land. The document did not show how the defendants presented their case to the court other than denying the claims of Vartan. Therefore, the court rejected the claims of the defendants and gave the land to the monastery by using the Land Code of 1858 and Mecelle. According to 97th article of the Land Code;

> …Meras reserved ab antiquo to the inhabitants of one village only, or in common to the inhabitants of several villages, cannot be bought or sold, enclosures, sheepfolds and other buildings cannot be made on them, they cannot be created into vineyards or gardens by planting trees or vines. If anyone has erected buildings or planted trees, the inhabitants can at any time have them demolished or pulled up. Permission cannot be given to anyone to break them up for cultivation like other arable land. If anyone cultivates them he will be ejected. They shall remain as meras always.[322]

[320] BOA. *ŞD.* 2564-20, 7. 1 Kanunuevvel 1297 (13 December 1881).
[321] BOA. *ŞD.* 2564-20, 7.
[322] *The Ottoman Land Code*, 50-51.

Moreover, the 906th article of the Mecelle also emphasized the importance of the meras as communal areas. According to the article,

> If the property wrongfully appropriated is land and the person wrongfully appropriating such property constructs buildings or plants trees thereon, such person shall be ordered to restore such land after uprooting the trees or pulling down the buildings. If the fact of pulling down the buildings or of uprooting the trees causes injury to the lands, the person whose land has been wrongfully appropriated may take possession of such buildings or trees upon paying the pulling-down value thereof. If the value of the buildings or trees is greater than that of the land, however, and such buildings or trees have been constructed or planted under the belief that there was some legal justification for so doing, the owner of the buildings or trees may claim to be vested with the ownership of the land, upon paying the price, therefore.[323]

These two articles from two different codes confirmed the land that the villagers took possession of was meadows. Therefore, people could not build or erect anything in these communal areas because, as the code said, their status had to continue as such. Mecelle also gave a chance to the monastery to destroy everything in that area but also by paying the peasants monastery would get the land because the value of the buildings was greater than the land. Thereafter, the monastery agreed to pay 6,300 kuruş to the peasants in return for taking possession of the land and destroying the houses, barns, and other things, and prevention the peasants to enter the land. The court also decreed to take 325 kuruş from Vartan for the expenses of the court.

This court decree given by the court of the first instance in Muş started a decade of a prolonged process of courts and appeals involving many ministries and Şeyhülislam. This decree was not the first attempt of Vartan trying to displace the peasants. According to the summary of this decree given by the court of the first instance, Vartan claimed the monastery possessed a title deed for this land, which

[323] *Al-Majalla al-Ahkam al-Adaliyyah*: (the Ottoman Courts Manual (Hanafi)), (USA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

was taken two years ago after an investigation.[324] It is not known whether Vartan attempted to displace these people in these two years or not, but Vartan emphasized Kasım's presence, as mentioned above. Kasım came to the village five or six months ago, and since that time, the monastery must have thought to take an action.

It is not known from the documents that why the decision did not take into consideration of this title deed during the court. The monastery would easily prove that the land was their property in the first place. Therefore, it is not convincing that the monastery had a title deed because the deed was a product of an investigation in the village in 1879 which the peasants later claimed that there was no investigation until this decree came out in 1881.[325] It is possible that the title deed Vartan claims may not be apparent during the case. However, it is not understandable why Vartan did not bring it. No matter what Vartan sought ways to displace the peasants after the decree came out and until 1887, he did not get a result for the displacement of people in the village. Before seeing the developments in this village, it is important to focus on the villagers who they were, what their occupation was, or how much worth their houses or lands had.

[324] "…hudud-ı mezkurede vaki mera ve çayır ve tarlaha-yı mezkura manastır-ı mezburun kadimen hakk-ı karar ve tasarrufu olduğu bundan iki sene evvel keşf-i muayene ile tapuya rabt olduğu…" BOA. *ŞD.* 2564-20,7.

[325] "…manastır tarafından doksan yedi tarihine kadar bir gün müdahale vuku'nı işitmemiş…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17,7. There was no date in this document but it is apparent that it was sent after Edhem Pasha sent his defense.

5.2 The village and the peasants

In the region, there were two Girvas villages one is Girvas-ı Ûlya and the other Girvas-ı Sufla. The documents tell us that the distance between the two villages was fifteen minutes and the Boğlan village's distance to Girvas-ı Ûlya is 1,5 hours and the Bağlı-ı İsa village (now the Bağlı village) is 4,5 hours further than Girvas-ı Ûlya.[326] On behalf of 26 people from the village, an unsigned document sent by a fifty-year-old man detailed who the peasants were. 13 out of 26 people were considered "wealthy people" and the rest was mentioned as "common people". According to this document, each one of them had oxen and tools for agriculture. The surplus from agriculture was exported and the wealthy people were a part of the sheep trade circle that was sent to Harput and Halep.[327] As is shown in Appendix E, the village consisted of 43 houses and 262 people 155 women and 107 men.[328] The population, however, was decreasing. The famine which was occurred multiple times in the region caused a decreasing number of people but the famine was not the sole factor.[329] The conscription to the army was a determining factor for men to stay at the village or to run away from the village. Therefore, the mutasarrıf of Genç sub-district[330] wrote that the peasants hid men in order to show the government officials

[326] BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17,8. 25 Haziran 1306 (7 July 1890).
[327] "…ahalisinin cümlesinin çift öküz ve edevatı mevcud olmasıyla her sene zer' eyledikleri arazilerinin mahsulünden kendüleri idare ve ta'ayyüş eyledikden sonra ba'zıları harice zahire füruht eyledikleri… Halep ve Harput taraflarına koyun sevkiyle ticaret eyler takımından oldukları civar kura ve nevahi ahalilerinin ma'lumu…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17,7.
[328] BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17,8.
[329] For famine in Ottoman Empire in 1880, see Özge Ertem, "Considering Famine in the Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Framework and Overview," *COLLeGIUM* 22, no. 9 (2017).
[330] Genç sub-province was a part of Bitlis province until the end of the empire. Before the establishment of the province, it was a district in Bitlis. Genç was very close to the Muş sub-province it is claimed the people in village was paying taxes to the Genç sub-province during this period. Ela Özkan, "19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti'nin İdari Taksimatı (1839-1914)," (PhD Diss. Fırat Üniversitesi, 2017), 178.

there were not enough men for conscription.[331] Moreover, the peasants owned 43 houses and lands (in some it was counted as 42 houses) according to a land and population survey.

Registers count 37 people who had either house or land or both. The total estimation of the worth of 42 houses and 706 evlek dönüm[332] is 147875 kuruş. To take into consideration the money given by the monastery, it corresponds to roughly 1/23 of the total worth. In terms of their houses and lands, the records show us that 6,300 kuruş that was given by the monastery to the peasants was very small. It is understandable the peasants' complaints since they cannot earn livings with the money given to them. As is shown in Appendix F, there are seven women who owned both house and land or one of them.[333] These seven women, Medine bint Ahmed, Hedi bint Güleş(?), Zeyni bint Abdullah, Nevli bint Halil, Medine bint Abdullah, and Peri bint Talo did not have any voice in the document written by fifty-years-old man's writings or population census which counted men as the owners of the houses. Therefore, they must be the close relatives of the "ehl-i servet" like daughters, wives, mothers, or even widows. The six women except Peri bint Talo had houses but Peri had only lands. Since the common people have a similar value to their house, it is not probable to think that their affinity with common people. Except for Hedi and Peri, their house worthed similar while Medine bint Ahmed's house was worth 750 kuruş, Nevli bint Halil, Fatıma bint Ahmed, and Medine bint Abdullah's houses net worth was 500 kuruş. However, Hedi was the richest among them. She had one house and five evlek of land their total worth was 3,625 kuruş.

[331]"mükellefiyet-i askeriye-i havffıyla nüfuslarını ve virgülerinin taklil ve 'adem-i itası …siyle hane ve arazilerini ketm ve ihfa ile yazdırmamalarından…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 2. 19 July 1890.
[332] Evlek is ¼ of dönüm. For more information see; Feridun Emecen, "Dönüm," 521.
[333] BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 9.

Another interesting point about these registers is that six people who did not have a house in the village occupied 556 evlek out of 706 evlek dönüm. Of these seven people, two of them are clearly out of the village. Vartolu Nadir bin Hamo and Şero from Girvas-ı Sufla were not from the village. Interestingly there is a woman Peri bint Talu in this village who owned land but no house with her business partner. While the land Yusuf held had more value than Peri it is interesting to see about this partnership. These six people possessed more than 76 percent of the evlek and compiled half of the estimated price in the registers. What happened after Vartan got the decree to displace people even though the registers were in detail about the estimated values of the people's possessions?

