A GENERATIONAL STUDY OF THE HASENAN TRIBE FROM THE TANZIMAT ERA TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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A Generational Study of the Hasenan Tribe

From the Tanzimat Era to the First World War

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Mahmut Polat, certify that

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

A Generational Study of the Hasenan Tribe

From the Tanzimat Era to the First World War

This study investigates the ruling family of the Hasenan tribe in the Muş region from the Tanzimat era to the outbreak of the First World War. I follow the dynamic relationship between the Ottoman state and Hasenan tribal leadership, built on both conflict and collaboration, over the course of two generations. The Hasenan developed social, economic, and military relations with three different Ottoman regimes over the period discussed. This study emphasizes that, unlike its predecessors, the Hamidian regime managed to become a strong political actor in the region by upending the tribal structure of Kurdish tribes, causing lesser chiefs to rise to higher positions within the tribal hierarchy following the establishment of the Hamidian regiments.

This study further argues that with the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, internal rivalries between Kurdish tribes increased, causing arbitrary and systematic violence in the region. The competition between Kurdish chiefs to seize and acquire land and property had a devastating impact on Armenian and Kurdish peasants. In this way, peasants inhabiting in the region experienced an unprecedented level of violence and havoc.

Lastly, this study demonstrates that although the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) considered the Hasenan chiefs to be relicts of the Hamidian era, Hasenan leaders managed to ally with the CUP, illustrating that they could be extremely pragmatic in their relationship with the Ottoman state.

ÖZET

Hasenan Aşireti: Tanzimat Dönemi'nden I. Dünya Savaşı'na Jenerasyonel Bir Çalışma

Bu çalışma Tanzimat dönemi'nden I. Dünya Savaşı'na kadar olan dönemde Muş ve çevresinde bulunan Hasenan aşireti'nin yönetici ailesini incelemektedir. İki farklı jenerasyon üzerinden Osmanlı Devleti ile Hasenan liderliği arasındaki çatışma ve iş birliği üzerinden şekillenen dinamik ilişki ele alınmaktadır. Bahsedilen dönemler boyunca Hasenanlar üç farklı Osmanlı rejimi ile sosyal, ekonomik ve askeri ilişkiler geliştirdiler. Bu çalışma kendi öncüllerinin aksine Hamidiye rejimi'nin Kürt aşiretleri'nin aşiret yapısını altüst ederek doğu bölgelerinde güçlü bir politik aktör olmayı başardığını vurgulamaktadır. Böylece Hamidiye Aşiret Alayları kurulduktan sonra daha az güçlü olan aşiret ağaları aşiretin hiyerarşisi içerisinde daha üst düzey pozisyonlar elde etmeyi başardılar.

Bu çalışma ayrıca Hamidiye Alayları'nın kurulmasıyla beraber, Kürt aşiretleri arasındaki rekabetin arttığını bunun da bölgede keyfi ve sistematik şiddete neden olduğunu savunmaktadır. Toprak ve mülk ele geçirmek için Kürt ağaları arasında cereyan eden rekabet Ermeni ve Kürt köylüsü üzerinde yıkıcı bir etkiye sahip oldu. Bu nedenle de bölgede yaşayan köylüler daha önce görülmemiş bir şiddet ve yıkım yaşadılar.

Son olarak, bu çalışma İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin (İTC) Hasenan aşiret ağalarını Hamidiye Dönemi'nin kalıntıları olarak görmesine rağmen Hasenan liderlerinin İttihat ve Terakki Rejimi'nin bölgedeki müttefiki olabilmeyi becerdiğini göstermektedir. Bu da Hasenan liderlerinin Osmanlı Devleti ile olan ilişkilerinde son derece pragmatist olabildiğini göstermektedir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a generational study of the Hasenan tribe from the 1850s to the beginning of the First World War and shows a shifting relationship between the Ottoman state and the Hasenan tribe in the Ottoman East.[1] The Hasenan are a Kurdish tribe[2] who have been in the Muş region of Eastern Anatolia since the eighteenth century. The modern-day tribe has dispersed largely to Urfa, but during the nineteenth century the Hasenan were one of the powerhouses of the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts. The Hasenan were the largest and most powerful tribe in the Muş district and acted as a confederation, with smaller tribes integrated into their power structure. Other tribes such as the Badiki, the Pencinan, and the Cibran were also active in the area, but the Hasenan were the most dominant. Even though the Hasenan tribe was one of the most powerful semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes in the northeastern part of Anatolia, unlike the Hayderan and Celali tribes, it is not well studied. Since the Hasenan tribe is a lesser known and seldom studied tribe, I have attempted a periodization. My main goal in this study is to historicize the changes and transformations experienced by the Hasenan. I examine the internal relationships amongst the Hasenan leadership as well as the tribe's relationship with the Ottoman state from the Tanzimat era to the outbreak of the First World War. In this study, I

[1] I use the term "the Ottoman East" in a way similar to Cora, Derderian and Sipahi's usage in *The Ottoman East in the nineteenth century*. In some parts of this study, however, I will also use the term "Ottoman Kurdistan" interchangeably with "The Ottoman East." In this regard, it should be noted that the boundaries of Ottoman Kurdistan were certainly in flux.

[2] Defining the Kurdish tribe is not easy because Kurdish tribes do not fit a clear-cut definition. However, I think that Albert Hourani's definition of a tribe is the best one to fit the context of this study. In this respect, the term Kurdish tribe (confederation) is used to suggest larger groups which derive their powers from common ancestry based on myth rather than kinship. This paradigm of myth and group solidarity can lead different families and segments of the same tribe to constitute heterogeneous and large sociopolitical organization. See in Hourani, "Conclusions," 303.

compare two different generations of a single Kurdish tribe from roughly the 1850s into the early twentieth century. The benefit of looking at a single tribe over a longer period of time is that we can better follow the changes that occurred in the Ottoman East and how those changes were lived by tribal leaders themselves. By comparing the Hasenan under Rıdvan Agha to the Hasenan under Fethullah Bey, I will show how truly unprecedented the changes that occurred during the Hamidian Era were, and how the Hasenan chose to meet these changes. In contrast to previous studies of Hamidian Kurdish leaders, which have focused on major powerholders in the region, my thesis centers on local actors, showing that they were far from powerless in this new, more intimate relationship with the state.

I focus on three points in this study. The first point is that the hierarchy within the Hasenan tribe was upended after they joined the Hamidian regiments during the Hamidian era. The goal of the Hasenan chiefs[3] during the Hamidian period was to rise within the Hamidian regiments and, by doing so, to gain more advantageous positions within the tribe, a shift which fragmented the traditional tribal hierarchy. As tribal leaders were deputized into the Hamidian regiments, they began to form a direct relationship with the Ottoman state, and tribal chiefs began to use this connection to claim power outside their traditional rank in the tribe. In this way, the Ottoman state became a powerful actor capable of instigating change in the traditional structure of the Hasenan tribe. After this there would be no removing the state from the tribe.

[3] I use the term Hasenan or Kurdish "chief" interchangeably with the word "leader" as an umbrella term for prominent leaders of a tribe which joined the Hamidian regiments. This does not correspond to a particular position or title within the linguistic culture of the Kurdish tribe. Many of these tribal chiefs traditionally carried the titles of "Bey" or Agha" (see the appendix for explanation of these titles), but I use the term chief to refer broadly to tribal leaders who joined the Hamidian regiments throughout this thesis.

My second point is that a particular stratum of the Hasenan tribe made their living through the plunder economy, necessitating regular pillaging, and the reason behind the collective and arbitrary use of systematic violence by the Hasenan tribe can be found in this economic necessity. While raiding had long been a part of tribal economics, with the Hamidian era, these raids became more violent, more intense, and more regular. The relationship between the Hasenan and other neighboring tribes and peasantry was based on taking lands and property in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The fierce competition between the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes for material resources severely undermined the Hamidian regime's assumption that the two tribes' participation in the Hamidian regiments would discipline them and reduce violence. As the struggle between the Hasenan and the Hayderan intensified, the Hasenan began to attack villages under the Hayderan's control and vice versa, victimizing Armenian and Kurdish peasants. The main motivation for attacking these more vulnerable villages was economic. As I show in the fourth chapter, looting was the most important source of income for a certain group of Hasenan tribesmen. Tribesmen in the close circle of the Hasenan chiefs formed their armed militia, and often Hasenan leaders had to ensure that their close circle had income, making plains and villages that were not under the protection of any tribe clear targets and intensifying the pillage economy.

Lastly, I focus on the dynamic relationship between the Hasenan leadership and the Ottoman state from the Tanzimat era to the outbreak of First World War. I illustrate that, contrary to popular belief, the relationship between Kurdish tribal regiments and the Ottoman center had actually begun to sour one-to-two years before the Constitutional Revolution of 1908. The Hamidian government, which grew frustrated that Kurdish chiefs were drawing unwanted attention from foreign

governments to the Ottoman East as well as pressure from the Armenian Patriarchate, began to prosecute Hamidian tribal chiefs more harshly and effectively in the last years of the Hamidian era. This relationship would, of course, shift even further as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) came to power. Hasenan leaders would, however, be pragmatic in their relationship with the CUP and the Hasenan gradually managed to develop its relationships with the Young Turk regime from 1910 onwards by using the conditions of the time to its advantage.

This study brings to the surface certain tensions, dilemmas, and nuances in its approach to the history of the Ottoman East, the history of Kurdish tribes, and Ottoman history more generally. One of these more complicated dynamics is that, throughout this study, we will see that the Ottoman state was both strong and weak in its power over its eastern periphery. We see instances where the state was unable or unwilling to fully control or punish Kurdish leaders who had been deputized into tribal regiments and shared the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of violence with these leaders,[4] potentially implying a kind of weakness. At the same time, however, the state's influence over the Ottoman East extended further than it ever had before, even penetrating the social structure of the Kurdish tribe. During the Hamidian era, the state exercised a discursive power over the Ottoman East, defining the terms upon which powerholders in the region would define themselves and relate to the Ottoman center.

The main goal of this study is to turn the past of the Hasenan tribe into a cohesive narrative. In this regard, looking at the internal structure of the Hasenan tribe and the relationship between the Hasenan leadership and other neighboring tribes as well as the peasantry is an important contribution to Kurdish studies as a

[4] See Hartmann, "The Central State in the Borderlands."

subfield of Ottoman studies. In contrast to conventional scholarship, which has largely focused on major powerholders in late Ottoman Kurdistan, my research focuses on the role of local actors, the power dynamics between them and the peasantry, and their relationships with the Ottoman state. By looking at these dynamic and multifaceted relationships, this thesis illustrates how Kurdish semi-nomadic Hasenan leaders utilized their socio-political networks with the Ottoman state to challenge and overcome the political, economic, and social dominance of their adversaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

1.1 Historiography

After Selim I (r. 1512-1520) defeated Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid state in Iran, with the help of Kurdish Beys (Beg) (for an explanation of these titles see the appendix), he recognized the hereditary rule of these Kurdish dynasties, [5] who became the allies of the Ottomans against the Safavids.[6] The Ottoman state granted temliknames (title deeds) to the Kurdish Beys in order to purchase their loyalty. In this way, Ottoman Sultans guaranteed Kurdish Beys' hereditary rule in their respective lands, and in return the Kurdish Beys promised that they would recognize the authority of the Ottoman state.[7] Until the 19th century, for nearly three hundred

[5] Throughout this study I will use the terms "Kurdish principalities," "Kurdish dynasties," "Kurdish emirates," and "Kurdish polities" to refer to the hereditary autonomous ruling entities of Ottoman Kurdistan whose particular status had long been negotiated and recognized by the Ottoman state but were abolished in the mid-nineteenth century.

[6] Atmaca, "Negotiating Political Power," 49-50. İdris-i Bitlis was the mastermind behind political alignment of the Kurdish Beys to the Ottomans in the sixteenth century. He convinced Kurdish beys to join the Ottoman rank against the Safavids, arguing that the Ottomans were the representative of the Sunni Islam fought the Qizilbaş Safavid state. In this sense, İdris utilized a sectarian discourse to make sure that Kurdish beys would fight the Safavid State. In addition to that, the Safavids sent some influential Kurdish beys into exile to Iran, showing that the Safavids did not respect the hereditary ruling rights of the Kurdish beys. This made it easy for İdris and the Ottomans to have Kurdish beys in their side against the Safavids. For more detailed information regarding how Selim I and İdris developed policies to obtain Kurdish support to defeat Shah Ismail, see Atmaca, "Negotiating Political Power," 45-72.