Even though Vartan got permission to prevent the peasants to enter the land he could not execute it. From an official letter sent to Fetullah Efendi who was a member of the administrative council in Muş, it is clear that the peasants resisted the decision. To help the monastery, this letter wrote, the court decreed to send officers to the village along with a member of court Tatyos who was representing the monastery.[334] Although there was an order to execute the decree the attempts became futile because almost six months later, and Vartan was still complaining. Vartan sent a petition to the Ministry of Justice to complain about not fulfilling the court decision. In the petition, he wrote that he was waiting for nine months for the execution of the decision. After a long wait of more than five years, in a decree dated 30 April 1887, Hüseyin Bey, the head of sub-district of Handırıs, along with members of the council went to the aforementioned village and gave the news to the peasants but they did not listen and did not accept the decree.[335] Therefore, Halil who

[334] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 27. 25 Haziran 1302 (7 July 1886).
[335] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 4. 21 Nisan 1303 (3 May 1887).

was an officer in the court of first appeals in Muş wrote that the help of the government was expected for this situation.[336] However, as time passed, the rhetoric changed from giving the news with tears to the *Ekrad-ı vahşiye* (*uncivilized Kurds).*

In a previous decree written by Halil on 3 May 1887, the help of government was written as "hükümet-i seniyye" (*Sultan's government*) and the peasants as "karye-i mezkure ahalisi" (*people from the aforementioned village*). After 27 days, there is another decree written by Halil changed the address for help. Now, the need for help had to come with "kuvve-i zaptiye" (*power of the zaptiye*) and the peasants turned from people to the "Ekrad-ı vahşiye".[337]

The documents do not provide us the exact date when the zaptiyes came and displaced the peasants but this slight change in the tone must be a result of the clash between government officials and the peasants. In a decree dated 16 June 1887, the events followed as such: the peasants did not accept any offer from the monastery and but officials went to the village again. The peasants were gathered and the situation was pronounced. However, Senco, Ahmed, Ali, and Abdullah refused the displacement decision, other peasantries also did not accept it hereupon zaptiye Esad and Hasan attacked the peasants but help was needed.[338] So, a platoon was sent to the village which was under the command of Şükrü Bey.[339] After that, the peasants were banished and the village as well as the mosque and four cemeteries were destroyed. However, what happened in these five and a half years from the time Vartan asked

[336] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 4. 21 Nisan 1303 (3 May 1887).
[337] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8; 4,3. 18 Mayıs 1303 (30 May 1887).
[338]Ba-tekrar mezkur Girvas karyesine gidilmiş ve karye-i mezkure ahalileri celb ve cem' ettirilerek keyfiyet tefhim olunmuş ise de karye-i mezkur ahalilerinden Senco ve Ahmed ve Ali ve Abdullahın temerrüdleri üzerine ahali-i merkume bu cihete de ru-yi rıza göstermediklerinden başka refakat-i âcizi de bulunan zaptiye Es'ad ve Hasan üzerlerine hücum suretini de göstermeleri ve hükm-i ilamın icrası kuvve-i kafiye-i iraesine muhtaç idüğü bu bedihisi bulunduğu…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8;4. 4 Haziran 1304 (16 June1888).
[339] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 28. 25 Haziran 1304 (7 July 1888).

for the destruction of the village many times from 1881 to 1887 and why the government officials agreed to execute the decree or, to put it simply, who ordered to make the execution of the court order?

5.3 Search for the culprit

For five years, Vartan tried to get the land but officials were not cooperative. However, after 1887, the monastery managed to take the village with the help of officials during Edhem Pasha's governorship. Edhem Pasha was appointed to the Bitlis governorship in 1887. He stayed in this position for two years and various petitions and correspondences claimed that Edhem Pasha abused his power. Edhem Pasha's actions in the district were significant since the government became suspicious of him. For instance, there was a complaint about Edhem Pasha from Muş district because he was interfering in judicial decisions.[340] Moreover, the government was paying for the governors' tours in the districts and Edhem Pasha was one of them getting paid. However, in Edhem Pasha's case, there was an anomaly because his claims for the expense of these tours are more than it cost. The government after his governorship ordered him to pay this money back.[341] Another document is about conspiring to rig the bid for the tithe of Ahlat district in Bitlis. In this document, Edhem Pasha's abuse of power is visible not only for the fraud but also for oppressing people and immigrants, which resulted in a migration from their houses. Edhem Pasha had no prestige among the local people, and because of his oppression

[340] BOA. *DH. MKT.* 1586-80. 11 Kanunusani 1304 (23 January 1889). The laws concerning Nizamiye courts that were proclaimed in 1879 and courts' scheme required the governors to abstain from judicial decisions. This attempt of separation of powers in the government, however, was resisted by the governors. For more information, see, Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts*: *Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 38-44.
[341] BOA. *DH.MKT.* 1797-55. 9 Kanunuevvel 1306 (21 December 1890).

and he even had to protect his household with guards because "their houses being shot and men are being killed and stolen."[342] Therefore, Edhem Pasha was dismissed from his governorship. These three events are instances of the misbehavior of Edhem Pasha, and it is no wonder that in this disputed land issue Edhem Pasha was questioned. The documents tell us that Edhem Pasha's actions made the peasants displaced as the government officials claimed which will be mentioned below. The Bitlis governors before Edhem Pasha did not approve the transfer of this land, but the monastery became the possessor of the land during Edhem Pasha's governorship.[343] Therefore, the authorities requested Edhem Pasha's defense and he sent it.

The accusations centered on two issues. First, the displacement was done by the orders of Edhem Pasha and how a governor agreed to destroy a village that consisted of a mosque and Muslim cemeteries. In his defense, he rejected both accusations by claiming that there was no village in the first place. He introduced two people in the defense: the mufti of Genç, İskender, and the well-known Mehmed Agha from Boğlan village. Edhem Pasha claimed that these two people joined the discussion of possession of this disputed land during the pasha's first Bitlis tour. According to Edhem Pasha, İskender and Mehmed claimed that they possessed the disputed land. There is no record of what İskender and Mehmed claimed other than Edhem Pasha's claims. Therefore, it is possible that Edhem Pasha tried to convince authorities that he was seeking the truth against the people who were not the

[342] "Vali-i müşarünileyhin ahali nazarında haysiyet ve itibarı kalmadığı ve geceleri hanesini zabıtalar ile muhafaza ettirilmekde olduğu ve erkan-ı vilayetin hanelerine kurşunlar atılmakda ve adam öldürülüp soyulmakda bulunduğu muharrer olarak fi'l-hakika yukarıda beyan olduğunu vechle umur-ı mevkulesini yerliden bulunan bir mümeyyize tevdi' eden valinin nazar-ı ahalide haysiyet ve ehemmiyeti olamayacağı gibi şu hal ile müşarünileyhin idame-i memuriyeti ahalisi ekrad ve âşairden ibaret olan Bitlis vilayetinin şirasında(?) intizam ve inzibatı bütün bütün ihlal edeceğinden vali-i müşarünileyin hemen tebdili…" BOA. *Y. A. RES.* 48-7, 2. 15 Mart 1305 (27 March 1889).
[343] Before Edhem Pasha there were three governors in Bitlis who did not approve the execution of the decree. Sinan Kuneralp, *Son dönem Osmanlı ricali*, 28.

possessor of the land but wanted to be. Edhem Pasha exemplified this by emphasizing that mufti was questioning the events rather than claiming the land for his possession. Edhem Pasha provided details about the disputed land, it was further than half an hour distance to the mountain. Around this land, there were only four or five shepherds and 10-12 beggars (*saile*). Edhem Pasha built his argument through how the mufti was disappointed in the answers given by shepherds and beggars. Edhem Pasha did not elaborate on the mufti's disappointment but it is clear that the beggars as Edhem Pasha called them disproved the mufti's claims on possessing the land.

After questioning "beggars", Edhem Pasha along with the mufti and Mehmed Agha went to the monastery to discuss the disputed land. In this discussion, the monastery priests explained to the mufti how the land was part of the monastery's meadow for its animals.[344] Edhem claimed that mufti "…could not find a word to say and felt embarrassed" and then Edhem Pasha became the mediator between two sides but he did not express how or what subjects he mediated. Along with the mufti, Mehmed Agha is one major character in Edhem Pasha's defense. Edhem Pasha claims Mehmed Agha was a guardian of people living on that land but we do not hear anything from Mehmed Agha reflected by Edhem Pasha in his defense. Moreover, the peasants are out of context in his defense, and to silence them more Edhem Pasha pointed to Mehmed Agha as the guardian of the "beggars". Mehmed Agha's role ended with his death, so the pasha did not have an eyewitness for cross-

[344] "Manastır rahibleri ve Muş murahhasa vekili yedlerinde bulunan mufassal(?) mahkeme mazbatasıyla evrak-i saireyi ve cereyan-i hali müfti-i mümaileyh huzurunda bir tafsil-i beyan ve arazi-i merkume-i manastır hayvanatının kadimen otlağı olup orada karye olmadığını ve bu adamlar müste'cir ve müsteir oldukları halde ağa-yı mümaileyh ve hempaları eşhas-i merkumeyi tahrir ederek zabt-i arazi için mülkümüz deyü da'va ettirdiklerini ve mahkeme tarafından ariz ve amik-i keşf ü tahkik olunarak davalarında haksızlıkları tahkik edildiğini ve bu babda isbat-i müddea için manastırda evrak ve mezabit ve kuyud-ı adide bulunduğunu ifade …" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 13. 25 Şubat 1305 (9 March 1890).

examining other than the mufti. Edhem Pasha came back to this land in the second field research after almost two years after the first field research. When he died these "beggars" wanted to leave the land because they would face hardships.[345] In Edhem Pasha's narrative, there is a big question. Why in the first-place people did not leave and waited for Edhem because he claimed the reason for their leave was that the land was not appropriate for cultivation and the meadow belonged to the monastery. If these people, "beggars" as Edhem claimed, were staying in the land with Mehmed Agha's assurance then there would not be a problem for leaving the land. Because in the end, Edhem Pasha claimed that the monastery priests offered them to stay. Even though there was enough grass for their management people did not want to stay. On the contrary, the displaced peasants argued that the protection provided by Mehmed Agha was a false claim as Edhem Pasha claimed. The peasants' wish was to start an investigation for the village and then the truth would come out.[346] Finally, the pasha finished his defense by claiming that he did not know what happened after that.[347]

If we compare Edhem Pasha's defense with Vartan's claims there are some inconsistencies. As mentioned above, Edhem Pasha's claims were about 15 or more people who were taking care of the sheep or staying there. Vartan's starting point was Kurds attacking the monastery and removing them from meadowlands. On the

[345] "Mehmed ağanın çend mah evvel vefat ettiğini ve kendülerinin de bundan böyle arazi-i mezkure de ikamet-i sefaletlerini mü'eddi olacağından…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 13. 18 Receb 1307 (9 March 1890).
[346] "Manastır rahibinin müteveffa Mehmed Ağaya ve o misillü ehl-i vukufunu karye-i mezkur ahalisine mensub göstermeleri icabı takdirde vuku'bulacak şehadet-i muhikeleri(?) haksız bırakmak gibi bir hülyası nâbecâdan ve hakikat-i hal ma'ruzat-i sabıkadan…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 7.
[347] "…arazi denilen mahal dağ ve otlak olup zira'ata kafi olmadığından ve otlak ise manastırın olduğundan idarelerine kafi mahal gösterilmesini musırrane beyan etdiler manastır rahibleri merkumun kemakan ikamet etmelerini ve idareleriçin lüzum-ı mikdar giyah vereceklerini söyledilerse de kabul etmediklerinden oradan hareketle Muş ovasına geçip badehu Muş'a azimet-i acizanemde keyfiyet mutasarrıf paşaya ifade olunarak hakikaten orası köye benzer mahal olmadığı cihetle orada barınamayacaklarından diğer mahal-i tedarikle memnunen nakl etdirileceğini … Muşca ve bu hususça cereyan-i mu'amele-i acizelerince mechul olup … malumatım bundan ibaret olmağın…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 13.

other hand, the peasants claimed that the land was in their hands for over 200 years and there was no clash with the monastery. Edhem Pasha's only connecting argument about this land in his defense was at the beginning. He claimed he did not destroy the land which had mosque and cemeteries, then his arguments about this dispute do not compromise. Then Edhem Pasha either is talking about another land or he did not want to be the man who destroyed the small mosque and cemeteries. The second option is more feasible since, in one part of the peasants' petition, there is a refutation on the protection of Mehmed Agha. If the monastery wanted people to stay then why Vartan tried to displace people for over five years and eventually managed to do so.

The government officials put Edhem Pasha in the center as the responsible person for the events. His defense is therefore important because he was seen as "the main suspect" for the destruction of the small mosque and cemeteries in the eyes of the government. Şura-yı Devlet claimed that the right to follow orders was under the command of the head of the court of the first instance. A civil servant like Edhem Pasha did not have the authority to follow this order without approval from Şura-yı Devlet.[348] His participation in the destruction of the village was questioned. Fethullah Efendi who was the ex-member of the local council knew not so much since it occurred four years ago but Lieutenant Mehmed claimed that Edhem started his tour from Varto and came to the monastery and then went to Muş and from Muş to

[348] "…şurâ-yı devletçe asl-i muhtaç tedkik olan cihet icra vazifesi kanunen bidayet mahkemesi reislerine aid olup mahkeme riyasetinden zabta müraca'at vuku'bulmadıkça me'murin-i mülkiyenin müdahaleye salahiyetleri bulunmadığı halde vali-i sabık-ı müşarünileyhin ne yolda ve ne gibi vesaite müraca'at ile ilamı icra eylediği ve isti'mal olunduğu beyan olunan kuvve-i cebriyenin neden ibaret bulunduğu ve müşarünileyh hazretlerinin emirlerine müstenid bulunduğunun nasıl tahkik eylediği hususatı olmasına bu babda…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17,14. 16 Safer 1308 (1 October 1890).

Bitlis.[349] Mehmed's information did not help much because the records said there was "no information or record was showing Edhem Pasha involved personally."[350] On the other hand, the prosecutor of the court of appeal in Bitlis, Ahmed Hamdi, the head of the courts in Bitlis district, was also asked about Edhem Pasha. Ahmed Hamdi wrote that "he did not have any involvement in the execution of the decree but the take-over had been done with his verbal order."[351] Therefore, the importance of Edhem Pasha in this investigation was shown with his involvement in the case. Without him, Vartan could not have the application of the decree and the peasants would not be displaced from the village. After their displacement, they aimed to go back to the village and one way to go back was an investigation in the village so the truth would come as they aimed.

5.4 The investigation

The peasants went to the court of appeal in Van in order to go back to their houses and lands. The aim was to provide a full-scale investigation and to seek justice. Eventually, an investigation was carried out in the destroyed village. Government officials went to the village and investigated the situation on 7 July 1890. In this investigation, the zabtiye, the representative of Surp Garabed Monastery, member of local council Agob, the mufti of Genç district, İskender Efendi, Naib of Genç Halid

[349] Mehmed was the only one remembers what Edhem Pasha was doing. Fethullah Efendi did not know what Edhem did or where he was. BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 9. 22 Cemaziyelahir 1308 (2 February 1891).
[350] "müşarünileyh Edhem Paşa hazretlerinin bir guna iş'ar-i resmisi kaydına zaferyab olunamadığı gibi emr-i icraya müşarünileyhin bi'z-zat müdahale-i failesini irae ve işrab edecek kayd u ma'lumat dahi bulunamamıştır." BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 11. 27 Kanunusani 1306 (8 February 1891).
[351] "…ve eğerçi icra-yı îlamda vali-i sabık saadetlü Edhem Paşa hazretlerinin bir işaratı yoğsa da kendileri devren orada ve manastır cihetinde bulunmasına ve oradan aza ve zabt etmelerine(?) nazaran emr ü şifahisiyle vuku'bulduğu anlaşılmış…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 12. 28 Kanunusani 1306 (8 February 1891).

Efendi and assistant-prosecutor of Muş İsmail Efendi went to the Girvas village. This investigation was carried out with many witnesses from the neighboring villages, namely Girvas-ı Sufla, Boğlan, Bağlı-ı İsa. According to the results, the village comprised 41 houses and 262 people, 155 women and 107 men before the destruction. The investigators found one small mosque and four cemeteries in which there were 800 graves. The taxes were given to Boğlan village, which was under the command of Diyarbekir province. People who were going to be conscripted to the army were sent to Genç. The investigators concluded that the land was not meadows but in possession of the village people. Therefore, the monastery had no rights on the land.[352]

Two weeks after the investigation, the mutasarrıf of Genç district sent a report to Bitlis district on 19 July 1890 according to an order sent by the grand vizier, on the behalf of displaced people and their goodwill. The mutasarrıf believed that the representative of the monastery tricked poor people to come and be witnesses and he claimed the village did not hear anything about the event. Moreover, as a state official, the mutasarrıf looked at the event from the perspective of taxation, too. The mutasarrıf claimed the court could have invited some officials from the government because the result of this decree and the displacement would harm the revenues. The mutasarrıf claimed that "in case the aforementioned village is given to the monastery…it is unknown from where the state will collect so much revenue."[353] As will be discussed below, the peasants' strategy of paying taxes after the decree was paid off a bit. The mutasarrıf also claims that people in the village proposed to be

[352] BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 8. 25 Haziran 1306 (7 July 1890).
[353] "Karye-i mezkurun manastıra rabt ve ilhakı halinde hukuk-ı ahali şöyle dursun devletin bu kadar emval-i varidatının nereden cebr ve te'min olunacağı bilinemiyor." BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 2. 6 Temmuz 1306 (18 July 1890).

conscripted even though they were in miserable conditions.[354] By showing their loyalty to the government in terms of conscription, the peasants thought that the government officials would take a side with them. Since they were movable, there would be no implications for this proposition. They would run away easily as they have done before. Even though their proposition was heard, these people still dispersed, and they aimed to go back.

Hacı Ahmed who wrote on the behalf of the people of the Girvas village detailed what happened to them and the village. After many compliances with the local authorities, Ahmed finally wrote to the Grand vizier to take action. In this letter dated 25 March 1891, Ahmed blamed the monastery for making the court take an unjust decision. He believed that the case was a futile attempt of the monastery to take the land, but by misguiding the investigators who came to the village; the monastery took the village. After that, they were displaced even though the villagers had the title deed for their houses and land. Without money or a house, they went to either the Muş Plain, Varto, or Meneşgüt and lived in misery with their children. People started to work as shepherds and servants or became beggars.[355] Even with these jobs, they could not afford to live, so what they did was to return to their destroyed village. Ahmed wrote that 12 families, including him, were living in a tent because of their destroyed houses. Eventually, Ahmed wanted to resettle in the village and cultivate the soil.[356] However, Ahmed's wish was opposed by the

[354] "…karye-i mezkur ahalileri bu kadar müddetten berü ve her nev' tekalif-i miriyelerine 'ita eyledikleri ve hatta bu sene dağınık ve perişan oldukları halde bile mukayyed olan nüfuslarına nazaran ahz-ı asker mu'amelesinin icrasıyla mükellef olanları asker eylemiştir." BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 2.
[355] "sefaletimiz son derecede olduğu halde muhafaza-i nefs için Muş ovasına Varto kazasına Meneşgüt nahiyesine dağılarak te'min-i ma'işet ve muhafaza-i hayat tarikini aramağa başlamıştık fakat diriğa ki gittiğimiz yerlerde ne arazi ve hanemiz ve ne de bunları edinmek için elde bir servetimiz olmadığından çobanlık hizmetcilik sailelik gibi hizmetle îaşe tarikini aradığımız ve vaktiyle oldukça ziraatimiz sayesinde ashab-i servetten sayılırken bugünkü gün kani' olduğumuz bir kuru etmekden bile mahrum oluşumuz…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 20.
[356] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 20.

monastery, and, eventually, Vartan got in contact with the Armenian Patriarch in İstanbul, Khoren I of Constantinople. Khoren I wrote to the Ministry of Justice on 15 February 1892, to refute the Kurds' claims over the land which will be seen in detail below. He wrote the Kurds were aiming to harm the monastery, which they have already done. Before destruction in the monastery could happen, he aimed to get rid of these Kurds who were still living on the disputed land.[357]