[7] Özok Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility,* 77.

years, the Ottoman state recognized the hereditary rule of the Kurdish emirates in the eastern regions.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman center began to perceive Kurdish principalities as a barrier to the introduction of new reforms aimed at bringing about centralization and modernization in the region. Mahmud II (1808-1839) initiated military campaigns which were intended to eliminate the Kurdish emirates.[8] Mahmud II believed that it was important to assert the Ottoman center's authority over the eastern provinces in order to centralize the Ottoman state.[9] In this way, the Tanzimat program was a means to bring largely autonomous peripheral areas under the firm control of the Ottoman center. It was not, however, as easy as Istanbul had hoped. Kurdish notables and Mirs (hereditary rulers) resented the Sublime Porte's efforts to implement its reform program across the region. Fierce resistance to the imposition of the Tanzimat took place in Kurdish emirates like Bohtan, Baban, Soran, and the emirates of Hakkari. The Ottoman state, nevertheless, had enough power to eliminate these Kurdish emirates. The political and military powers of the Kurdish emirates were no match for that of the Ottoman center. The state thus destroyed these Kurdish polities, and local Kurdish notables were sent into exile to different parts of the Ottoman empire. However, many Kurdish elites, such as the Babanzades and the Bedirhanzades, maintained their elite status through important positions within the Ottoman bureaucracy awarded them by the state.[10]

[8] Indeed, during his three decades long reign, Mahmud II's military campaigns aimed to assert the power and authority of İstanbul over the peripheral areas of the empire. For more detailed information, see Shaw and K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey,* 14; Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire,* 60-62.
[9] Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 74; Özok Gündoğan, "Ruling the Periphery, governing the land," 160-175.
[10] Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 80.

Though Kurdish aristocrats were eliminated from the region, a new group of sheikhs and tribal chiefs emerged as new sociopolitical local authorities in the region. These people stood willing to fill the power vacuum created by the destruction of the Kurdish emirates in the region.

According to Wadie Jwaideh, after the state eliminated the Kurdish emirates, dysfunction and disorder became common in the region because these semi-independent Kurdish principalities had been responsible for law and order. Thus, with the dismantling of the Kurdish emirates, the Ottoman East witnessed a new stage of lawlessness and disorder.[11] In this regard, Martin Van Bruinessen has a similar opinion to Jwaideh. According to him, the Kurdish emirates were strong social and political polities that could deal with the Ottoman state. After the introduction of the Tanzimat reforms, however, there was a process of atomization of the sociopolitical structure of the region, making the state more visible.[12] This illustrates that Van Bruinessen considers tribal polities to be simpler and smaller units than Kurdish principalities, which mimicked the function of the state.[13]

Hakan Özoğlu also has a similar argument to Bruinessen and Jwaideh with regard to the creation of a power vacuum following the elimination of the Kurdish dynasties in the region. He claims that the Ottoman Empire was not able to fill the power vacuum created after the introduction of the Tanzimat program in the region, paving the way for the emergence of a new group of Kurdish figures. The Tanzimat program thus brought about a new administrative structure in the region without delegating authority to the traditional Kurdish nobility.[14] In this regard, the Sublime Porte became a new influential actor which challenged the authority of Kurdish

[11] Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement Its Origins and Development,* 75.
[12] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 193-195.
[13] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 181-182.
[14] Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 63.

aristocrats in the region. Özoğlu also pays attention to the internal dynamics of the Kurdish nobility, arguing that Kurdish notables were not passive actors when it came to the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms in the region, but were actually a part of important decision-making processes. Many Kurdish nobles did not have any conflict with the state, enabling them to maintain their prestigious status in the region during the first half of the nineteenth century.[15] Even though Özoğlu does not directly analyze Kurdish tribes as active social organizations in the region, he emphasizes that Kurdish principalities and the Ottoman state were not exclusive and distinct units.

David McDowall is also another prominent scholar who focuses on the Kurdish tribal organization and the effects of the Tanzimat program on Kurdish society in the middle of the nineteenth century. He stresses the mediating role of the Kurdish emirates when it came to intra and inter-tribal fights. In this way, he claims that, following the destruction of the Kurdish emirates, lawlessness, disorder, and violence increased tremendously in the region.[16] This is a harsh and reductionist argument which takes the agency away from Kurdish tribes in the age of the Kurdish principalities. Kurdish tribes were neither passive subjects of the Kurdish dynasties nor passive subjects of the imperial Ottoman state.

Even though there was an increase in disorder, insecurity, and violence due to the power vacuum after the destruction of the Kurdish emirates, as Yener Koç elegantly shows, it is misleading to depict the age of the Kurdish emirates as a time period without disorder or problems.[17] When one defines the post-Tanzimat era as a period of disorder and dysfunction, it implies that Kurdish tribesmen were a group of

[15] Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 65.
[16] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds,* 49.
[17] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 14-15.

people who inherently committed crimes and engaged in violence. Further, blaming Kurdish tribes for the uptick in violence after the fall of the Kurdish emirates ignores the fact that Kurdish tribes constituted a large proportion of the population in the region before the fall of the emirates. These assumptions also pave the way for an underestimation of the agency of Kurdish tribal chiefs. These tribal leaders would be new partners of the state in ruling the region, indicating that they would accumulate important economic and social capital in the region. Even though the power of the Kurdish emirates promoted a more stable atmosphere in the region, it is still not true that Kurdish tribes were under the complete control of Kurdish Mirs. Yener Koç emphasizes that there was actually a mutual dependency between the Kurdish principalities and Kurdish tribes in the middle of the nineteenth century.[18]

When tribes are depicted as lawless and tyrannical groups of people sociologically, this harsh depiction implies that tribal units were not economically motivated, implying that tribesmen were nomads focused entirely on pastoralism. This line of thinking is erroneous, as tribesmen frequently engaged in trade. They also often had very symbiotic relationships with imperial states. Many studies of tribe and tribalism show that the relationships between tribes and imperial states were dynamic and flexible rather than static. Distinguished scholars such as Lois Beck, Richard Tapper, Philip Carl Salzman have developed important theories regarding the lifestyle and structures of tribes in the Middle East in the 1960s and 70s.[19] These studies show that making generalizations about tribes and portraying them as monolithic or pre-modern units is untrue. Thanks to the methodology developed by these scholars, the archaic perspectives that defined tribes as primitive,

[18] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 15.
[19] Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth-and Twentieth Century Iran;" Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran*; Carl Salzman, "Tribal Chiefs as Middlemen."

tyrannical, and stagnant units began to change. Now, tribes are no longer seen as monolithic organizations, but rather, tribal units contain many multitudes, and many of them had reciprocal relationships with imperial states. Lois Beck illustrates that tribes provided local security, meat provision, along with military power for imperial states, and likewise the support of imperial states could be crucial for a tribe in local conflicts.[20]

Kurdish tribes were dynamic units, and their relationship with the Ottoman state shifted in accordance with their self-interests and agendas. Kurdish tribes were not passive units that were under the absolute authority of the Ottoman state, but rather, they had a reciprocal relationship with the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century. In this regard, the agency of Kurdish tribes should not be overlooked when it comes to dealing with the state as a new actor in the middle of the nineteenth century. In this sense, I avoid making oversimplifications about the Hasenan tribe. Rather, I focus the role of the Hasenan leadership in the Muş region as a semi-independent group of people who dealt with the state from the Tanzimat era to the beginning of the World War I.

According to Michael Eppel, when Ottoman reformers embraced policies which asserted state control over Kurdish provinces, Kurdish tribes' ability to maneuver began to wane over time. The state thus gained the upper hand as a new policy maker in the region during the Tanzimat era.[21] Though Eppel accurately emphasizes the increasing role of the state in the eastern regions, it is not entirely accurate to say that Kurdish tribes had decreased maneuverability after the elimination of the Kurdish dynasties. I argue that, after the dismantling of the Kurdish emirates, Ottoman governors appointed in the Ottoman East needed the

[20] Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth-and Twentieth Century Iran," 192.
[21] Eppel, "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates," 237-238.

support and cooperation of Kurdish tribal chiefs, and in this way, these tribal leaders gained political and social power in the region. Yet, these Kurdish chiefs also knew that the Ottoman state was no longer a distant actor, and İstanbul was more intimately involved in the eastern regions more than ever during the Tanzimat era. Istanbul would, however, become even more active in Kurdish tribal affairs with the establishment of the Hamidian regiments during Sultan Abdulhamid II's era (1876-1909). The relationship between Kurdish tribes and the state fundamentally changed during the Hamidian era, revealing that Kurdish tribes that joined the regiments gained important sociopolitical and economic power. These tribes now found themselves with a particular level of political and military power that they had never seen before the establishment of the Hamidian regiments.

When the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments were established by the Hamidian regime in 1891, the main goal was to make Kurdish tribesmen loyal Ottoman subjects so that the state could utilize their manpower. Kurdish tribes were also officially registered when they joined the Hamidian regiments, and the state hoped that because of this they would now start paying taxes. In this way, the material motivations behind the formation of the Hamidian regiments were very clear. In addition to material motivations, however, the Hamidian regime intended to implement a process of civilization and Ottomanization in establishing the Hamidian regiments. In this regard, the Hamidiye was an institution that helped the Ottoman state gain control over Sunni Kurdish tribes, heralding a new era of Ottoman state policies. For the first time, top officials of the Ottoman state, including M. Zeki Pasha, would provide Kurdish tribal leaders who joined the Hamidian regiments with personal patronage, illustrating that they recognized Kurdish tribal chiefs as newly emerging representatives who replaced Kurdish principalities.

The subject of the Hamidian regiments is not widely studied in Ottoman studies. There are, however, several important works about the establishment of the Hamidian regiments and the impact of them on the relationship between Kurds and Armenians. In this work, I delve deeply into the Hasenan tribe's participation in the Hamidian regiments, arguing that the tribal hierarchy and structure of the Hasenan tribe were damaged when the Hasenan leaders joined the Hamidian brigades.

Janet Klein's book *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* is one of the most notable works that examines the Hamidian Regiments from 1890 to 1914.[22] Klein pinpoints that there were several goals behind the establishment of the Hamidian regiments in chapter one, emphasizing that the creation of the Hamidiye was a "manifold mission." Klein illustrates that the Hamidan regiments were modeled on the Russian Cossacks, and the main motivation of the Ottoman state was to harness the military power of Kurdish tribes.[23] For Klein, another reason behind the formation of the Hamidian regiments was to push policies of Ottomanism and civilization on Kurdish tribes, thus purchasing their loyalty.[24] She argues that the process of "re-emirization" began in the Hamidian era, underscoring that Kurdish tribes who joined the Hamidian regiments gained military, social, and economic power in their respective areas.[25] Klein's book does not, however, cover the pre-Hamidian era in detail when utilizing the term "re-emirization," and in this way the book does not make a strong comparison between the Tanzimat and Hamidian eras. Another important feature of Klein's work is that she focusses on land disputes between Kurdish tribes and Armenian peasants from a strictly economic perspective in chapter four. She defines these disputes as an "agrarian

[22] Klein, *The Margins of Empire.*
[23] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 20-51.
[24] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 43, 48.
[25] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 84-86.

question."[26] Further, she prioritizes three major Kurdish tribes, the Hayderan, Milli, and Miran tribes. By focusing on these three tribes, she addresses how Kurdish tribes harassed and attacked Armenian peasants by seizing their lands and moveable properties.[27]

In terms of its theoretical framework, Klein's work has a strong analysis of how tribalism was reinforced and supported within the Kurdish community by Yıldız Palace during the Hamidian era. Yet, Klein largely relies on British and French primary sources utilizing fewer Kurdish and Ottoman primary sources, limiting the perspective of her work. Klein mainly focuses on land disputes between Kurdish tribes and the Armenian peasants, arguing that Kurdish tribal chiefs were opportunistic when they attacked Armenian villages and were motivated by material gain.[28] In this way, she argues that the struggle for lands and property gained an ethnic dimension within time. Despite Klein's in-depth analysis of land disputes and the economics of the Hamidiye, she does not address the common class relationship between Armenian and Kurdish peasants and the similarity of their struggles with Kurdish aghas.

Mehmet Polatel is another prominent scholar who analyzes land disputes between Kurdish tribes and Armenian peasants in Eastern Anatolia. His doctoral dissertation is a study that examines agrarian disputes from 1870 to 1914. Polatel highlights that it is difficult to make generalizations regarding land transfers between Kurdish and Armenian communities in the Ottoman East.[29] He stresses that land disputes gained an ethnic character in the 1890s, meaning that the land question was no longer just an issue between Kurdish aghas and Armenian peasants. Now, there

[26] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 131-136.
[27] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 63, 84, 97, 136.
[28] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 169.
[29] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 111.

were many other actors, including immigrants and ordinary Muslim peasants, who attempted to seize Armenian lands. [30] This is a formidable argument, but it may be a bit of a stretch to say that numerous actors were now trying to seize Armenian lands. There is not strong enough evidence to suggest that ordinary Muslim peasants were powerful enough to take Armenian properties and lands during the Hamidian era. Instead, I emphasize that there was a systematic and collective violence which was committed by Kurdish aghas, local state officials, and certain groups who constituted the main militia forces of Kurdish chiefs in order to seize the lands and properties of Armenian people in the 1890s. In this regard, it is undeniable that the formation of the Hamidian regiments led to major land transfers to Kurdish chiefs, and in this way harmed the relationship between the Kurdish and Armenian communities more than ever.