The case ended with a decree from Şura-yı Devlet dated 4 March 1892. According to this decree, the Kurds did not object to the decree given by the court until 25 March 1891, when Hacı Ahmed send a petition to the grand vizier. However, we know that even before Ahmed's petition, the peasants went to Van for the case so probably the Şura-yı Devlet decree emphasized the date when the capital was informed. This decree gave the land to the monastery since there was no evidence showing the Kurds were the sole possessors of the land. If the Kurds would bring new evidence, then there would be a new decision. This decree summarized the events that started with Vartan's appeal to the court. From the application of the decree to Hacı Ahmed's petition, four years passed and it is argued there was no objection until to this petition. Therefore, the decision was not to accept the peasants' appeal since the decree became non-changeable because of the four-year time lapse. Şura-yı Devlet, on the other hand, acknowledged an irregularity in this case. "The irregularity" as mentioned by Şura-yı Devlet was repeated before the case was finalized. Ahmed Hamdi, the court of appeal prosecutor in Bitlis, wrote that;

> According to the 65th article of Teşkilat-ı Mehakim there needed to be a prosecutor in the court and if there was a need for zaptiye then the application had to be done in Genç subdistrict but they went to the mutasarrıf of Muş which made a corrupt procedure…since there was no

[357] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 17.

> executive officer made the doubt in the lawsuit and judgment of the law.[358]

Fethullah Efendi declined the allegations against them and he believed that there was no need to inform the mutasarrıf of Genç.[359] Ahmed Hamdi's allegations against the mutasarrıf of Muş were answered by Ömer Şevki Pasha.

The mutasarrıf of Muş Ömer Şevki Pasha was in the capital during the investigation process of this case. Therefore, there was a chance to ask his opinion about the events. Ömer Şevki Pasha claimed that the disputed land was in Muş. Ömer Şevki Pasha said that the Kurds wanted 60 golds to leave but after a while, they came back. Then the monastery deputies went to the Ömer Şevki Pasha for the second displacement of these people, which Ömer Şevki Pasha claimed that he said: "The court gave a decree on the behalf of your assertion and executed the decree now if you have a claim then go to the court and your decree will be executed …"[360]

Moreover, Ömer Şevki argued that if the land was in Genç subdistrict the zaptiye in Genç would interfere. Even though the judicial affairs of the Genç were attached to the Muş court, in theory, the decree issue should have gone to Genç court. Ömer Şevki Pasha eventually declined the forced displacement of the people from the village.[361] Like Ömer Şevki Pasha, Fethullah Efendi also declined that there was no force to displace people from the village and he claimed that the Kurds accepted the 6,300 kuruş and left.[362] The current mutasarrıf of Muş Mehmed bin

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[358] BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 12, 29 Cemaziyelahir 308 (9 February 1891), for the transliterated text, see Appendix A, 3.
[359] "avdet ve icra hususunun Genç'e aidiyeti bahsine gelince muamelatın bi't-tabi' acizlerince mahbul bulunacağından hikmet-i hükümete karşı o suretin ihtarına da mecburiyet görülemediği hasebiyle ihtar edilmemiş ve hakikat-i halde bundan ibaret bulunmuş" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 24.
[360] "…evvel iddia ettiğiniz mahkeme lehinize bir îlam verdi anın hükmü de icra edildi şimdi yine bir iddanız var ise mahkemeye müracaat ediniz kanunen la-hakk olacak hükm mevki-i icraya konulur." BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 30.
[361] BOA. *ŞD*. 1879-8, 30.
[362] "bu arazi kendilerinin hakk-ı karardan tasarruflarında bulunduğundan terk edemeyeceklerini söylediler ise de icra memuru madem ki îlama karşı ağraz edilmemiş icrası yoluna gidileceğini tekrar

Salih on 8 January 1892 wrote that the order to tell the village people to leave the village was given by the former mutasarrıf Ömer Şevki Pasha but the details of the order were not known.[363] According to a document that explains the involvement of Ömer Şevki Pasha, he wrote that even though there was no platoon some people from the zaptiye and army were sent to the village. These people took care of the displacement of people because of people's helplessness.[364] The people, according to the current mutasarrıf, were right in requesting justice.

Şura-yı Devlet decided that even though the land was in Genç sub-district the court process, the application of the decree and not having an executive officer were done without the involvement of the mutasarrıf of Genç or the zaptiye. Şura-yı Devlet acknowledged the court hierarchy between the Muş and Genç courts where the latter is under the authority of the former. Moreover, Şura-yı Devlet abstained from talking about the claims of the destruction of the small mosque and cemeteries by both the Kurds and government officials. Rather than talking about a whole village, the decree mentioned Kurds' attacks and their capture of land. It was written that "even though the aforementioned land had been composed of meadowland and was under the possession of the monastery since time immemorial it is proved that it

tefhimîde meskenleri bedeli kendilerine verilir ise terk edeceklerini beyanıyla meskenleri için başka başka fiy'at takdirle baliğ olduğu beş veyahut altı bin kuruş bedelleri manastır tarafından kendilerine yedden-be-yedd tesviye ile …lerinde sened-i tealisi(?) edilerek olbabdaki evrak-i aidiyeti cihetle icra memurluğuna tevdi' edilmiş ve bir güna muamele-i cebriyye vuku'bulmadığı…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 24.

[363] "Mümaileyh Fethullah Efendi ile hey'et-i zabıtadan bu işe memur edilen Mülazım Mehmed Efendi'nin memuriyetleri liva-i tahrirat-i kalemince buldurularak zeyli evrak-i mukayyedliğinden musaddak bulunan ve mutasarrıf-i esbak-i mümaileyh Ömer Şevki Paşa tarafından yazılmış olan resmi bir buyurulduya müstenid olub bunda emr ü icraca ittihaz olunacak tedabir ve teşebbüsatın derecesi hakkında bir şey denilmeyerek" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 26.

[364] "Ömer Şevki Paşanın müfreze zabitine olan tahrirat-i muavaza-i resmiyesinde azzü'l-icab(?) muavenet-i askeriye ifası yolunda cevaz haric gösterilmesi ve şu suretle memurların refakatine birlükden(?) ziyade zabtiye ve nizamiye efradı terfik edilmesiyle satvet-i askeriyenin tesiratı-i mehibesine karşı ahalinin aciz halinden istifade edilmiş olduğu anlaşılmakta olduğundan cereyan-i muâmele…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 26.

has been captured forcefully by the Kurds and they constructed a few cottages."[365] Şura-yı Devlet accepted the land as meadows which meant that any construction on that land was forbidden. Therefore, rather than using the Islamic rhetoric as the Kurds and some government officials used, Şura-yı Devlet's emphasis was on the breaching of the law. The claims of the Kurds were not proven and Şura-yı Devlet claimed the Kurdish people were admitting they were not accepting the decision of the court by coming back to the destroyed village. This meant only one thing: giving the land to the monastery. Eventually, unless there was no more evidence the case was closed.[366]

5.5 First strategy: Paying taxes

The village's tax records are an example of the peasants' strategies to cope with the decree given by the Muş court. Until the village people were displaced the taxation was the important tool for them to narrate their rightfulness through the taxes. They were the loyal peasants who were paying the taxes and contributing to the state. As will be seen below, the tax payments increased effectively after Vartan got his decree. While it can be argued the reason for the increase was due to the war and hence not a strategy but the effect of the aftermath of the war should take into

[365] "…mahall-i mezkurun kadimden beri çayırlık araziden ibaret ve tasarrufu manastır-i mezbura âit olduğu halde ekrad-i merkume taraflarından bi'l-ahire teğallüben tecavüzle ol vechle âdi birkaç kulübe ihdas etmiş oldukları bir dereceye kadar isbat olunarak yollu yolsuz yerde ilama rabt edilmiş olmasına karşı bu kere hükümet-i mahalliyece icra etdirilmiş olan tahkikat…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 1.

[366] "6300 guruş kayme yedan-be-yedd eshabına tevzi' edile… olbabda alınan senedin dahi icra memurluğuna tevdi' kılındığı ve bu yolda bir güne cebr-i isti'mal olmadığı marü'l-beyan evrak-ı tahkikiye netayicinden tezahür etmekde ve bütün ol yoldaki müddeat-i dava bila-delil kabilinden kalmakda olmasına binaen arazi-i mezkureye bu kere hod-be-hod avdet eylediklerini ve bir taraftan dahi tecemmu edeceklerini kendi arzuhallerinde itiraf eylemekde olan ahali-i merkumenin şu iddia-yı tasarruflarını her nasıl olsa haber-i sübuta îsal edebilmeleri mülâhazatı pek meşkuk görünmekdedir." BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 1.

account that not one piaster was paid before the decree. Therefore, the first strategy was paying the taxes against Vartan's claims.

Table A: Total tax payments and debts from fiscal year 1289 to fiscal year 1305[367]

	Total	Paid	Debt
Virgü (tax)	12938,30	1287,20	11651,10
Income tax	580	.	580
Military exemption tax	558	.	558
Sheep tax	40329,20	18179,10	22150,10
Tithe tax	15770	10287	5483
Tithe tax that was collected through the state officials	551	.	551
Total	70427,10	29753,30	40673,20

There were five different taxes that they had to pay. These were sheep tax (bedel-i ağnam, the tax (virgü), bedel-i askeriye (military exemption tax), income tax (temettu'), and the tithe tax (öşr). The table showing the allocated money from the village sent by Mehmed Emin who was the deputy accountant of Genç district on 3 July 1890. The comparison between the records of the payments before and after the decree show very interesting changes. According to the table showing the taxes, the anticipated revenue was 70427 kuruş which only 29753,5 kuruş were paid. However, the payment of the taxes starts shortly before the decree came out. For instance, for the first time, the peasants paid the tax was in R. 1296 (1880) and they paid some of the virgü more precisely, 5/22 of that year. After that year, each year the peasants paid their share for the tax and the fiscal year 1305 was the last year the peasants paid the tax after their displacement. I argue that the peasants paid the taxes to show their loyalty to the government for not being displaced. From these five taxes, the peasants paid 1,200 kuruş before the decree was issued. After the decree, the

[367] BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 9.

peasants paid 29553,30 kuruş.[368] Until Edhem Pasha's arrival, their strategy worked out but, in the end, the peasants were displaced.

The total revenue was accounted for 17 years with breaks, especially during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. As is shown in Appendix G, during the war, only the tithe, military exemption tax, and the virgü were counted but none of them were paid. The other taxes were not counted. The main tax was the sheep tax where 4/7 of the total accrued revenue was the sheep tax.

The sheep tax from the fiscal year 1288 (1872) to the fiscal year 1304 (1888) was collected with the disruptions. For 4 years, in the fiscal year 1289, 1292, 1293, and 1297, sheep tax was not counted. While the tax in the fiscal year 1293 was not counted, in 1294 was counted but there were no payments from the peasants. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 was fought at closer locations to the village, and it was normal for a two-year-lapse in the table. When we look at the table, the tax revenue has ups and downs, but not until the fiscal year 1296 (1880) the government could collect money from the village. However, the taxpayers started to pay the tax and until fiscal year 1304 they paid a large proportion of the tax. The tax revenue was declined after the first year and only after 7 years; it surpassed the first year's amount. For instance, the tax in the fiscal year 1,290 and 1291 was only 270 and 300 kuruş while the tax in the fiscal year 1288 was 2,416 kuruş. Therefore, the conclusion from this table is that in three counts the village hid their sheep in order not to give them more money. The peak year for the sheep tax was the fiscal year 1295. After that year, the tax never became as high as its level in 1295. If we take into account the total payment, it is clear that the villagers became adapted to their

[368] 1 kuruş was equal to 40 para.

role in the taxation to become loyal subjects because until the fiscal year 1298 the majority of the tax was being unpaid, which changed drastically after the fiscal year 1299. As mentioned above, the mutasarrıf of Genç claimed conscription was one of the reasons the population of the village was less than its actual numbers. As an important asset of the people, the sheep owners could hide their sheep in the counting times. The sheep tax was collected according to the number of sheep, which were present and counted by the government officials and the changes show us fluctuation of the amount of the sheep. While the peasants were paying their taxes, it is more probable that they were also hiding it. Since there is no information on how many kuruş were taken from each sheep, it can be estimated that 500-1500 sheep were in the possession of the village.

The tax (virgü) was taken from the village for 17 years. Ufuk Gülsoy claimed the virgü was determined according to people's houses, lands, and profits. If the taxpayers would pay more than other taxes, the virgü was more or the less the payment the less the virgü was considered.[369] The only year in the table that did not write any value for the tax was the fiscal year 1292 (1876) other than that year in 17 years the virgü was counted. However, the government managed to gather the tax only for five years and in these years not all of them were collected. The amount that is levied for this tax also fluctuated. For 11 years, 880 kuruş were determined to be given by the village but during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 the amount declined to 680 kuruş and after the war, it again rose to 880 kuruş. the fiscal year 1302 (1886) was the last year the tax was set at 880 kuruş after that year it decreased. The exact reason for the decrease is not known, but it is probable that the people

[369] Ufuk Gülsoy, "Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlikten Muâfiyet Vergisi: Bedel-i Askeri (1855-1909)," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 37 (2002): 101.

started to leave the village. However, in these 17 years, the peasants paid 1287,5 kuruş out of 12938 kuruş which is roughly 10 % of the tax. The tax count was important since it determined the "virgü" along with other taxes. The increase in this tax also showed the peasants' strategy worked.[370]

The military exemption tax was collected from the fiscal year 1289 to the fiscal year 1301. The military exemption tax was counted as one soldier out of 180 men in 1855. Therefore, people would pay for this one soldier, which Gülsoy claimed 50 liras.[371] The exemption for Muslims was fixed at 80 liras and for non-Muslims at 50 liras.[372] The only time it was not counted was the fiscal year 1292 just before the war. First, the tax was 8 kuruş in the fiscal year 1289 but after the fiscal year 1290 the tax rose to 50 kuruş, and interestingly it was never paid. It is known that the village was not fond of sending their men to the military. For instance, during the investigation process, it was said that they were under-reporting the men's population in order not to send them to the army.[373] Therefore, it is acceptable for these numbers and why they were never paid.

The income tax was also counted 3 times from the fiscal year 1302 (1886) to the fiscal year 1305 (1889) and after the first count, which was 80 kuruş, it rose to 100 kuruş. This tax was a personal tax and from the other documents, we see that only 6 men were responsible for paying this tax. The highest amount of tax was 25

[370] Gülsoy, "Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlikten Muâfiyet Vergisi," 107–8.
[371] Gülsoy, "Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlikten Muâfiyet Vergisi," 103.
[372] Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion: Concription in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue D'histoire Européenne Contemporaine* 5, no. 2 (2007): 275, www.jstor.org/stable/26265853.
[373]BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 2.

kuruş and the smallest one was 10 kuruş.[374] However, in these three years, none was paid.

The tithe tax was counted from the fiscal year 1293 to 1304 and while the fiscal year 1293-the fiscal year 1295 were counted as "emaneten aşar" which means there was no tax farmer that bought the right to collect the tax so the government collected it. From the table, it is clear that the village did not pay anything for these years and it always rose during the counts. From 1295 to 1299 there are no records for the tithe but in 1299 the count and payments began. Interestingly, as well as sheep tax, the tithe tax was paid in the fiscal year 1301 without any debt and it was the highest amount of the tax with 2,950 kuruş. The village must have experienced the famine in 1886 since the payments became to drop and the debts lead to an increase. Overall, the payments for all of them were 29753,5 kuruş and the debt was 40673,5 kuruş. The question was after the displacing of the people how these people were going to pay their debts.

Münir Pasha, the Minister of Interior, wrote about this debt and asked about instructions from the Minister of Finance on 28 January 1890. Almost 2 years later, on 28 November 1891, Nazif Pasha, the Minister of Finance, answered by saying that;

> …since it is not known what the reason and importance of the decree and scope of what kind of property and land is, it cannot be said anything, however, … if people's house and their means of support are taken away and given to the monastery it means that these people need the help of the sultan. Therefore, to ask to give the taxes would not be suitable for the mercy of the sultan … to forgive their taxes and delete their record.[375]

[374] "Yasin bin Osman had to pay 20 kuruş, … Bin Hacı İbrahim 15 kuruş, Hasan bin Ali 25 kuruş, Hüseyin bin Ali Süleyman 15 kuruş, Ali bin İsmail 15 kuruş and Abdullah bin Kırkyılan(?) paid 10 kuruş." BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 9.
[375] BOA. *ŞD.* 2585-28, 4. 25 Rebiülahir 1309 (28 November 1891), for the transliterated text, see Appendix A, 4.

As can be seen from the minister's words, the importance that was attributed to the taxation showed that until Edhem Pasha came to the region their strategy was paying off. However, the governor stopped the villagers' strategy by banishing them. Therefore, the peasants appealed to the second strategy. This time they adopted the words rather than paying the taxes. They used the Islamic discourse to return their destroyed village.

5.6 Second strategy: Islamic discourse vs. "savage" discourse

When the first strategy the peasants used did not work, they adopted a new strategy: embracing the Islamic discourse. I use the term Islamic discourse since the petitions and correspondences focused on the claim of the destruction of a small mosque and four cemeteries. The Hamidian Period witnessed the Pan-Islamism abroad and inside the empire, it was Islamist policy which the focus was on Abdulhamid II's policies on the Muslim population. For instance, Orhan Örs analyzed the relationship between Kurdish şeyhs and Abdulhamid II from a Pan-Islamist perspective by claiming that the şeyhs gain from controlling the peasants or making them loyal to the sultan in this policy. The relationship between the şeyhs and the sultan changed.[376] In this case, we see active participation of the peasants who were not supported by any şeyh in a period that the Islamic character of the empire was started to be emphasized by many government officials. Therefore, the peasants used their only weapon because they had nothing to lose. This strategy was also useful for them

[376] Orhan Örs, "İslamcılık/Panislamizm Penceresinden Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kürt Şeyhleriyle İlişkisi," *Kürd Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 3 (Mart-Mayıs 2020): 179, Kemal Karpat and Cezmi Eraslan focused on Abdulhamid's role in this policy leaving out the peasants. For more information, see Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslâm Birliği: Osmanlı Devleti'nin İslâm Siyaseti, 1856-1908*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2019).

since they gathered sympathy from şeyhülislam but also this discourse was used to prevent the savage discourse of the government officials and related to the monastery's attacking discourse. As mentioned above, the monastery's goal was to prevent Senco, Kasım, and others from entering into the field and banning, and after this ban, destruction of the village. Therefore, what we see is the usage of two different strategies to possess the land.