Bayram Kodaman is another scholar who focused on the establishment of the Hamidian regiments,[31] utilizing a state-oriented perspective regarding their function. He argued that the main aim of the Hamidian regiments was to form a strong barrier against a possible Russian invasion in Eastern Anatolia. He also claims that the Hamidiye was a barrier to the materialization of Armenian nationalism.[32] Kodaman is one of the first names to research the subject of the Hamidian regiments, thus he gives many technical details about the number, structures, and hubs of the regiments. Yet, he sees the Hamidian regiments as a monolithic organization, as if the Kurdish tribes that joined the regiments did not have their own agendas or interests. Even though Kodaman generally focuses on military aspect of the Hamidian regiments, he

[30] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 110-111.
[31] Kodoman, "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiment."
[32] Kodoman, "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiment," 392-394.

admits that the Hamidiye was an institution that had a number of goals in the region.[33]

Erdal Çiftçi's doctoral dissertation about the Hayderan tribe is another important contribution to the study of Kurdish tribes.[34] Çiftçi delves into an examination of the history of the Hayderan tribe from the pre-Tanzimat period to early Republican era. His work is largely political history and focuses on the relationship between the Ottoman state and the Hayderan tribe, which was one of the biggest Kurdish tribes in the region. Çiftçi shows us the extent to which the Ottoman state became an actor in Hayderan tribal affairs in the nineteenth century. In this regard, Çiftçi's doctoral dissertation offers us important insights into how power dynamics changed in favor of the Hayderan chiefs following their participation in the Hamidian regiments. Çiftçi does not, however, delve into the relationship between the Hayderan tribe and other major tribes in the region. Economic and social aspects of the Hayderan tribe are also rarely touched upon in this work. This work largely focuses on the leadership of the Hayderan tribe and utilizes a wide range of sources including Kurdish oral history, Ottoman, British, and French sources.

While Klein examines the participation of three large Kurdish tribes in the Hamidan regiments, Kodaman does not focus on any specific Kurdish tribe. Çiftçi's doctoral dissertation also focuses on Blind Hüseyin Pasha and the Hayderan tribe. In this vein, the studies mentioned above focus either on large and well-known Kurdish tribes and their participation in the Hamidian regiments or act as a general analysis of the Hamidian regiments and land disputes. In this regard, I focus on the Hasenan tribe, which was a powerful Kurdish tribe in the general vicinity of the Muş region.

[33] Kodoman, "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiment," 423-424.
[34] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East."

However, unlike some other major Kurdish tribes, such as the Celali, the Milli, and the Hayderan, the Hasenan tribe is not widely studied.

Only three studies have previously looked at the Hasenan tribe. Gülseren Duman Koç's doctoral dissertation on the elimination of the Alaaddin Pashazade family in the Muş region is an important contribution to the field of tribal studies.[35] Her last chapter discusses the relationship between the Hasenan leader, Rıdvan Agha and the Tanzimat state in Muş. She focuses on the impact of the Tanzimat program on the Hasenan tribesmen and their reactions to the Tanzimat. In this sense, the settlement of Kurdish tribes in the Ottoman East was the main goal of the Tanzimat reformers. Duman Koç elegantly shows how the Hasenan chief, Rıdvan Agha, handled his interactions with the state when the state came up with new demands, such as collecting taxes or conscripting the tribesmen into the army in the Muş region.[36] Koç shows us how the Ottoman state began to engage in the tribal affairs of the Hasenan chiefs during the Tanzimat era. Koç's doctoral dissertation does not, however, address the late nineteenth and early twentieth century sociopolitical structures of the Hasenan tribe, but helpfully shows how the center-periphery relationship began to shift in favor of the Ottoman state during the Tanzimat era in the region. A detailed description of the *torin* (ruling) family of the Hasenan tribe is outside the scope of Koç's work, thus she does not analyze the tribal hierarchy in detail.

Sedat Ulugana's book chapter is another significant work which focuses on the Hasenan leaders from the Tanzimat era until the First World War.[37] In this sense, this book chapter resembles my thesis in terms of its generational focus on the

[35] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak."
[36] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 286-310.
[37] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı'' İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret."

Hasenan. Ulugana's work, however, does not offer a detailed investigation of the changing and evolving tribal structure of the Hasenan tribe, and thus is only able to scratch the surface of the political dynamics within the tribe. Further, because it is not a study specifically about the Hasenan tribe itself, it prioritizes the relationship between the Ottoman state and four major Kurdish tribes that inhabited the Muş and Siird regions. This book chapter also does not have a strong chronological flow which contextualizes the sociopolitical developments and conflicts in the region. Ulugana's work is mainly interested in the political history of the Muş region from the Tanzimat era until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Last but not least, Kemal Süphandağ's book *Büyük Osmanlı Entrikası: Hamidiye Alayları* offers helpful information about the Hasenan tribe.[38] In this work, Süphandağ transcribed a great number of Ottoman archival documents which offer important insights into the relationship between Kurdish tribes and Armenian peasants, the structure of the Hamidian regiments, and the relationship between the Kurdish tribes which mostly inhabited in the northeastern part of Anatolia. Süphandağ comes from the region and is the great-grandson of Blind Hüseyin Pasha, thus he is well versed in the socio-political and historical context of the region. His book does not, however, provide us with significant theoretical and historical frameworks for understanding Kurdish tribes. Even though his book is very informative regarding the Hayderan leadership, it is a selective and somewhat biased work. As the great-grandson of Blind Hüseyin Pasha, Süphandağ paints a rosier picture of his great-grandfather than historical analysis should support. Süphandağ's work also portrays the Hamidian regiments as a monolithic organization and implies

[38] Süphandağ, *Büyük Osmanlı Entrikası*.

that Kurdish tribes were manipulated and used by the Hamidian regime, undermining their historical agency.

1.2 Chapter outline

This thesis is based on the activities of the Ömerriye (Emeriye) branch of the Hasenan tribe in the Muş region of the Ottoman East. I focus on the state-Hasenan tribe relations and the intra and inter-tribal conflicts and collaboration of the Hasenan leadership with other neighboring tribes. As chapter four and five investigate, the violence committed against the peasantry in the Muş region is also another important subject of this study. This study is composed of six chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion. The chronological order of events involving the Hasenan leaders is important for exploring the changes and continuities from the Tanzimat era to the first quarter of the twentieth century in the Muş region.

The second chapter of this study has two parts. In the first part, I focus on the emergence of Kurdish tribal leaders as new "policy makers" in the Ottoman East after the elimination of the Kurdish principalities by the Ottoman state. The first part is important to show us the gradual penetration of the state into the region, indicating that Tanzimat program had more centralist tendencies in the Ottoman East. With the elimination of the important Kurdish Mirs (hereditary leader) (see the appendix for more explanation of these titles) such as Bedirhan Bey, Han Mahmud in Van, and Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, Kurdish tribal leaders gradually gained a political power because they were now intermediaries between the state and tribesmen, giving Kurdish tribal leaders an important sociopolitical position in the region. In this regard, the first part of this study shows the formation of direct channels between the state and Kurdish tribal leaders, but this change in the region was not smooth.

Instead, the emergence of Kurdish tribal aghas as new representatives was a dynamic but harsh process. Intra and inter-tribal conflicts would increase following the gradual implementation of the Tanzimat reforms in the region.

In the second part of this chapter, I begin with the story of Rıdvan Agha, who was the father of Halit Agha and the grandfather of Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha. This part illuminates the settlement policy of the Tanzimat regime and the reactions and agency of Rıdvan Agha. The conflicts and collaboration between the state and Rıdvan Agha are the main focus of this part of the chapter. This part shows us that the Hasenan tribesmen under the leadership of Rıdvan Agha did not easily accept the settlement policy of the state, thus Hasenan tribesmen were still very mobile in a large area in the region. Yet, the hiring of the Hasenan leaders as sub-district governors as salaried officials was a clear indication that the state wanted to reduce the mobility of the tribesmen during the Tanzimat era.

The third chapter is composed of two parts. In the first part of the third chapter, I investigate the intra-tribal conflicts between two important houses of the Hasenan tribe. This part begins with the establishment of the Hamidian regiments in 1891, and it examines the impact of the Hamidian regiments on the Hasenan leadership. Now, Fethullah Bey and his brother, Rıza Agha, were the new actors and leaders of the *torin* (ruling) family of the Hasenan tribe, and the two brothers did not hesitate to join the newly established Hamidian regiments in order to become more visible and powerful in the local politics of the region. However, the state was now more visible as an actor when it came to tribal affairs during the Hamidian era. In this part, I explore how the competition for leadership within the Hasenan tribe accelerated after the state established the Hamidian regiments. In this sense, sub-chiefs in the Hasenan tribe became more aggressive in their attempts to attain

leadership of the Hasenan tribe. This part illustrates how the upending of tribal hierarchy by the state became a common norm in the region in the 1890s.

The second part of this chapter investigates the relationship between three neighboring tribes, the Hasenan, Hayderan, and Sepki tribes. These three big Kurdish tribes became more aggressive against each other after they joined the Hamidian regiments. The infamous Blind Hüseyin Pasha of the Hayderan was the most important rival of Fethullah Bey in the region. I argue that Fethullah Bey did not accept the superiority of Blind Hüseyin Pasha, thus their competition in order to gain control over villages in the region accelerated during the Hamidian era. Apart from competition for material sources, the blood feud between the leadership of the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes was another important reason why these two tribes failed to become allies in the region after they both participated in the Hamidian regiments. In this vein, intra-tribal conflicts between leading Hasenan families and their fights with the two neighboring tribes are the subjects of the third chapter.

The fourth chapter investigates the relationship between the Hasenan leaders and the Armenian and Kurdish peasants in the region. Both Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha were very strong sociopolitical figures who dictated their demands in the region following their participation in the Hamidian regiments. In this chapter, we can see that looting was an important economic activity for a group of Hasenan tribesmen. This chapter also focuses on other economic activities of the Hasenan leaders like tax farming. There are two cases which illustrate the growing influence of the Hasenan leaders. In the Ahlat incidents, the Hasenan tribesmen were operating military incursions in areas far from their main territory, while the Derik case is an example of systematic, intense, and large-scale violence in the region. In this regard, large villages, which had larger fields and were close to water sources, regardless of

the religious affiliations of their subjects, were systematically and consistently exploited by Hasenan perpetrators, illustrating that these were no ordinary raids, but systematic raiding campaigns organized by the Hasenan chiefs during the Hamidian era. This chapter also shows that Rıza Agha drew the attention of the British Consul to the Ahlat incidents.

The fifth chapter examines the relationship between the Hasenan leaders and the Armenian peasantry following the proclamation of the Second Constitution. Even though the relationship between Yıldız Palace and the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs was colder in the last two years of the Hamidian regime, the CUP regime took a direct position against the Kurdish chiefs in its initial years, claiming that they were the relicts of the old regime. The important point of this chapter is that Fethullah Bey and other Hasenan leaders quickly responded by attempting to become the allies of the CUP in the region following the establishment of the Constitutional regime, revealing that they had their own agendas and self-interests. However, the new regime was very suspicious of these Kurdish chiefs in its initial years. After 1910, with the changing conditions, when the CUP did not side with Armenian political organizations in order to solve the land issue between the Armenian peasantry and Kurdish chiefs in the region, the role of Kurdish chiefs partially increased again. Yet, this chapter shows that the Hasenan leaders and other Kurdish tribal leaders would no longer be the influential figures they used to be during the Hamidian era. In this sense, Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha's power began to wane after the CUP came to power, indicating the centralist policies of the new regime in the region.

1.3 Sources

This thesis is mainly based on Ottoman archival documents. I primarily rely on the Presidency Ottoman Archives (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi). These Ottoman sources are not only important because they show how the state dealt with Hasenan tribesmen, but also because the voice of peasants can often be heard in their arzuhals (petitions). These petitions reveal that Armenian and Muslim peasants were not indifferent to what was going on in the region. Moreover, the documents from Ministry of the Domestic Affairs (Dahiliye Nezareti) and the Yıldız Catalogues of the Ottoman Archives have significant information regarding the perspective and understanding of Ottoman bureaucrats about Kurdish tribes in the region. Examining the generations of a Kurdish tribe is no easy task as there are few primary sources about semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes, apart from the major tribal confederations such as the Milli, the Hayderan, or the Celali. Therefore, I utilize Kurdish oral sources that offer important details regarding the relationships between the Hasenan and other tribes. These oral sources show us the internal conflict in the Hasenan leadership. Unlike Ottoman written sources, local oral history sources offer more detailed information about the family structure of the Hasenan tribe and a more nuanced perspective on intra-tribal conflicts between different segments of the Hasenan because Ottoman officials who recorded the activities of Hasenan tribesmen often failed to record the names of Hasenan tribesmen. As Ottoman officials were not native people who were familiar with the region, it was common for them to record important Hasenan names wrong, or to fail to record them at all. In this regard, I have compiled details and information about the Hasenan leadership from a number of different sources and I attempt to contextualize and present this information in a clear manner, despite the fact that archival sources on the Hasenan ruling family are very

scattered. In this way, this study will integrate both Ottoman archival records and oral history sources in order to offer a more complete and nuanced information about the leadership of the Hasenan tribe.