According to the Şura-yı Devlet decree, the peasants opened a case with Hacı Ahmed's petition to the grand vizier. Ahmed wrote that the monastery did not attempt to take the land until the decree was given by the Muş court. Ahmed claimed the reason for the monastery's wish to destroy the village was having a Muslim village around the monastery. Ahmed believed that the monastery did not want this Muslim village to be around because of their ambition and greediness.[377] Ahmed while writing to the grand vizier he tried to prick the grand vizier's conscience by saying that "I evade to sorry about the conscience of the government by repeating the truth"[378] to assert that the peasants were right in their cases. There is nothing in his letter referring to the ethnicity of the peasants but the main concerns are again first giving a Muslim village to the monastery and secondly making Muslim people's lives miserable. However, Ahmed accused only the monastery but there is no mention of officials because he claims that the representative of the monastery misguided the officials. Even if the officials are at the heart of this case, Ahmed makes the

[377] "karyemize civar bulunan Çanlı manastırı ruhbanı öyle bir *İslam karyesinin civarlarında bekasını istemedikleri* ve nazar-ı hırsı ve tama'larını arazilerimize dikdikleri için bu karyenin manastır-i mezkur mülhakatından olduğuna da'ir vaktiyle ne yolda fuzuli bir dava kapusu açmış…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 20.
[378] "tekrarla masdar-ı hakkaniyet olan vicdan-i devletlerini müte'essir ve dağdar etmekden ictinab ederim." BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 20. Italics are mine.

monastery the sole perpetrator of this destruction. This is another indication that Ahmed wanted the state's support with his case.

Unlike Ahmed's no accusation of the government officials, another unsigned petition written from the village wrote that the displacement was carried out "…with the help of Muslim force dispatched from Muş district."[379] This fifty-year-old man points to the zaptiyes sent by Şükrü Bey but his description of the police force as the Muslim force shows that his idea of getting displaced by the help of Muslims for the non-Muslim monastery.

The government officials, as well as the peasants, used the Islamic discourse. The Şeyhülislam Ömer Lütfi played a role in this discourse. As the head of religious affairs in the courts, his main concern was how a Muslim official in the court would help a transfer of the Muslim village to the non-Muslim monastery. He accused Naib Şükrü who was at the head of Muş court of the first appeal for this transfer. As he argued, "since there is evidence that the village composed of Muslim people and there are mosque and cemeteries, how Naib Şükrü could accept to see the case which is not just and right…"[380] It is understandable for the religious authority in the empire to see this issue from the perspective of religion but he is not the only one using it. Edhem Pasha's defense has also one of the examples of this discourse. As mentioned above, Edhem with his defense argued that the land the peasants wanted and the land given to the monastery were different despite the contrary claims. He argued: "no Muslim's conscience would accept to displace people with force in a

[379] BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 7.
[380] "…Na'ib Şükrü efendinin taht-i riyasetinde bulunmuş olan Muş sancağı bidayet mahkemesinden verilen i'lam nizamı hükmü … na'ib-i mümaileyhin adil ve hakkaniyet ile kabil-i telif olmayan böyle bir da'vayı istima' ve kabulü…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 11. 28 Cemaziyelevvel 1307 (18 February 1890).

village which has a small mosque and cemetery and give it to the monastery."[381] Edhem Pasha knew what happened to the village since the order was given by him verbally. The way he refuted the claims perfectly suits Islamic discourse. He started his defense with the quote above to refute the idea that he was the reason for the diminishing of the mosque.

Non-Muslims in this narrative argued a Kurdish discourse by emphasizing their attacking character. Vartan's main argument, in this case, was the attacks of people on the monastery. Even though Vartan did not use the ethnicity of the peasants he wanted no people to be on the land. However, the main opposition to the use of the land specifically by the Kurds came not from Vartan but the Armenian Patriarch. Khoren I of Constantinople wrote to the Ministery of Justice on 15 February 1892 for this issue. Patriarch Khoren emphasized Kurds' activities around the monastery. According to the patriarch, the local Kurds especially Senco, Ömer, and others were harming the monastery and people around it. Even though they were given money to give the land to the monastery Kurds claimed this land with erroneous statements. Patriarch Khoren claimed the Kurds intended to harm the monastery again. Giving the land back to the Kurds would not be right since the decree was on the side of the monastery and it would not be acceptable. The interesting part is Khoren's writing is that first he believed that the Kurds had power and influence in that place so they were trying to do everything they could. Who these powerful people were to possess the land and why they did not do anything in the first place are important questions to ask. The Patriarch did not mention their occupation but it is possible that these people were state officials or had ties with

[381] "mescid ve kabristanı bulunan bir karye ahalisini cebren tard ve ihraç ve manastıra ilhak etmeği hiçbir Müslimin vicdanı kabul etmeyeceği malumdur." BOA. *ŞD.* 1878-17, 13. 18 Receb 1307 (9 March 1890).

them. On the monastery's side, Edhem Pasha's arrival to Muş is a milestone because governors before him did not agree to help the monastery. Moreover, Fethullah Efendi, Ömer Şevki, Naib Şükrü helped the monastery indirectly to take the disputed land back. However, Patriarch Khoren's argument about Kurds' influence in that region might refer to the dismissal of these people. Because Fethullah Efendi in his petition to the attorney general in Muş signed the petition as "reis-ı sabık-ı meclis-i irade-i Muş."[382] Moreover, Khoren never mentioned the small mosque or four cemeteries that overwhelm the petitions of the Kurds or government officials. He emphasized the ethnicity of the attackers or people who were living there but not their religion. The houses in the village were corral, barn, and cabin for Khoren but not houses, which indicates he implied people were in temporary/new settlement in this status as mentioned by Vartan in the case of Kasım. All in all, the patriarch and Vartan's goal was to displace these people the second time for the fear that the peasants were going to attack the monastery.[383]

The savagery discourse was one of the phenomena in the writings of the government officials. While the main users were the high-level officials like the governors the low-ranking officials were also using this discourse. As in the case of

[382] "…mutasarrıf-i sabık … Ömer Şevki Paşanın … mahkemeden dahi terfik edilen na'ib-i sabık müteveffa Receb Sami efendinin biraderi Mustafa ve aza-yı sabıkadan Tatyos…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 7. 7 Kanunusani 1306 (19 January 1891).

[383] "…birçok zahmet ve külfet ihtiyar olunarak ve ağıl ve samanlık ve kulübe bedelleri namıyla manastır-i mezkur sandığından merkumun Kürdlere bi'l-mecburiye gayet kılınmış akçeler verilerek arazi-i mezkurede manastıra teslim edilmiş iken merkumun Kürdler bir takım yalan yanlış ifadelerle makamat-i ûlyaya arzuhaller irsal ederek mezkur arazinin istirdadı istidâsında bulunmuş oldukları ve keyfiyet Şura-yı devlete havale olunmasıyla isti'lamı havi tahrirat-i aliyye tastir ve tesyir buyurulmuş olduğu ve merkumun Kürdler mahallinde nüfuz ve te'sirleri sayesinde mezkur-i aliyyesine bir karar verdirilmesine her dürlü cehd ve gayretde bulundukları ve niyet ve maksadları manastırı ba-tekrar zarar ve hasara düçar etmek olduğu manastır-i mezkur murahhasalığından ba- varaka-i mahsusa ifade ve beyan olunarak bunların men'-i teşebbüsleri zımnında icabın icrası istidâ olunmuştur. … mezkur arazi kadimen manastır malı olduğu usulen ve nizamen tebeyyün ve tahkik etmiş ve olbabda südûr eden hükm-i kat'iyet hali kesb eylemiş ve icraya dahi konulmuş iken merkumunun tecdid-i davâ için müstedâyat vakıaları kanunen ve nizamen mesmu olamayacağı ve müracaatlarına ehemmiyet verildiği takdirde bunlar if'al ve harekat vakıalarında teşvik ve tergib olunarak bi'l-ahire manastırın bir kaidha(?) zarar u hasara uğramasına sebeb olacakları cihetle teşebbüsat-ı vakıalarının men'i…" BOA. *ŞD.* 1879-8, 17.

Halil, a member of the Court of First Appeals in Muş changed the discourse after the peasants and the zaptiyes attacked each other. Halil wrote two documents to explain the events in the first one village people were "people from the aforementioned village" but in the second one the identification changed badly to "uncivilized Kurds". Edip Gölbaşı emphasized the use of the words in the writings of the elites in the Ottoman Empire not as a copy of the European colonial discourse. "Savage" discourse he claimed was used to close the gap between the civilized and uncivilized not to deepen it.[384] However, in this case, Halil degraded the people by claiming them as uncivilized. Even Edhem Pasha joined in this discourse by identifying the villagers as "beggars". He claimed that these people were beggars who needed protection but after Mehmed Agha died, they refused to stay around the monastery's land. The people were associated with beggars to prevent any claims on the lands so Edhem Pasha used the term to protect himself by showing that the land did not belong to people but it was empty so he could prove that he made the right call. Eventually, the discourses played a role in the claims and defenses to influence the decision-makers. The village people managed to get the attention of the important institutions but the decision was against them.

5.7 Conclusion

The disputes around the land in Girvas lasted more than 10 years. In these years, the monastery and the peasants adopted discourses and other practices to gain an advantage in their claims over the land. The village had 262 people before the destruction but the numbers would be higher if there were no famine or hiding men

[384] Edip Gölbaşı, "19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Emperyal Siyaseti ve Osmanlı Tarih Yazımında Kolonyal Perspektifler," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 13 (Güz 2011): 208–9.

to prevent conscription. The monastery gave 6300 kuruş to the peasants for their displacement. However, the registers show that the money was not enough for people since it only covered roughly 4 percent of the estimated value of the houses. Vartan could not execute the decree of the removal of the peasants without having the approval of government officials, in this case, the approval of the governor. The order was executed after Edhem Pasha became the governor of Bitlis, and the village was destroyed.

The peasants before and after Edhem Pasha became the governor adopted strategies. Before the decree, the peasants did not pay any tax but just a bit later this decree was issued, the peasants started paying the tax. To compare the tax proportions the peasants paid 1200 kuruş before the decree and 29553,10 kuruş after the decree. The different kinds of taxes were being paid until their displacement and the aim was to show that they were the loyal citizens of the government. The displacement of the peasants led to the second strategy: adopting Islamic discourse. The peasants along with the government officials used it in their petitions. The discourse emphasized the Muslim character of the village therefore they should not be displaced. In order to gain support from the government, this discourse mainly helped the peasants since the case reopened and from the grand vizier to Şeyhülislam the government officials turned their attention to the destruction of the mosque and cemeteries.

The monastery and the Armenian Patriarch, on the other hand, adopted the anti-Kurdish discourse. This discourse emphasized the attacks from the Kurds and if the case would be in favor of the peasants the changes of re-attacking to the monastery would be higher. Therefore, the patriarch especially, wanted Şura-yı Devlet to stop the Kurds. In the end, the case closed in favor of the monastery. Kurds

did not have sufficient evidence to retake the village and Şura-yı Devlet closed the case. This land issue shows us, therefore, the peasantries' use of every chance they get in order to stay in their houses likewise the monastery used a different strategy.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on ethnic conflict through land disputes, reform attempts, and the perception of the state officials in the Muş region, specifically Varto, Malazgird, and Bulanık, between 1865-1890. The mixed population in the region, Armenians and Kurdish people and Circassian immigrants, caused the conflicts and these conflicts were interpreted as the nationalist discourse. The main theme was the interference of the European Powers in the region the period cannot be minimized as nationalist urges. As Chapter 1 focused the survival of the local inhabitants were more important. As a land empire, the population in the region was bound to the soil therefore any problem with the land affected the population badly. For many people, the land was a significant asset for living. Therefore, the land was the center of the conflict, however, its implications were everywhere. While I did not emphasize the relations of the production in the thesis the surplus of the production and distribution of it resulted in the conflict the reforms, land disputes, or the actions of the tribes were all reasoned to have them. The fertile lands of the region were not enough for the nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes and they preferred to have the peasants' production. The scarcity of the sources, however, complicated the well-being of the peasants who relied on the land. Throughout the thesis, this hardship was mentioned.

Chapter 2 focused on the land issue and land seizures. The victims of these seizures were mostly Armenians who claimed they were the possessor of the land but they lost the land to the notables or people who were close to the state officials. Chapter 3, on the other hand, focused on the migration into the Muş region which led to the conflicts, however, unlike many scholars claimed the Islamization of the empire was not the primary focus of the empire. The immigrants most of the time

chose where to settle and this led to a conflict since the state officials were not prepared for the results of the immigrations. Therefore, employment of the immigrants in the military or gendarmerie was chosen to slow down the tension in the region. The state officials in the first years of the 1860s tried to reduce the problems so the reform attempts continued from the 1860s to the end of the 1880s. However, the reform attempts changed as Chapter 4 showed. The role of the state officials was visible in every aspect of the life. Chapter 5 focused on the Girvas village and its destruction. The village people before and after the destruction paid taxes and used the Islamic discourse to avoid it but they did not succeed. In all of these chapters, the land was the center of the discussion.

The land issue, in this context, was a complex problem since the surplus was being taken the land itself was also started to be taken away from their hands. The Land Code of 1858 gave an opportunity to the people to possess the land. The peasants, and in this case, the Armenians claimed the land for a possession, however, the contention was high in the region. The notables were also aiming to take advantage of the code by seizing the lands of the Armenians. The 1860s can be considered as the class conflict in which the powerful people in the region with the support of the state officials became the owners of the lands. The complaints were based on having a title deed but the state did not accept their title deeds and, therefore, the Armenians who contested to the powerful people lost their land and became tenants.

This thesis showed that the people were using different strategies to cope with the officials so show how they became an agent in the state-society relations. The people in Girvas village showed that the Armenian priests had the power to expel the people from the village and destroy the mosque and the cemeteries. It is

important since the destruction of them became a strategy to be used by the people. The governorship of Edhem Pasha changed the fate of the people who started to pay the taxes to continue living in the village. This was the first strategy and the second one was applied after the village was destroyed. The people as well as the higher-level state officials focused on the destruction of the mosque and the cemeteries. The village people by adopting an Islamic discourse gathered attention from Şeyhülislam and the grand vizier. However, in the end, the land remained at the hands of the Surp Garabed Monastery. The main issue here is not to object to the decision why the Kurdish people were expelled but it showed how the people who were the backbone of the empire tried to cope with the injustices as people called it. As the case showed the state officials influenced the region, so it should be asked that who these state officials were.

Many incidents showed that the notables were also the state officials who continued their profession for many years. These state officials did not change mostly unless a problem occurred in the region or he was the source of the problem. As Chapter 2 investigated, the dismissal of the state officials did not mean that they were kicked out from the state profession but their comeback would be even extremely fast. However, these state officials do not leave documents in the archives so what we know is very limited about them. However, the representation of the Muslims and non-Muslims in the region as the administrative councils showed the state officials were mostly Muslims. If the non-Muslim population was closer to the Muslim population, then the representation of non-Muslims increased but they never became the head of a permanent office like the case of the Kasor and Handırıs sub-districts.

The central government was also important for the appointments of the officials as well as accepting the reform attempts. The period between 1865-1890 saw many efforts to consolidate its power in the region as well as improving the well-being of the inhabitants. However, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 changed the effects of the reform as well as the content of it. The reform attempts between 1865-1878 were to prevent any attack that the peasants were experiencing as much as the government tried. However, the next period was affected by the interference of the European Powers as the state officials began to look at the Armenians with mistrust. The new reform was to secure the region however, this plan also involved favoring the Kurds. Therefore, the officials' choice in the region escalated violence. While violence was mainly targeted the Armenians in the 1880s, the Armenians began to respond with guns. Thus, as this thesis showed, the choice the state officials made changed the region forever.

APPENDIX A

THE TRANSLITERATED TEXTS OF THE QUOTED OTTOMAN ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

1.BOA. .İ.DH. 597-41609. 25 Rebiülahir 1286 (15 August 1868).

"200'den mütecaviz kuraatı havi olarak cihet-i cünubiyesinin Kürdistan cibal-i müteselsilesine iltisakî ve her tarafa savuşmağa müsaide-i mevkiesi hasebiyle cevelangah-ı aşair idüğünden ekseri ya fenalıklar orada vuku'bulmakda ve her yerden ziyade kurra-i mezkure ahalisi taaddi görmekde…"

2. BOA. DH. MKT. 1617-42. 8 Şaban 1306 (9 April 1889).

"kuş bile uçamıyor cümlemiz aç ve telehhüm(?) kaldık şaki-i merkum ovamızı sar…tiriyor(?) çend senedir müte'addid telgraflarla makamat-ı aliye feryad etmeden aciz kaldık valanın(?) istishabatıyla icraatı görülmedi hükümet-i hukuk ibadın mukafazasını iğmaz (görmezden gelme) ederse ikinci ahalinin eşkıyaya mukabele etmeğe iktidarı yoktur. şaki-i merkum yevmiye bir köy talan ve harab ediyor çoluk çocuklarımız eşkıya ayağı altında kaldı. Merkum familya ve avaneleriyle buralardan teb'id edilmez ise iade-i asayişimiz mümkünsüzdür yakında zaruri dağılacağımız … hazinede mutezarrır oldu… şaki-i merkumun familya ve biraderinin Cezo(?) ve Ömer beğlerle avaneleriyle buralardan teb'idleriyle iade-i asayiş ve temin-i hukukumuza merhamet buyurulması yahud Allah aşkına can ve namusumuzu kurtarmak zımnında ateşde(?) çayır çayır yakılan … ahali kullarının diğer suretle bir çare edilmesi adalet-i … namına olarak istid'a olunur."

3. BOA. ŞD. 1879-8, 12. 29 Cemaziyelahir 308 (9 February 1891).

"…bu işin bir mahall-i ahalisine ve evkafa âid olduğu halde Teşkilat-i Mehakimin 65. maddesi ahkamınca muhakemede müddeâ-i umumînin bulundurulması ve esas madde Genç sancağı dahilinde olub îlamın icrası için zabıtaya müracaat ve lüzumu takdirinde Genç mutasarrıflığına müracaat olunmak lazım gelirken Muş hükümetine müracaat olunmuş ve cerin(?) muhakemede daha yolsuz muamele mevcud olub esasen gayr-i muvazzaf na'ibin biraderi ve idare azası ma'rifetiyle … cerâ vazifesi olan icra memuru bulundurulmaması şübheyi dava ve ahkam-i kanuniyeye muhalif görülmüş…"

4. BOA. ŞD. 2585-28, 4. 25 Rebiülahir 1309 (28 November 1891).

"…müterakîm virgü bakayasına münhasır olarak îlam-i mezkur mutâlaa ile hükmün esbab ve mahiyeti ve ne nev' emlak ve araziye şümulü olduğu bilinmedikçe bir şey denemeyib ma'mafih hükm -i mezkur beyan olunan karyede sakin ahalinin mesken ve ma'valarıyla müte'ayyişlerini tedarike muhtası olan tarla ve sairelerinin ellerinden nez' ile manastıra teslimini şamil ise ahali-i merkume muhtaç-ı muavenet-i seniyye

bu halde kalmış demek olacakları cihetle onlardan müterakîm olan virgülerini taleb etmek merhamet-i seniyye-i hazret-i padişahiye muvaffık olamayacağından … bunlara âid virgünün afv ile ahvali da'iresinde terkin-i kaydı …"

APPENDIX B

THE TABLE OF DEATHS AND BIRTHS AND THE TOTAL POPULATION OF SUB-PROVINCES OF MUŞ FROM 1876 TO 1880[385]

			August/ September 1876-16th January 1877	16th January 1877-5th January 1878	5th January 1878-26th December 1878	26th December 1878-4th October 1880	Total Numbers of Death and Births
Sason and Muş	Non-Muslim	Death	305	410	315	332	1362
		Birth	300	410	305	174	1189
		Population	18133	18133	18123	17965	
	Muslim	Death	220	751	250	260	1481
		Birth	220	351	600	260	1431
		Population	9344	8944	9294	9294	
		Total	27477	27077	27417	27259	
Malazgird and Bulanık	Non-Muslim	Death	231	215	197	216	859
		Birth	274	248	261	287	1070
		Population	9647	9690	9723	9787	
	Muslim	Death	401	625	386	298	1710
		Birth	466	317	365	444	1592
		Population	20785	20844	20536	20515	
		Total	30432	30534	30259	30302	
Varto	Non-Muslim	Death	28	19	23	15	85
		Birth	53	31	40	27	151
		Population	685	710	722	739	
	Muslim	Death	102	113	120	145	480
		Birth	124	108	62	98	392
		Population	6772	6794	6789	6867	
		Total	7457	7504	7511	7606	

[385] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 20.