CHAPTER 2

THE TANZIMAT ERA (1839-1876)

2.1 Introduction

The Tanzimat reforms were a set of reforms which aimed to centralize and modernize the Ottoman state. The nineteenth century was an era of important fiscal, political, bureaucratic, social, and military reforms not only for the Ottoman state but also for European imperial powers. External pressure from Europe and internal challenges from different communities living in Ottoman domains made holding the empire together difficult for Ottoman bureaucrats. The Ottoman center intended to implement the Tanzimat reforms in order to build a direct relationship with its subjects. In other words, one of the more pressing goals of the Tanzimat program was to establish direct rule from the Ottoman center over the peripheries. By establishing a proper bureaucratic administrative system, Tanzimat authorities aimed to collect more taxes and introduce the notion of equal citizenship.[39] Provincial powerholders, however, resisted the Tanzimat program because it brought about structural changes which undermined their fiscal and political power in their respective peripheral areas.[40] The Ottoman center enacted a number of laws which delegated power to centrally appointed governors in the provinces, which made local notables furious and rebellious.

In the second chapter of this study, I will examine the impacts of the Tanzimat reforms on the Ottoman East and analyze the extent to which the elimination of the hereditary Kurdish emirates impacted the Kurdish community.

[39] Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation," 478.
[40] For detailed information about Ottoman structural reforms in the Tanzimat era, see Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire;* Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 140-220; Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye Ülke Yönetimi.*

New socio-political actors, including sheiks and tribal leaders, became intermediaries between the imperial state and the local people who lived in the eastern regions. In this vein, this chapter analyzes a gradual transfer of power from local Kurdish notable families to tribal chiefs on the eastern peripheries of the empire by looking at the Hasenan tribe of the Muş sancak (district)[41] under the leadership of Rıdvan (Rızgan) Agha. In this chapter, I will first explain how the Ottoman State started a process of penetration into its own eastern periphery by destroying the Kurdish emirates[42] who had been powerholders in Ottoman Kurdistan since the time of Selim I (r. 1512-1520).

Later, I will examine the impact of the Tanzimat reforms on the process of settlement of nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish groups in the Ottoman East. Tanzimat reformers regarded Kurdish mirs[43] as obstacles that could pose a threat to the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman East. They sought to build a regime based on centralization and modernization by eliminating these hereditary rulers in the region. To put it differently, the demise of Kurdish principalities created a power vacuum, and new socio-political figures, namely sheikhs and tribal chiefs, rose to hold newly created provincial and administrative positions in the region. This study has no intention of depicting the era of the Kurdish emirates as a romantic period of peace and prosperity, but rather to illustrate how shifting power dynamics contributed to violence in the region. Further, I would like to point out that when I describe Kurdish tribes as new social, economic, and

[41] With the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms, new administrative units were created in the peripheral areas of the state. See Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri,* 46-63.
[42] Hakan Özoğlu refers to this process of Ottoman military campaigns against hereditary Kurdish rulers as a "Decreasing Level of Autonomy" see Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 57.
[43] Mir is a term used for Kurdish hereditary rulers who were the leaders of the emirates. In terms of power hierarchy within the emirate, the mir and his family were followed by other prominent tribal leaders. The tribal elite consisted of the mir, his family members, prominent tribal leaders, religious dignitaries, and bureaucrats paid by the mir. For more information see Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 64.

political units, this is not meant to undermine their agency and power during the period of hereditary Kurdish rule. Yet, I will argue that with the destruction of the Kurdish dynasties in the region, Kurdish tribal chiefs acquired crucial intermediary roles between the imperial state and local people. In this sense, Kurdish tribal chiefs and sheikhs became the new policy makers in the region.

In the second part of this chapter, I will tell the story of the Hasenan tribe under Rıdvan Agha and his cousin, Kulihan Agha, and show how Rıdvan Agha of the Hasenan played a pivotal role in the newly created socio-political power structure of the region, particularly in the Muş district. In this part, I will delve into how the Tanzimat state managed to transform the nomadic lifestyle of the Hasenan tribe into a partially sedentary one, and its reasons for doing so. The important point here is the extent to which Hasenan tribal leaders took positions within the newly created provincial administration of the region, creating a connection between tribal leaders and the Sublime Porte. The relationship between the Hasenan tribe and the local settled population is discussed in the second part of this chapter. The second chapter of this study thus marks the beginning of our story of the Hasenan tribe under the leadership of the Household of Emer during the Tanzimat, Hamidian, and Second Constitutional periods.

2.2 The implementation of the Tanzimat in the Ottoman East

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire strived for modernization and centralization. Modernization efforts, including the creation of a modernized army, would incur significant expenses for the Ottoman State. A new tax system, coupled with the Sublime Porte's direct control over the peripheries of the empire, paved the way for Ottoman central authority to intervene in the local affairs

of the Kurdish emirates. The first military interventions, which attempted to bring remote eastern regions under firm and direct control, began under the leadership of Mahmud II (1808-1839) in the mid-1830s.[44] In this vein, Sabri Ateş argues that the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of modern states which prioritized centralization and direct authority over their peripheries, which is why local notables and peripheral powerholders were the first targets for elimination.[45] Sharing power with local hereditary rulers was no longer a desirable ruling method for centralizing governments who now sought to create cohesive and unitarian states.

Looking at nineteenth century Ottoman Kurdistan, aside from the traditional Ottoman sancak system, hereditary Kurdish rulers had two different autonomous modes of administration which made them an obstacle to Tanzimat reforms: the Yurtluk-Ocaklık and Hükümet (government) systems. The Kurdish Hükümet was the more autonomous system of administration and was embraced in the most remote and inaccessible regions. In the Hükümet system, Kurdish dynasties were not expected to pay taxes to the central state, and inhabitants within Hükümets were not conscripted for the Ottoman Army. In addition to these privileges, the Ottoman state did not interfere with the internal affairs of the Hükümets or the succession of their hereditary leaders.[46]

The second type of administrative unit was the Yurtluk-Ocaklık or Ekrad Beyliği, which was obliged to pay taxes. The main difference between a Yurtluk-Ocaklık and an ordinary sancak was that the ruler of an Ekrad Beyliği could not be

[44] What makes Mahmut II (1808-1839) different from his predecessor, reformist Selim III (1789-1807), is that he decided that rather than changing a few military elements, institutional and empire wide reforms must be enacted for the purpose of transforming the entire empire. See Shaw and K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire,* 1; Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire,* 60-62.
[45] Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 73.
[46] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State,* 158; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 57; Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands,* 41-42; Özok Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility in the Ottoman Empire,* 23.

removed from his position by the central government because ruling was his hereditary right.[47] For this reason, Tanzimat reformers made it a priority to eliminate powerholders who traditionally avoided sending soldiers to the army and paying taxes directly to the central treasury.

The destruction of the Kurdish emirates started when Mehmed Reşid Pasha was appointed governor-general of Diyarbekir with extensive powers by Mahmud II in 1834.[48] Mehmed Reşid Pasha had led many campaigns against Kurdish mirs, most notably, he defeated Mir Muhammad of Rewanduz, the leader of the Soran Emirate, enabling the central government to take control of the areas under authority of hereditary ruler of Rewanduz.[49] Mir Muhammad of Rewanduz was removed to Istanbul and given a nişan (medal) and decorations and even invited to the selamlık, the solemn procession to the Friday prayers.[50] This example indeed indicates that the imperial government did not intend to completely eliminate Kurdish notables, but the main goal was to replace hereditary Kurdish rulers with centrally appointed governors and officials and to incorporate those notable Kurdish aristocrats into the new centralized Ottoman administrative system.

After Reşid Mehmed Pasha died in 1836, Çerkez Hafız Mehmed Pasha was appointed governor-general of Diyarbekir and Sivas, and he continued his predecessor's efforts toward centralizing state power in Ottoman Kurdistan.[51] In this manner, Hakan Özoğlu states that those who participated in military campaigns against Kurdish hereditary rulers were granted the "Medal of Kurdistan," along with

[47] See Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 56-57; Özok Gündoğan, "The Making of the Ottoman Modern State," 79-82; Ateş, "The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands," 41.
[48] Rhys Bajalan, "Between Accommodationism and Separatism," 81.
[49] Bruinessen, Agha, Shaikh, and State, 176; Aydın and Verhij, "Confusion in the Cauldron," 31-32.
[50] When Mir Muhammad of Rewanduz returned from Istanbul to his homeland, he disappeared mysteriously, meaning that he was likely killed by Ottoman authorities, but his family members were not physically eliminated, and they would later be integrated into the Ottoman system. See Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 78-79.
[51] Aydın and Verhij, "Confusion in the Cauldron," 32.

grants and titles, and salaried governors who were appointed to Kurdistan provinces enjoyed high salaries.[52] Hafız Mehmed Pasha would be unable to topple Han Mahmud of Müküs (Van, Bahçesaray), and he was defeated by the army of Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha at the Battle of Nizip in 1839, undoing Mehmet Pasha's efforts toward centralization in the eastern provinces.[53]

The Bohtan Emirate might be the most famous example of a Kurdish dynasty which fervently resisted Ottoman Tanzimat centralization efforts. Mir Bedirhan of Bohtan gained tremendous power when he became the mütesellim (tax collector) in 1836, which extended his authority from east of Rawanduz in the Southeast to west of Uramiya in the East after the Battle of Nizip in 1839.[54] The important point here is that he was able to extend his powers beyond the hereditary Hükümet system of administration, even having his name recited during Friday prayers. He also tried to modernize his troops and revive destroyed villages.[55] Furthermore, he established and extended his authority by building alliances with other Kurdish Emirs, including Han Mahmud of Müküs (Van) and Nurullah Bey of Colemerg (Hakkari).[56]

In the new atmosphere of the Tanzimat, which stressed the importance of centralization in peripheral areas, the central Ottoman government was able to eliminate the Bohtan Emirate, and Istanbul issued a law which transferred Cizre, the powerbase of Bedirhan Bey, from Diyarbekir to Mosul.[57] The annexation of Cizre into the Mosul Province was an indication of Ottoman efforts to weaken the authority

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[52] Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Dürenişleri*, 250; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 61. More information for a detailed list of Kurdistan governors see Devlet Salnamesi 1847 (1263) – 1867 (1284) in Özoğlu *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 62-63.
[53] Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Dürenişleri*, 88-90; Aydın and Verhij, "Confusion in the Cauldron," *34-36.*
[54] Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 85; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* 177-180.
[55] Aydın and Verheij, "Confusion in the Cauldron," 36; Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 109-111; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State,* 179-180.
[56] See Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Dürenişleri,* 157-190; Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan Beyi Bedirhan,* 103-129; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* 179.
[57] Sevgen: *Doğu ve Güneydoğu'da Türk Beylikleri*, 66-69.

of Mir Bedirhan, who was regarded as a major threat to the unity and integrity of the empire in the Ottoman East. The turning point was the massacres committed by Mir Bedirhan and Nurullah Bey against Nestorians in 1843 and 1846, which attracted the attention of European powers who then pushed the Ottoman state to crush the revolt of Bedirhan Bey in 1847.[58] With the elimination of the Bohtan Emirate, the era of the Kurdish Principalities ended. It should be emphasized, however, that, like Mir Muhammad of Rawanduz, the Bedirhan family was not killed. On the contrary, they were forced to surrender and then sent into exile far from their homelands, and within time, important Kurdish notable families, including the family of Han Mahmud and the Bedirhanzades, were incorporated into the new administrative system of the empire.[59]

It could be argued, however, that the history of Kurdish principalities should not be reduced to the reactions to policies of the central government. In the 1830s and 1840s, these Kurdish emirates were strong political entities which had their own agendas and ability to develop their own policies in the complex socio-political atmosphere of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Kurdish emirates not only fought back and resisted the policies of the central government in order to preserve their hereditary status, but also revolted against local Ottoman governors. For example, the revolt of Mir Bedirhan Bey against the Ottoman State was triggered by the governor of Mosul, Bayraktar Mehmed Pasha, who sought to curb the power of the Mir in order to increase his own power in the region.[60]

[58] Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan Beyi Bedirhan*, 288-290; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* 180.
[59] Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan Beyi Bedirhan*, 373-381.
[60] Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 93; for more information about the policies of İncebayraktar Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Mosul who triggered Mir Bedirhan's revolt see Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 71-72.

By the 1850s, the Kurdish ruling dynasties were eliminated and a new phase of the Tanzimat program began. Apart from military campaigns, Tanzimat bureaucrats also prioritized institutional changes. In this vein, Takvim-i Vekayi, the official Ottoman newspaper, stated that Eyalet-i Kurdistan (the Kurdistan Province) was created in accordance with the Tanzimat-i Hayriyye (Beneficial Tanzimat) in 1847.[61] In other words, creation of the Kurdistan Province was not an indication of Kurdistan as a political entity, but rather a reorganization through which Tanzimat reformers attempted to exercise direct control over the eastern regions.[62]

The state took other legal steps in order to diminish the power of local notables. Among them, the Arazi Kanunnamesi (The Land Code of 1858) indicated that although the Ottoman state was the de jure owner of agricultural lands, title deeds would be regularized by giving land de facto to those who were able to cultivate it.[63] However, the Land Code of 1858 failed to meet the expectation that it would make peasants the new the landholders because powerful tribal chieftains and local officials were able to use the land code to register lands in their names by forcing and convincing peasants to cede their rights to registration.[64] As a result, the

[61] Bjalan, "Between Accommodationism and Separatism," 86. The Diyarbakır province (Eyalet) and the Hakkâri, Van, and Muş districts (sancak) and the Mardin, Cizre, and Botan sub-districts (kaza) became part of the Kurdistan province. See also B.A. Mesail-i Mühimme, 1310 in Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 61.

[62] According to Özoğlu, the main reason behind the creation of the Kurdistan Province was its importance as a strategic buffer zone at the intersection of the Russian and Persian empires. Yet, in 1867 or 1868 (1284) the Kurdistan province was united with Memaretülaziz and renamed the "Diyarbakır" Province. See Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 60-62.

[63] On the Land Code of 1858 see İslamoğlu, "Property as Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858," 4-62; Aytekin, "Agrarian Relations, Property and Law," 935-951. The Land Code of 1858 was prepared by a commission under Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and one of the main aims of the Land Code was to achieve the standardization of land registration throughout the Empire. For more information, see Gözel, "The Implementation of the Ottoman Land Code in Eastern Anatolia," 36-37

[64] Karademir, *Osmanlı'nın Son Yüzyılında Kürtler Modernleşme,* 438-439. Gözel, "The Implementation of the Ottoman Land Code in Eastern Anatolia," 2-4.

Land Code of 1858 actually reduced the status of peasants and tribesmen to sharecroppers,[65] excluding them from this new land system.

Another important reform which changed the socio-political structure in the empire was the introduction of the Vilayet Nizamnamesi (The Passage of the Statute of Provincial Organization) in 1864 and 1871.[66] These new legal reforms changed the structure of provincial administration, making it easy for tribal chiefs, as newly emerging socio-political forces, to take part in the ruling process of the Ottoman East. For example, the old eyalet (provincial) system was replaced with a new provincial system, and new administrative units like vilayet (province), sancak/liva (district) and kaza (sub-district) were introduced, and new provincial councils would now be composed of both Muslim and non-Muslim members.[67] In appointing tribal leaders as sub-district governors, it could be argued that the Ottoman center was attempting to make itself more active and visible in the internal affairs of the mostly Kurdish populated regions.

It should be also noted that military campaigns did not end after the elimination of Mir Bedirhan. Indeed, military campaigns went hand in hand with legal action during the Tanzimat era. For example, after the Crimean War (1853-56), Ottoman central authorities attempted to make a military expedition in the Çukurova and Kozan regions for the purpose of punishing nomadic tribes who refused to send their members as soldiers to the imperial army. Similarly, Fırka-ı Islahiye (the Reform Corps) undertook an expedition in the Cilicia region, enabling the imperial

[65] Even though villagers did not realize the importance of the Land Code of 1858 in its initial years, there were some examples of peasants registering lands in their names in many mountainous villages in Northern Kurdish regions, for more details, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* 182-185.
[66] Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri,* 61-62; Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye Ülke Yönetimi,* 212-216.
[67] Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri,* 61, 74, 75; Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye,* 212-216.

state to collect taxes and conscript tribesmen.[68] These military expeditions in the Çukurova and Kozan regions indicated that the state had decided to make tribal populations more loyal and dependent subjects.

It is important to note that until the Tanzimat era, Kurdish emirates were seen as important political entities which provided a buffer zone between the Ottoman and Iranian states. From the perspective of the Kurdish Mirs, the Sublime Porte could often be an important ally when they needed to keep their families in power amid intra and inter-emirate conflicts. These emirates ruled over large lands, and they controlled the nomadic Kurdish tribes in the Ottoman East, meaning that they acted as intermediaries between the Ottoman center and Kurdish tribes. In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms, power dynamics and structures shifted, and the role of intermediary between the local population and the central Ottoman government passed to tribal chiefs. Hamit Bozarslan, in describing the changing power dynamics, explains, "already by the end of nineteenth century, many of these tribal entities had also a presence in towns and constituted real counter-powers challenging the weak Ottoman bureaucracy."[69] Yet, it should be emphasized that until the Tanzimat era, there was a very practical and pragmatic relationship between the Kurdish emirates and Istanbul. The Kurdish emirates provided a buffer zone between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, Ottoman authorities only asked for Kurdish men for the army during times of war, and Kurdish hereditary rulers were able to use state alliances to keep their families in power.

[68] Gould, "Lords or Bandits? The Derebeys of Cilicia," 496-499; Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskanı*, 115-118.
[69] Bozarslan, "Tribal Asabiyya and Kurdish Politics," 135.

In this regard, it should not be forgotten that the demise of Kurdish principalities went hand in hand with the process of the "demarcation and delimitation of boundaries."[70] I might call this process a solidification of previously liquid borders. The archaic demarcations of borders between states were replaced with new border treaties which gradually paved the way for a solidification of the borders. In a similar vein, it is important to note that the demise of the Bohtan Emirate was nearly concurrent with the Erzurum Treaty of 1847, which was signed between the Ottoman and Iranian governments in order to solve the border problems between the two states.[71] To put it differently, with the Erzurum Treaty of 1847, it became more difficult for nomadic Kurdish groups to roam freely across the borders. In this respect, a gradual solidification of the liquid borders began to limit the migration and mobility of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish tribal population in the interest of centralization.

In sum, in the middle of the nineteenth century, after legal reorganization and military campaigns in mostly Kurdish populated eastern regions, Kurdish notable families were eliminated and replaced with centrally appointed governors. It is important to note that centralizing reforms were not unique to the Ottoman East. Other parts of the Ottoman Empire also experienced these centralizing reforms and sometimes resisted.[72] The Kurdish regions and other remote parts of the empire became the places where resistance to the Tanzimat reforms was most formidable.[73]

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[70] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes, 173-181; see also Koç, "Celali Aşireti: Üç İmparatorluğun Sınırında," 306-308.
[71] Ateş, "The End of Kurdish Autonomy," 95.
[72] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 62.
[73] Remote peripheral areas including Lebanon and Yemen also became important hubs for resistance against Ottoman reform projects. The imperial state had to find ways to get support from the local notables of these remote places. In this sense, like Kurdish populated eastern regions, Yemen and Lebanon became important places where the Ottoman state had to rely on prominent, strong, families in these remote peripheries. See Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions,* 151-167; Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen;* Akarlı, *The Long Peace,* 29-34.

2.3 The emergence of Kurdish tribes as new socio-political actors

Even though "tribe" (aşir) is a vague term, the term tribe will be used to describe nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish groups in the Ottoman East in this work. However, tribes are not necessarily nomads, as Tapper elegantly illustrates, there were many settled tribes in the Middle East.[74] By the middle of the nineteenth century, with the introduction of the Tanzimat program in the Kurdish regions, tribal confederations[75] progressively emerged as the most prominent socio-political units in the region. According to Van Bruinessen, it is problematic to describe all Kurdish tribes with a single term because they can be different sizes and have different compositions, structures, and forms.[76] To this end, Kurdish tribes should not be reduced to simple definitions and stereotypes of groups of people who did not develop economic, social, and political aspirations and policies.

These tribal confederations would not, however, be able to fulfill the same functions as the Kurdish emirates because they did not have a hierarchical bureaucratic structure. Instead of being large, complex socio-political organizations, tribal confederations actually became gradually smaller. Van Bruinessen has described this process:

> The tribal entities that we see articulating themselves in each consecutive phase of administrative centralization became correspondingly smaller, less complicated, and more genealogically homogeneous: emirates gave way to tribal confederacies, confederacies to large tribes, large tribes to smaller ones.[77]

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[74] Tapper, "Introduction," 8.
[75] Although I have used tribal confederacy and tribe interchangeably in this study, there are some basic differences between a tribe and tribal confederacy. A tribal confederacy has a more complex and heterogenous structure than a tribe and there is a more stratified class composition and more circumstantial solidarity rather than kinship bonds within a tribal confederacy. See Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 46. The term "tribe" should not be understood as a stagnant economic, social, and political unit; besides that, nomadic and semi-nomadic populations should not be seen ahistorical subjects in the course of history. See Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Iran," 190; Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 60.
[76] Bruinessen, "Kurds, States and Tribes," 178.
[77] Bruinessen, "Kurds, States, and Tribes," 169.

Van Bruinessen elsewhere says that this shift is "as if tribal organization had taken a few steps back on the evolutionary ladder."[78] In this vein, he argues that the process of devolution from the Kurdish emirates to tribal confederations and later individual tribes not only incited and escalated lawlessness and instability but also bolstered Istanbul's domination in the Ottoman East in the long run.[79]

However, it should be noted that the increase of lawlessness, insecurity, and instability cannot be explained solely by the actions of newly emerging tribal units. In the time of the Kurdish emirates, insecurity, exploitation, and instability were historically part of ordinary life. We can say, however, that the process in which tribal chiefs rose as new socio-political actors was an indication of how uneven and painful the Tanzimat period was. In this regard, Yener Koç argues that romanticizing the Kurdish emirate era in terms of order and security leads to a perception that tribes were the only unjust and lawless groups in the Ottoman East who ever undermined security and order.[80] I agree with Yener Koç in the sense that romanticizing the era of the Kurdish emirates undermines the agency of Kurdish tribes before the Tanzimat era. Yet, from my view of point, when tribal confederations progressively became smaller and less complex in the second half of the nineteenth century, the collectivist aspect of Kurdish tribes was replaced with individualism, meaning that the power of major tribal leaders waned and lesser Kurdish chiefs gained power, paving the way for the destruction of the monolithic power structures[81] under the Kurdish principalities.

[78] "The Denser the administrative network of the state became, the smaller and simpler the tribes." See Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 181-82.
[79] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 193-195.
[80] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 15.
[81] By monolithic power structures, I mean that under the Kurdish emirates, there were fewer centers of power and authorities within a single principality, because in any given area there was a single hereditary ruling governing structure. After the fall of the Kurdish emirates, power would become more dispersed, as many different authorities would come to power in a given area.

We should not, however, understate the role of the Ottoman state's penetration into Ottoman Kurdistan in the first half of the nineteenth century in the increasing exploitation of the local population, plundering, insecurity, and lawlessness. On the other side of the coin, looking at the relationship between the Ottoman State and Kurdish tribes, it is clear that both sides stood to benefit from each other. Kurdish tribes could be great sources of soldiers, while the political power of the Ottoman state could elevate certain tribal chiefs in the region. Therefore, we must understand that there was a somewhat symbiotic relationship between the state and Kurdish tribes which affected their policies toward each other. In this work, I will discuss the Hasenan tribe of the Muş district under the leadership of Rıdvan Agha as a socio-political and economic organization in the final part of this chapter. A complete historical examination of the social, economic, cultural, and political features of Kurdish tribes is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

2.4 The implementation of the Tanzimat reforms on nomadic and semi-nomadic groups of people

There is little doubt that with the implementation of the Tanzimat program, the social and political landscape dramatically changed in the Ottoman East. In this vein, when Tanzimat reformers embarked on centralization and modernization projects, the Ottoman state put more emphasis on the Ottoman East. Bajalan argues that "in certain respects, the reforms had intensified the linkages between Kurdistan and Istanbul to unprecedented levels."[82] However, in a general manner, the "reconquest" of the eastern periphery did not pave the way for a new, more central and modern way of ruling. On the contrary, it seems that the state was not able to accomplish its

[82] Bajalan, "Between Accommodationism and Separatism," 93.

mission of exercising direct rule over the region, but rather brought a new form of indirect rule led by tribal leaders. However, the intention of the Tanzimat reformers was clear: to transform the socio-political landscape of the empire.

In carrying out the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman East, Istanbul sought to exercise its authority over the new socio-political figures, Kurdish tribal chiefs. To this end, the central government sought to find new ways to collect taxes directly and conscript soldiers from amongst Kurdish tribes. For this reason, the sedentarization of nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish tribal communities became a major priority for the Ottoman state in the eastern regions. It should be noted, however, that tribes were not passive actors who accepted whatever the imperial state demanded. The Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes should not be construed as opposing sides, partially due to their somewhat symbiotic relationship, and partially due to the dynamic way that tribes interacted with the state. Moreover, tribal communities had strong social, economic, and political organizations which made the way they interacted with the state even more complex.[83]

Indeed, before the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state had periodically deployed policies aimed at settling tribes with varying motivations. In the pre-Tanzimat era, the most basic reason to promote the settlement of tribes was to prevent tribes from creating problems with settled populations. Another motivation was to develop agriculture by settling nomadic people in deserted villages.[84] The word, iskan (forced settlement), is used to mean sending or exiling tribes to remote or newly conquered areas of the empire. In this respect, the Ottoman state sometimes embraced some coercive methods when central authorities failed to convince tribes

[83] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 5.
[84] Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskanı,* 29-34. Regarding "wandering dervishes" who made great contributions to the settlement of nomads and semi-nomads during the early periods of the Ottoman Empire, see Barkan, "İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri," 5-37.

to settle willingly. Bringing in the Ottoman army to forcibly settle nomadic people was far from the first choice because tribes would often simply cross the border to avoid violent confrontation. Further, military expeditions were expensive, and settling tribes was seldom worth the expense. For all these reasons, the Ottoman state had been unable to settle the majority of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in the pre-Tanzimat era.[85]

In this manner, rather than resorting to coercive methods to settle the nomads, the Ottoman state generally employed the tools of persuasion and mediation as general policies to benefit tribes. For example, granting a salary to tribal leaders or exemption from taxes for a certain period of time were the oldest and most common techniques to try to convince tribes to settle.[86] The relationship between tribes and sedentary groups also shaped the central government's settlement policies. Geopolitical location, geographical boundedness, the internal organization of tribes, and trade between tribes and outside populations were all things that factored into the central government's decisions when it came to settling nomadic peoples.[87]

During the Tanzimat era, however, the Ottoman State embraced more aggressive policies to settle tribes in the interest of modernization and centralization. According to Orhonlu, the main difference between the settlement policies employed during Tanzimat era and those of the pre-Tanzimat era, is that Ottoman Empire forced nomadic groups to settle in their winter quarters. Before the Tanzimat Era, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities were more free to move between their summer pasturelands and the places where they spent their winters, but with the centralizing efforts implemented during and after the Tanzimat, Ottoman reformers

[85] Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation", 469-472.
[86] Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation," 479.
[87] Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation," 472-473.

gave large swaths of newly created provinces to Kurdish tribes in the hopes of encouraging them to settle in their winter quarters. If the tribes settled, the state could record their goods, properties, livestock, and populations for taxation purposes.[88]

When the imperial state put great effort into preventing nomadic communities from moving from one place to another, this sparked revolts against the state. The settlement of tribes who had their own pastoral economies, cultures, and social designs, was not an easy or swift process, particularly in the remote provinces of the empire. Another important point is that during and after the Tanzimat era, the sedenterization of tribes was a huge project which was only partially and unevenly implemented in different parts of the empire. Despite of the fact that Ottoman authorities had new techniques and practices, including creating new sub-districts and then appointing Kurdish tribal chiefs as müdür (sub-district governor), in order to settle many nomadic people, the state had to resort to more coercive methods. The Ottoman state sent troops to Cilicia, for example, to punish tribes who resisted settlement policies.