APPENDIX C

REPORTED CRIMES IN MUŞ, SASON, VARTO, MALAZGİRD, AND BULANIK FROM 1876 TO 1880[386]

	22nd August 1876-16th January 1877	16th January 1877-5th January 1878	5th January 1878-26th December 1878	26th December 1878-25th October 1880
Rape	0	0	0	0
Defloration	0	0	1	1
Ef'âl-i Şenîa	0	0	2	1
Kidnapping a girl	0	0	0	1
Burning grass	0	2	6	1
Burglary	4	4	52	12
Usurp	2	4	12	7
Wounding	1	1	3	4
Murder	2	2	18	7
Total	9	13	94	34

[386] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 18.

APPENDIX D

NUMBER OF GENDARMERIE AND SOLDIERS IN MUŞ, SASON, MALAZGIRD, AND BULANIK FROM 1876 TO 1880[387]

		22nd August 1876-16th January 1877	16th January 1877-5th January 1878	5th January 1878-26th December 1878	26th December 1878-25th October 1880	Total[388]
Muş and Sason	Gendarmerie	335	293	337	281	
	Soldiers	171	272	141	0	584
Malazgird and Bulanık	Gendarmerie	5	0	0	0	
	Soldiers	182	85	140	173	580
Varto	Gendarmerie	5	0	0	0	
	Soldiers	238	52	180	132	602

[387] BOA. *Y. PRK. UM.* 4-10, 20.
[388] The original document calculated only the soldiers' numbers.

APPENDIX E

POPULATION SURVEY OF GİRVAS VILLAGE[389]

House owners	House	Population	Men	Women
Hasan bin Ali	1	7	2	5
Sofi Ömer bin Hüseyin	1	5	3	2
Nado bin Ali	1	5	2	3
Ali bin İbrahim	1	2	1	1
Ali bin Hüseyin	1	5	1	4
Hüseyin bin Hacı Hasan	1	5	1	4
Derviş bin Cendo(?)	1	3	2	1
Ahmed bin Hamo	1	7	1	6
Hüseyin bin Mehmed	1	9	5	4
Maho bin Cendo(?)	1	6	2	4
Senco bin Hamo	1	9	5	4
Halife bin Hamo	1	3	1	2
Resul bin Beri	1	7	3	4
Maho bin Bekir	1	4	1	3
Ali bin Yaso(?)	1	4	1	3
Ali bin Meryem(?)	1	7	3	4
Abdullah bin Osman	1	2	1	1
Osman bin Köso	1	5	2	3
Ahmed bin Faki Yusuf	1	7	3	4
Abdo bin Eyyübo	1	7	3	4
Hallo bin Eyyübo	1	5	3	2
Derviş bin Nado	1	5	3	2
Resul bin Senco	1	6	3	3
İskender bin Cendo(?)	1	3	1	2
Mehmed bin Cendo(?)	1	3	1	2
Yasin bin Osman	1	8	2	6
Musa bin Başar	1	5	1	4
Mami(?) bin Ali	1	5	2	3
Ahmed bin Hamid	1	15	8	7
Hüseyin bin Ali	1	6	1	5
Hacı bin Faki Yusuf	1	12	5	7
Ali bin Hacı	1	5	2	3
Ali bin Süleyman	1	11	4	7
Abdullah bin Mehmed	1	6	3	3
Sofi bin Osman	1	5	2	3
Ahmed bin Osman	1	7	2	5
Ömer bin Ahmed	1	4	2	2
Perhanköklü Ahmed	1	4	1	3
Hasan bin Abdullah	1	5	2	3

[389] BOA. ŞD. 1878-17,8.

Sihvan bin …	1	9	4	5
Amo bin Fettah	1	5	2	3
Nado bin Eyyübo	1	11	6	5
Yusuf bin İbrahim	1	8	4	4
	43	262	107	155

APPENDIX F

THE ESTIMATED PRICES OF THE LAND AND HOUSES[390]

Names	Arazi-i kıta'at	Evlek dönüm	House	Estimated price
Sancar bin Osman	4	13	2	7500
Ferho bin Abdullah	.	.	1	750
Musa bin Başar	3	8	2	5500
Yasin bin Osman	4	14	1	7000
Senda(?) bin Osman	4	11	1	5750
İbrahim bin Hüseyin	2	7	3	3250
Resul bin Genco	.	.	1	500
Mehmed bin Cundi	.	.	1	500
Sofi bin Osman	.	.	2	1000
Hacı İbrahim bin Faki Yusuf	5	16	2	7000
Hüseyin bin Mehmed	2	6	2	2000
Nadir bin İbrahim	1	3	1	1375
Halil bin İbrahim	-	-	1	750
İsmail bin Nadir	3	13	3	7000
Hüseyin bin İzam(?)	.	.	1	500
Resul bin Mehmed	.	.	1	500
Ahmed bin Kalo	.	.	1	750
Yusuf bin Abdullah	.	.	1	750
Ahmed bin Kasım	.	.	1	750
Yusuf bin Ali	.	.	1	750
Alo bin Mamo	.	.	2	1250
Ahmed bin Osman	.	.	1	500
Ali bin Süleyman	1	3	1	2625
Mehmed bin Mustafa	1	4	.	1250
Yusuf bin Mehmed	1	2	1	1250
Resul bin Yusuf	.	.	2	1250
Medine bint Ahmed	.	.	1	750
Hedi(?) bint Güleş(?)	2	5	1	3625
Zeyni bint Abdullah	2	42	2	7250
Fatma bint Ahmed	.	.	1	500
Nevli bint Halil	.	.	1	500
Medine bint Abdullah	.	.	1	500
Vartolu Nadir bin Hamo	4	90	.	15250
İsmail bin Nadir	1	30	.	3000
Hacı İbrahim bin Yusuf ve şeriki	2	412	.	41250
Girvas-ı Sufla'da Şero veled-i Tero	9	21	.	11375
Peri bint Talo and her partner	1	3	.	725
Yusuf bin Muso	1	3	.	1000
Total	53	706	42	147875

[390] BOA. ŞD. 1878-17, 9.

APPENDIX G

THE TAXES OF THE GİRVAS VILLAGE BETWEEN THE FISCAL YEAR 1288 AND 1306[391]

Years	TAXES									
	Tax (virgü)		Sheep tax		Military exemption tax		Tithe Tax		Income Tax	
	(Paid) Debt	Total	(Paid) Debt	Total	(Paid) Debt	Total	(Paid) Debt	Total	(Paid) Debt	Total
1288	X	X	(0) 2416	2416	X	X	X	X	X	X
1289	(0) 880	880	X	X	(0) 8	8	X	X	X	X
1290	(0) 880	880	(0) 270	270	(0) 50	50	X	X	X	X
1291	(0) 880	880	(0) 300	300	(0) 50	50	X	X	X	X
1292	.	.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1293	(0) 680	680	X	X	(0) 50	50	(0) 155	155	X	X
1294	(0) 680	680	(0) 1750	1750	(0) 50	50	(0) 196	196	X	X
1295	(0) 880	880	(0) 7408	7408	(0) 50	50	(0) 200	200	X	X
1296	(200) 680	880	(1000) 4903(?)	4903,2	(0) 50	50	X	X	X	X
1297	(200) 680	880	X	X	(0) 50	50	X	X	X	X
1298	(200) 680	880	(400) 4500(?)	2900	(0) 50	50	X	X	X	X
1299	(0) 880	880	(2872,2) 57	2929,2	(0) 50	50	(1997,2) 212,2	2210	X	X
1300	(200) 680	880	(2824,2) 987	3811,2	(0) 50	50	(1292) 1658	2950	X	X
1301	(0) 880	880	(2950) 0	2950	(0) 50	50	(2950) 0	2950	X	X
1302	(0) 880	880	(2954) 0	2954	X	X	(2747,2) 202,2	2950	(0) 80	80
1303	(0) 616,3	616,3	(2678,2) 27	2705,2	X	X	(1300) 1200	2500	X	X
1304	(0) 634,1	634,1	(2499,3) 531	3031,2	X	X	(0) 2200	2210	(0) 100	100
1305	(487,2) 160,1	634,3	.	.	X	X	X	X	(0) 100	100
1306	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total	(1287,2) 11651,1	12938	(18179,1) 22150,1	40239,2	(0) 558	558	(10287) 6034	16321	(0) 280	280

[391] BOA. ŞD. 1878-17, 9.

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