Granting gifts to tribe leaders and exempting some tribes from taxes for a certain amount of time were old practices which Tanzimat reformers continued to use. One of the newer methods was to create new administrative units such as provinces or districts, as in the case of the Malazgirt and Bulanık sub-districts of the Muş district, and then employing tribal leaders as local officials by making them heads of these new administrative units. There was, however, no one-size-fits-all solution for the Ottoman state's problem of nomadic people. Based on particular tribes' structures, geographies, sizes, or problems with settled peoples, the Ottoman

[88] Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskanı,* 113-114.

state would use different methods of enticing tribes to settle, be it giving tax exemption, salaries or medals to the heads of these tribes.

Gülseren Duman Koç illustrates how the Zilan tribe was settled by giving salaries to some tribal chiefs and even the mother of Kasım Agha, which eventually led to controversy between the Ottoman and Iranian states.[89] Furthermore, when the state made tribal chiefs heads of certain villages, it was easier for the state to get soldiers from amongst Kurdish tribes. To put it in a different way, the Sublime Porte developed policies to conscript tribesmen into the imperial army by incorporating tribal leaders into the state mechanism as sub-district governors and village headmen. In the Tanzimat period, tribes like the Hasenan and the Cibran were given empty villages in newly created districts and sub-districts for the purpose of settling them so that their populations, properties, and livestock would be accessible resources for the central government. Hasenan and Cibran chiefs were given administrative posts and roles in the Muş district in the hopes that it would convince them to provide tribesmen for the imperial army during the Crimean war and pay taxes to the central treasury.[90] In this manner, the main motivation of the central Ottoman government was to make Kurdish tribes permanent peasants who would hopefully become loyal subjects.

Forcing or convincing Kurdish tribes to cultivate empty lands as agriculturalists would not necessarily mean that they were willing to completely abandon their nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles. The sedenterization of Kurdish tribes was a gradual and uneven process in which tribe members both cultivated fields and took their livestock to grazing lands. We must nevertheless stress that even though many Kurdish tribes tried to maintain their pastoral lifestyles, transhumance

[89] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 269.
[90] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 270.

mobilization and migratory routes decreased within time, especially after certain boundary treaties like the Treaty of 1847 between the Ottoman and Iranian governments, which aimed to minimize the cross-border mobility of Kurdish tribes.[91] In this manner, the pasture and grazing lands of Kurdish tribes shrank as Ottoman authorities increased their presence in the region.

The way that Ottoman authorities attempted to settle Kurdish tribes was to force tribesmen to build their own houses, rather than renting the houses of villagers, in their traditional winter pasturelands. The state thus hoped that Kurdish tribesmen would return to their own homes during winter periods.[92] This indicates that Tanzimat reformers knew that the settlement of Kurdish tribesmen would be a long process and would require patience. With time, forcing Kurdish tribesmen to build their own houses eventually ended up successfully limiting the migration patterns of Kurdish tribes to particular places.[93] In this way, Ottoman authorities often chose less coercive methods to encourage Kurdish tribes to become more sedentary.

The Ottoman state certainly did not expect Kurdish tribes to change their nomadic lifestyles overnight. The process would begin by encouraging nomads to become semi-nomadic and then encouraging semi-nomads to become more sedentary. In the long run, the aim of the Ottoman Empire in the frontier regions was to support tribes in building houses and then equip them with the tools to cultivate empty and deserted lands so that these empty lands and deserted villages could be revived, which would increase the revenues of the central treasury.

[91] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 180-181.
[92] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 198.
[93] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 199.

2.5 The economic aspect of the sedentarization of Kurdish tribes

Offering salaries and official positions to tribal chiefs was also a way of encouraging the settlement of tribes, as they would then lead their relatives and other tribal members to settle with them.[94] Offering salaries, titles, decorations, and medals to tribal chiefs is one indication of how the Ottoman state began to recognize Kurdish tribal leaders as new socio-political figures, taking the place of the Kurdish mirs. There was, however, a paradoxical situation here. The tribal leaders who were granted salaries in order to encourage their tribes to settle would not be paid from the central treasury. Instead, their salaries would be paid by the taxes of their tribal members. This reveals that the new sedentary Kurdish population became the new taxpayers who had to pay taxes to the central government while their chieftains were deputized as new governors of sub-district, township, and headmen of villages by the central government.[95]

In the age of imperial modernization and centralization, the reaches of capitalism extended, and with it came a commercialization of agriculture[96] which paved the way for the idea of settling nomadic people as both new producers and consumers, hoping to transform them from unproductive bandits who created problems for local sedentary people into productive agriculturalists. By doing that, the Sublime Porte aimed to collect taxes in a more direct way and create new consumer and producer groups who would contribute to the mode of production.

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[94] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 271.
[95] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 203-204
[96] The term "commercialization of agriculture" refers to the growing of agricultural products not for village consumption village but for national consumption. By the middle of the nineteenth century, we will witness a dramatic fiscal transformation that put emphasis on serial production throughout the empire, although Eastern Anatolia was less affected by this fiscal transformation. Land would become more valuable, and within time, nomadic and semi-nomadic populations settled, and they were supported by the central government to begin agricultural production. See Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 135.

This perspective, which saw tribal groups as "unproductive bandits," greatly underestimated the roles of nomadic and semi-nomadic people in the economic system of the empire. By the 1850s, with the development of capitalism, agriculture had gradually become an industrial mode of production, prompting the Ottoman Empire to realize just how important agriculturalists were. In this way, the Sublime Porte constructed a project aimed to settle "unproductive" nomads so that their contributions to the economy, which was largely based on agriculture at the time, would flourish. Therefore, Tanzimat authorities began to believe that if they were able to settle nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes, they would be able to collect more taxes and even conscript more troops into the imperial army.

It should be noted that the attempt to settle nomadic tribes in the hopes of making them "productive" agriculturalists, and thus docile citizens, was not a policy unique to Ottoman Kurdistan. Other parts of the empire also experienced this project of turning "unproductive" groups into "productive" agriculturalists, which illustrates that the imperial state began to put importance on incorporating its subjects into an agricultural mode of production by the middle of the nineteenth century. There is little doubt that by the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a formidable process of disciplining the nomads in almost every peripheral area within the Ottoman Empire. In this manner, with the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms, the old socio-economic realities and practices in the Ottoman East had to be changed on behalf of the settled population. Local peasants of the region, particularly Armenian peasants, had been obliged to provide winter quarters, called 'Hafirlik' for nomadic Kurdish tribes. "Hafir" (Kafir) and 'Olam" were taxes paid yearly in kind (Sheep, carpet, mine, wool) by peasants to the Kurdish tribes in return for providing

protection.[97] The imperial state sought to increase its power in the region by abolishing these older practices, like olam and hafirlik, so that local settled people would not be impoverished by paying double taxes. Practices of hafirlik and olam were not, however, completely abolished in the nineteenth century. Even in the late nineteenth century, when Kurdish tribes adjusted to sedentary life more than ever, problems between newly sedentary Kurdish tribes and local Kurdish and Armenian peasants did not cease. Land conflicts and fights in the late nineteenth century would be seen as a part of the commodification of the land.[98] We may, however see, that there was a symbiotic, though not egalitarian, relationship between the Kurdish tribal population and the sedentary communities of the Ottoman East.

2.6 The civilizational discourse behind the sedentarization of Kurdish tribes

Looking at the reasons for the settlement of Kurdish tribes, we can see that the settlement process was not purely motivated by economics. By settling the Kurdish tribes, the imperial state aimed to bring a secure and stable environment to the Ottoman East. In this respect, Ottoman authorities saw tribal populations as "the other" in terms of their lifestyles and where they lived.[99] In the age of imperial centralization, Ottoman authorities considered Kurdish tribes to be backward, stagnant, and savage. For this reason, they developed a discourse of modernization which was supposed to go hand in hand with the project of settling these tribes. This

[97] Hoffman and Koutchrian, "The History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire," 8; Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 280.
[98] Koç, "Celali Aşireti: Üç İmparatorluğun Sınırında," 302. With the regulations brought by the Land Code of 1858, the capitalist understanding of land as a property gained momentum throughout the Ottoman Empire and the sale of agricultural lands became an empire-wide practice, thus with the formal lifting of private and public land after the introduction of the Land Code of 1858, land commodification gradually became a new phenomenon throughout the Ottoman empire by the mid-nineteenth century. For more information about land commodification, see Aytekin, "Agrarian Relations, Property and Law," 947-948.
[99] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 209.

notion of bringing civilization to these nomadic and semi-nomadic groups illustrates the extent to which the Sublime Porte had created its own "orient" by classifying them as backward.[100]

In this respect, with the implementation of the Tanzimat program, the imperial state also embarked on a civilizing mission which aimed to transform "primitive" tribesmen into modern Ottoman subjects who would pay their taxes and not create trouble with villagers. Further, I emphasize that those who examined the Ottoman East from Istanbul did not regard these Kurdish tribes as true Ottomans. Instead, they were seen as an "other," who could be used and benefited from if the Sublime Porte was able to civilize them.[101] In terms of its civilizational discourse, Tanzimat authorities embraced western colonialism. Deringil has elegantly described this process as "borrowed colonialism."[102] By claiming that the notion of nomadism was "an anathema for modernity," Deringil pinpoints that the bureaucrats thought that "these people were never actually bad, they were always, 'simple folk who cannot tell good from evil'" (nik ve bed'i tefrik edemiyen sade dilan ahali).[103] Besides all these negative assumptions about tribal lifestyle, there was a teleological understanding by which the imperial state would gradually transform them into settled populations ("Pey der pey daire-i medeniyete idhal").[104] It is possible to suggest that Ottoman authorities might have created an imaginary idea of Kurdish tribes in their minds, associated with savagery and backwardness, which is why they did not consider these tribal people true components of the state. In this way, the

[100] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 209-216. See Reinkowski, *Düzenin Şeyleri, Tanzimat'ın Kelimeleri*, 142-146 for an explanation of how "Savage" and "Primordial"' became common terms which described nomadic populations during the Tanzimat Era.
[101] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 212.
[102] Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery," 317-318.
[103] Ibid., 317.
[104] Ibid., 317.

state embraced its civilizing mission to settle these nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

2.7 The political impact of the Tanzimat reforms on Kurdish tribes

When tribal leaders appeared as new powerholders after the destruction of the Kurdish emirates in the Ottoman East, the Ottoman central government developed a policy aimed at minimizing the power of major tribal actors in the hopes of dividing Kurdish tribes into much smaller units. In this way, it was hoped that larger tribal confederations would not pose a formidable threat to the central government if they could not function as a strong monolithic power unit. According to Sabri Ateş, there was a process of "clanization of large tribal confederations" and "atomization" by which lesser chiefs were empowered by the state in order to minimize the power of more dominant tribal leaders.[105] Along with empowering lesser chiefs, some sheikhs were also supported by the central government in the hopes of creating new power holders, fracturing the social structure in the Kurdish populated eastern regions.[106]

There was one noticeable chief in particular, who will be discussed later in this chapter, who the Sublime Porte sought to undermine because he had the potential to unite tribal power segments. During the mid-1850s, this would result in the Hasenan being broken up into four separate branches. In this new power structure, tribal chiefs, as the new socio-political actors who replaced the Kurdish mirs, had more direct contact with the state as the mediator between their tribes and the state. The imperial state embarked on a project to support chiefs who had less prestige so that those less prestigious chiefs would end up sharing power with more

[105] Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, 82.
[106] Ceylan, "Toprak Reformunun Bağdat'ta Uygulanışı," 832.

formidable tribal leaders. I refer to this process as the "politicization of Kurdish tribes" by which the *torin* family of a Kurdish tribe encountered more direct challenges from other component families within same tribe.[107] In this regard, we can see that when tribes had closer contact with the imperial state, their social and political organizations were more likely to change over time as the state damaged the egalitarian structures of nomadic groups of people.[108] However, the state's penetration into the social fabric of Kurdish tribes would not be so deep during the Tanzimat era. As a result, until the formation of the Hamidian regiments, the social glue of Kurdish tribes held, and the hierarchy was maintained.

The third chapter of this study reveals how members of the *torin* family of the Hasenan tribe fought with other prominent families of the tribe during the Hamidian era. It is important to note, however, that the Ottoman state was not able to exercise direct authority over Kurdish tribes until the Hamidian era, and largely, not even then. In most cases, during the Tanzimat era, Kurdish tribes were unenthusiastic about the centralizing policies the Ottoman government attempted to impose on them. In this sense, although Tanzimat authorities believed that the Tanzimat reforms would pave the way for centralization and modernization in the Ottoman East by appointing governors from the center, it should not be forgotten that those newly appointed governors did not have enough information or experience with the region

[107] The *torin* household refers to the ruling family which held important domination over decision mechanisms of the tribal confederacy or the tribe itself. In this regard, with the introduction of the Tanzimat program, *torin* families of tribal confederacies were indeed affected in a negative way because the state intended to limit the power of stronger tribe leaders by empowering lower tribe chiefs. See Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 205-208; Uluguna, "Şiddet Yüzyılı'' İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 319-320. See more information about leadership terminology of tribal confederacies including "Kethüda", "Has Voyvoda", and "*Torin*" Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskanı,* 14-15.
[108] Glatzer, "Political Organization of Pashtun Nomads and the State," 227-228.

to control it effectively, and this fact stood to jeopardize Ottoman authority over the Ottoman East.[109]

2.8 The emergence of tribal leaders during Tanzimat era: the Hasenan tribe under the leadership of Rıdvan Agha

The Muş region had a yurtluk-ocaklık status and was ruled by the descendants of Aladdin Pasha. His descendants had held the positions of mutasarrıf (ruler) and mültezim (tax collector) beginning in the eighteenth century with the fall of the Bitlis Khanate.[110] Emin Pasha was the last mutasarrıf who enjoyed political and economic power in the Muş region. Emin Pasha was able to extend his influence beyond the Mutasarrıflık of Muş into places like Malazgird, Hınıs, and Tekman. According to Duman Koç, what Emin Pasha and his brothers, Şerif and Murat Beys did, as tax collectors, by attaining administrative and economic control of these new places shows us that the boundaries of Yurtluk-Ocaklık lands as administrative units were flexible.[111] This also illustrates, particularly in the case of Emin Pasha, that local Kurdish elites could be dynamic and ambitious leaders who pushed their own agendas and plans and beyond their traditional realms of power.

However, as was mentioned earlier, the power dynamics of the region began to change by the middle of the century with the implementation of the Tanzimat program. Strong local Kurdish notable families were eliminated and replaced with new socio-political actors who acted as new intermediaries between the Sublime Porte and the eastern periphery. The central government established the Müşirlik (province) of Erzurum and then incorporated the district of Muş into it in 1836. In

[109] Doğan, "Tanzimat'ın Van'da Uygulanması," 159; Ceylan, "1858 Toprak Reformunun Bağdat'ta Uygulanışı," 832.
[110] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 312.
[111] Ibid., 312.

1849, the central government annexed the region into the newly created Erzurum province, confiscated Emin Pasha's hereditary lands, and sent him and his family into exile.[112] Confiscating long-standing hereditary lands from a prominent family illustrated that Tanzimat reformers were serious about their program of centralization in the remote parts of the empire. We should remember, however, there was no binary opposition between the central government and the local Kurdish notables, but rather, they prioritized paradigms of negotiation and communication. In this way, the abolishment of the yurtluk-ocaklık status of the district of Muş was a process aiming to bolster the infrastructural power of the Tanzimat state in the region. The state was not, however, the primary power in the region, and tribal leaders were emerging as new powerholders.

The major tribes that the Ottoman state tried to settle in the Muş region in the mid-nineteenth century were the Hasenan, the Cibran, and the Pencinaran. In this next part of the chapter, I will examine the settlement process of the Hasenan tribe, who, by the middle of the nineteenth century, had become the most powerful tribe in the Muş region. This study will illustrate that the Hasenan tribe under Rıdvan Agha had a dynamic and flexible relationship with the Ottoman government.

According to Vehbi Bey, who prepared a list of Kurdish tribes for the establishment of the Hamidian Regiments,[113] all Kurdish tribes came from two big tribal confederacies called the "Milan" and the "Zilan." Tribes including the Sepki, Zilan, and Cemadan were branches of the Zilan, while the Hayderan, Cibran, and Hasenan tribes descended from Milan.[114] The Hasenan tribe was a large semi-

[112] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 314.
[113] In the third and fourth chapters of this study, I will analyze Hamidian militia forces in detail.
[114] Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (later BOA), Y. PRK. MYD, 12/36 10 Recep 1310 (28 October 1893).

nomadic tribal confederation in the beginning of the eighteenth century.[115] The ruling class of the Hasenan Confederation was composed of four prominent families: The House of Emer (Mala Emer), the House of Eshed (Mala Eshed), the House of Şeweş (Mala Şeweş), and the House of Fariz (Mala Fariz). Within the internal power structure of the Hasenan confederacy, the House of Emer, under the leadership of Rıdvan Agha, was the *torin* family of the Hasenan tribe.[116] Although there were a number of prominent families within the tribe due to its large size, the leader of the tribe would always come from the *torin* family, and power in the tribe would radiate down this bloodline. The leadership of the *torin* family was not disputed by other prominent families due to the manpower of the *torin* family and the importance of its bloodline.

Although conflicts could certainly arise between prominent families, for instance, around migration routes between summer pasturelands and winter villages, the prominent families did not question or undermine the role of the leader of the *torin* family in handling these disputes. This would change in the Hamidian era at the end of the nineteenth century, when the prominent families of the Hasenan tribe would compete for dominant positions within the tribe.

A document from the Ottoman archive shows that in the eighteenth century, the semi-nomadic Hasenan confederacy roamed freely between Ottoman and Iranian soil. They spent their winters in the vicinity of the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts and spent their summers on the pasturelands of the Iranian border, causing problems between Ottoman and Iranian authorities.[117] By the first quarter of the

[115] Mark Sykes travelled to the Ottoman East in the beginning of the twentieth century and prepared a detailed report on Kurdish tribes. According to Sykes, the Hasenan tribe was a major tribe which was composed of 3300 families and more than 100 villages were under the control of Hasenan leaders at the time. Sykes, "The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire," 476.
[116] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 320.
[117] Ibid., 320.

nineteenth century, Ömer Agha of the Hasenan tribe became the mütesellim (tax collector) of Malazgird.[118] This did not mean, however, that the Ottoman state had successfully settled the Hasenan tribe. The Hasenan tribesmen would continue their semi-nomadic, pastoral lifestyle until the early twentieth century.

The Ottoman state, as part of the Tanzimat, began an attempt to settle the Hasenan tribe in the Malazgird sub-district in the early 1840s, after the elimination of the House of Aladdin in the Muş region. With the incorporation of Muş to the Tanzimat program in 1845, the primary goal of the Ottoman state was to register the livestock, properties, goods, and populations of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of this region, including the Hasenan tribe. But convincing the Hasenan to settle would be no easy process because Rıdvan Agha and his followers had no intention of abandoning their nomadic lifestyles.

As the state tried to convince the Hasenan to settle, Rıdvan Agha, worried for what these new reforms might bring for him and his tribe, escaped from local state officials, and hid with Han Mahmut of Mükus (Bahçesaray) in the Van region.[119] However, this was not an easy time for Han Mahmud either, as he was in a state of an open confrontation with the Ottoman center. When the Sublime Porte sought to eliminate prominent Kurdish notables in the eastern periphery, those notables often resisted and fought back in order to retain their power. But this did not necessarily go well. The alliance between Han Mahmud and Rıdvan Agha ended with both of them arrested, and Han Mahmud's principality under the control of the state in 1847,[120] and with that, the Ottoman state moved closer to settling the Kurdish tribes in the region.

[118] Ibid., 320.
[119] BOA. HR. MKT. 17/41, 17 Safer 1263 (4 February 1847).
[120] Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan Beyi Bedirhan*, 326.

What is particularly interesting about the alliance between Rıdvan Agha and Han Mahmud is that they were seen quite differently by the Ottoman state. Whereas Han Mahmud appeared to be an obstacle to Tanzimat modernization, Rıdvan Agha was seen as a potential ally who could help the Sublime Porte stabilize the Muş region. Even so, Rıdvan Agha did not stand against Han Mahmut, even though, as a tribal chief, the state favored his leadership over that of the Kurdish aristocracy. Instead, Rıdvan Agha believed that he needed Han Mahmud's help in order to protect his tribe from the centralist policies of the state, indicating that there were important local relationships and dynamics that the central authorities would have to deal with before the introduction of the new reforms. These are among the reasons why the state did not first resort to force in order to settle the Hasenan in the 1840s. Rıdvan Agha had strong local connections which would allow him to simply cross the Iranian border if things got too difficult for his tribe. In this sense, the alliance between Rıdvan Agha and Han Mahmud is important in terms of showing that the relationships between the old Kurdish elites and tribal leaders, as new socio-political actors, were often strong, flexible, and pragmatic.

During the Tanzimat era, the central government used both negotiation and force to try to sedentarize the Hasenan tribe. As Istanbul began to penetrate the eastern periphery of the empire, tribal leaders often did not wait to see what would happen. They reacted. In the case of Rıdvan Agha, instead of passively accepting settlement of his tribe, he began by escaping and hiding with Han Mahmud, and then later resorted to seeking assurance from the state that he would not be prosecuted for his crimes.

As Gülseren Duman Koç explains, the Ottoman State also employed a variety of methods to sedentarize and discipline (te'dib) the Hasenan tribe. To give an

example, Ottoman authorities encouraged tribesmen from the Cibran tribe to fight Rıdvan Agha. Murad Bey, the brother of Şerif Bey was also sent with a group of irregular soldiers to persuade revered elders amongst Rıdvan Agha's 'avene (accomplices) to mediate between him and the state so that he might accept the true authority of the state.[121] The policy of making one tribe an enemy of the other tribe was a common method which enabled the Ottoman state to not have to gather a large army in order to punish "rebellious" tribes. As a result, the Cibran tribe ended up an enemy of the Hasenan tribe for a period of time. This was one of the first examples in the Muş region of the Ottoman state intervening directly in the affairs of two Kurdish tribes and turning them against each other.

Murad and Şerif Beys, who were the last hereditary rulers of the Muş region, eventually helped Ottoman authorities convince Rıdvan Agha and his tribesmen to settle in the vicinity of the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts. In so doing, they were trying to make themselves seem like important figures who could still be of use to Istanbul, even though Ottoman authorities actually saw them as obstacles to the implementation of the Tanzimat. The case of Şerif and Murad Bey demonstrates that the political relationships and dynamics in the region were not strictly defined, and all sides (i.e., Ottoman government, local state officials, Kurdish notable families, and tribe leaders) had their own agendas, policies, and interests. In sum, the Ottoman center was not the only actor determining the course of events because the sociopolitical landscape of the region was very fluid and complex.

Rıdvan Agha's attempt to move from Ottoman territory to the Iranian side of the border with a large group of tribe members was a way of showing that Rıdvan Agha intended to escape from under the shadow of the Tanzimat. 200 households of

[121] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 287.

the Hasenan tribe, under the leadership of Rıdvan and his cousin, Kulihan (Qulihan) Aghas, decided to move from the Ottoman realm to Iran in 1848.[122] They were particularly worried about Tanzimat policies which aimed to collect information about Kurdish tribes. In the interests of modernizing the state, Tanzimat reformers knew that they would have to gather information including the locations, identities, wealth, and numbers of tribesmen.[123] Fearful that this kind of information collection would lead to taxation and conscription, the Hasenan chose to flee.

This is why Rıdvan Agha's migration to Iran seemed like a good plan. However, Kulihan Agha was not so sure about crossing the border and he changed his mind about the move. He left his cousin, Rıdvan Agha, with a group of Kulihan's followers and then informed local officials that Rıdvan Agha was attempting to cross to the Iranian side of the border.[124] For this reason, the state deemed Kulihan Agha to be loyal and granted him a salary of 200 kuruş. After Kulihan informed on Rıdvan, there was likely tension between them, at minimum, and possibly even fights between their respective branches of the family, though no serious clash is recorded in the written record. Further, Kulihan Agha's change of mind regarding crossing the border, in defiance of Rıdvan Agha, illustrates that prominent chiefs within major Kurdish tribes had power and leverage. Even though Kulihan used the Ottoman state to undermine Rıdvan's authority, likely because he just did not want to go to Iran, Kulihan never directly challenged Rıdvan's leadership over the tribe nor instigated a major clash with him. Whatever conflict transpired after Kulihan's betrayal, it stayed within the tribe and Kulihan was never brave enough to challenge Rıdvan so openly. Within a generation this would change.

[122] BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 18/83, 1 Safer 1266 (17 December 1849).
[123] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 143.
[124] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 291; BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 18/83, 1 Safer 1266 (17 December 1849).

Meanwhile, Mehmed Reşid, the kaymakam of Van, tried to convince Rıdvan Agha not to leave the Ottoman realm.[125] The important point here is that the Ottoman state did not violently force Rıdvan Agha to remain in Ottoman territory. Ottoman officials knew that they needed these tribal confederacies when it came to collecting taxes or drafting soldiers into army. In this respect, large tribal confederacies, including the Hasenan, Hayderan, and Celali, were considered to be human resources by the Ottoman center, and if the Sublime Porte managed to gain the loyalty of tribe leaders, as they did with Kulihan Agha, then it might be easier to exercise its authority in this remote part of the empire.

Additionally, both Iranian and Ottoman authorities were in competition to persuade tribes to stay on their soil because both states knew that nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes were crucial to the pastoral economy. If they were incorporated into the agricultural economy, within time, the Ottoman and Iranian empires could collect more taxes and conscript tribesmen into their armies. Thus, Kurdish tribes claimed important roles within the new social and administrative organizations in the Ottoman East thanks to their crucial role in the mode of production.

Though both the Iranian and Ottoman states tried to encourage Kurdish tribes to settle on their soil by offering them incentives, as a last resort they would use coercion to prevent them from crossing the borders. Ottoman and Iranian authorities gathered to negotiate ways to solidify their border. From the view of the Iranian and Ottoman authorities, the way to subjugate nomadic Kurdish tribes was to strengthen their claims over disputed borderland territories.[126] Kurdish tribes were not, however,

[125] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 291.
[126] The Ottoman Empire and Iran were unable to reach a compromise on the official subjecthood/nationality of Kurdish tribes, so it was up to the tribesmen themselves to choose their patrons. "During the conferences held in Erzurum in between 1843-1847, tribesmen of the northern

the tools of imperial governments. They knew their value to these governments and used the liquidity of the borders to their advantage. Whenever problems arose with either the Ottoman or Iranian authorities, tribes could simply cross into the other state's territory. Mobility offered a method of escape from the Tanzimat reforms that were intended to make tribes governable.

After Rıdvan Agha was persuaded to remain in Ottoman territory, he and a few other prominent Hasenan chiefs were given local administrative positions. In this scheme, Rıdvan Agha was appointed governor of the Malazgird sub-district while Kulihan Agha was named governor of the Bulanık (Kop) sub-district. Agid Agha, another prominent chief of Hasenan tribe, was given the Liz sub-district.[127] According to Ulugana, Malazgird had an important place within the administrative structure of the Muş district, which is why it was given to Rıdvan Agha, as the leader of *torin* family of the Hasenan tribe, while other smaller sub-districts were given to other Hasenan chiefs.[128] This shows that state authorities partially respected tribal hierarchies even if they sometimes provoked sub-chiefs into clashing with the ruling family in an attempt to manipulate the tribe. Additionally, Rıdvan Agha was rewarded with 500 guruş salary per month when he was appointed as governor of the Malazgird sub-district upon his return to Malazgird, and people from his tribe were allotted lands and deserted villages which were once under the control of Emin Pasha and Şerif Bey of the Household of Aladdin in the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts.[129]

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stretches of the Ottoman-Persian border presented such testimonies to conference participants. Through such testimonies, the tribes not only participated in the border-making process but chose the subjecthood of the empires to which they were willing to belong. The conferences were finalized by the Treaty of Erzurum signed in 1847." See Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 183-184; Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands,* 129-130.

[127] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 321.

[128] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 320.

[129] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 322.

In this vein, it should not be forgotten that when the Ottoman state appointed these Hasenan leaders to local administrative positions, the state intended to both use and monitor these leaders in the hopes of making ruling over Kurdish tribes easier. If they were not incorporated into the ruling mechanism of the state, they ran the risk of becoming threats to the state's authority. In this sense, tribal leaders like Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha were instrumentalized as new local administrators to work on the behalf of the state.

Rıdvan Agha and other prominent tribal leaders were incorporated into the state mechanism when the state gave them provincial administrative roles. Similarly, when these tribal aghas began to collect taxes as the new tax collectors named by the state, they began to develop relationships with local state officials which paved the way for these tribe leaders to embrace the idea of a sedentary lifestyle. Besides that, according to Duman Koç, one of the reasons behind the semi-settlement of the Hasenan tribe in the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts is that "the journey between the summer and winter pastures of the tribe was relatively short… the Hasenan was already pasturing in the mountains of Muş in the summer and spending the winter in its villages."[130]

From another point of view, the appointment of Kulihan Agha and Agid Agha as governors of sub-districts indicated that the Ottoman center aimed to weaken the formidable power of Rıdvan Agha. The Ottoman state often sought to undermine strong tribal leaders by supporting lesser chiefs who did not come from the *torin* family. Erdal Çiftçi called this process "dividing the already divided" in order to rule the region, because the various members of the leading families had a legitimate right to govern their own separate branches of the tribe."[131]

[130] Duman Koç "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 299.
[131] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 206; Ateş, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, 82.

In some cases, however, the Ottoman state attempted to appoint a chief to tribes that did not have an established hierarchical structure in order to control them. These tribes that lacked a hierarchical structure were dispersed across a wide region and quite scattered. Yonca Köksal elegantly illustrates how the Ottoman state appointed tribal chiefs to the Rişvan and Afşar tribes in order to assert control over them. In the case of the Afşar tribe, state authorities were able to appoint Çerkez Bey as their tribal leader, and as a result, the state had no issues with this tribe for nearly ten years. In contrast to the Afşar tribe, the state failed to appoint a leader to the Rişvan tribe, and for this reason, the Rişvan did not come under the state's control.[132] Therefore, Ottoman authorities applied various methods to impose control over nomadic tribes. In the case of the Hasenan tribe, the Ottoman state attempted to empower sub-chiefs in order to weaken the authority of the *torin* family; while the example of the Afşar and Rişvan tribes in Central Anatolia, however, reveal that the Tanzimat state attempted to provide tribal hierarchy for some tribes in order to have administrative control and collect taxes in certain regions.

Further, I might speculate that after tribal leaders and chiefs were given titles and positions within the local Ottoman administration, this likely led those tribal chiefs to build closer relationships with Ottoman officials, creating new layers of complexity and political dynamics. These relationships may have even developed without the consent of the Ottoman center. To put it in a different way, the appointment of the Hasenan chiefs as the heads of certain sub-districts demonstrates that, with the implementation of the Tanzimat program, tribal leaders would be the new "chosen" partners of the imperial state by becoming new provincial officers in the eastern regions.

[132] Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation," 484-486.

Yet, when it came to providing security, centralization, modernization, and direct rule in the Ottoman East, it is pointless to claim that the Tanzimat program was as successful as it was supposed to be. Even though I use "chosen" as a term to describe the position of the Kurdish tribal leaders as the new partners who replaced the Kurdish mirs in the Ottoman East, the relationship between the state and Kurdish tribal leaders was dynamic, flexible, and complex, and both sides had their own agendas and interests when it came to taking positions in the region. To borrow a phrase from Sabri Ateş, the "integration of the periphery is a two-way exchange between state and periphery, between the borderland peoples and central states, rather than simple impositions from the center."[133] According to Sedat Ulugana, although most of the Kurdish tribes saw the Ottoman state as unreliable and untrustworthy, they still knew that they had to build relationships with Ottoman authorities in a pragmatic way in order to maintain their power in the region.[134]

In this vein, when the Crimean War broke out in 1853, the Ottoman state attempted to conscript tribesmen into the imperial army from tribes that resided in the Muş region. Again, however, tribes of the region, including the Hasenan tribe, revolted, and this revolt resulted in massive ruin and devastation for the Kurdish and Armenian peasants because the Hasenan tribesman created a large amount of damage by pillaging and looting the villages in the vicinity of the Muş sub-province.[135]

The Hasenan tribe was also in a state of conflict with the Hayderan tribe. The state had encouraged the Hayderan to settle in the vicinity of the Muş region, bringing them in close proximity to the Hasenan. During one of the fights between these two tribes, Rıdvan Agha's son, Halit, was murdered by Alihan of the Hayderan

[133] Ateş, "Empires at the Margin," 447.
[134] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 318.
[135] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 321.

tribe in 1853, paving the way for numerous fights, killings, and troubles in the late nineteenth century.[136] However, according to another document dated 1855, Rıdvan Agha, his close family members, and his followers from the Hasenan tribe did end up taking part in the Crimean War by serving with the Ottoman troops in Kars. They relented after significant pressure from the state to join the war effort.[137]

Indeed, when one examines how the Hasenan tribe revolted in order to avoid joining the Crimean War, and then Rıdvan Agha and his tribesman changed their mind and joined the Ottoman army, we can see that both the state and the tribe were adapting to changing conditions and they did not have rigid or strict ways which would prevent them from collaboration. In this case, the Ottoman state needed the manpower of the Hasenan tribe during the war, while the Hasenan chiefs needed the patronage of the state to keep their prestige and status as provincial administrators. Clearly, this relationship between these two sides was reciprocal and dynamic, rather than stagnant and exclusive.

Looking at the situation in the Muş district after the Crimean War, the conditions of the peasants and local inhabitants of the region were neither secure nor stable, in contrast to the Tanzimat assurance that the lives, properties, and honor of the people were under protection of the imperial state. In this regard, the peasants of the Muş district had plenty of complaints about the behavior of Rıdvan Agha and other notable Hasenan chiefs. Usurping, looting, plundering, double taxation, and

[136] Halit was the father of Fettullah Bey and Rıza Agha. He would terrorize the Muş and Bulanık regions, particularly after joining the Hamidian Regiments in the 1890s. I will examine the Hamidian Regiments and the participation of the Hasenan tribe in these paramilitary forces in detail in the third chapter. Regarding the murder of Halit Agha, listen to Dengbej Kawis Axa, *"Xèlito Mudurè Milazgirè."*

[137] Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 293.

extortion were common,[138] in stark contrast to the Ottoman government's expectations in implementing the Tanzimat program in the eastern peripheries.

The important point here is that Rıdvan Agha and other Kurdish tribal leaders who were appointed into the provincial administration were partially backed by local state authorities, and at the same time, they were harassing and oppressing the sedentary population in the eastern regions. These tribal leaders could take advantage of their official positions to demand things from the local people. Having the right of collecting taxes as local state officers enhanced the status and positions of these tribal leaders in the region. In this vein, it is not difficult to assume that Rıdvan Agha and other prominent Hasenan chiefs had hegemony over the peasants of the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts because they had a legal right to collect taxes. It was thus easy for them to force the peasants to work without payment or to double tax villagers. Rıdvan Agha would be accused of committing many crimes including murdering, plundering, looting, and using force against local peasants.

Yet even though Rıdvan Agha and other Hasenan chiefs were not harshly censured by the state in the beginning, as the numbers of petitions about their misconduct, assaults, and extortion increased, Istanbul decided to take precautions to prevent Hasenan leaders from pillaging the villages. The state's goal was to take Rıdvan Agha and other notable chiefs of the Hasenan tribe into custody without the use of force, which could incite the tribesmen to resist state authority. When Rıdvan Agha went to the center of the Erzurum province to have a conversation with the moneylender, Hoca Minas, he was arrested without the use of force. Additionally, Kulihan Agha, serving as a local administrator, who was responsible for collecting

[138] BOA. İ. MVL. 433/1908, 5 Zilhicce 1276 (24 June 1860).

tithe, was sent to Erzurum by Colonel İsmail Bey, and he was taken into custody after he arrived in Erzurum.[139]

Rıdvan Agha and his cousin, Kulihan Agha, were the most important figures of the Hasenan tribe to become part of the provincial administration during this period. So, in the name of their tribe, they had a direct relationship with Ottoman local authorities. For this reason, the local authorities knew that their arrest could cause trouble in the region–particularly a potential battle over succession. Therefore, the state avoided using force while arresting them and embraced a strategy of gradually arresting important figures from the Hasenan tribe. In line with this strategy of gradual arrest of prominent Hasenan figures, following the arrest of Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha, first İsa Agha and then Seyfi Agha were arrested in 1861.[140] In all the arrests of these four prominent Hasenan Aghas, state officials were careful to not use force. When state officials and soldiers arrested the Hasenan leaders, the chiefs were far from their main bases, helping Ottoman authorities avoid clashing with Hasenan tribesmen. In this respect, all these important Hasenan tribal chiefs, who were reportedly causing trouble for the local inhabitants of the region, were finally arrested. In this sense, the arrests of these aghas show us that the Ottoman state did not completely turn a blind eye to the complaints of the local inhabitants of the region during the Tanzimat era, even though these tribal leaders were originally promoted to important provincial positions in the hopes of convincing them to settle.

The state had different plans for these four aghas. Rıdvan Agha was the most important figure of the Hasenan tribe, as the leader of the *torin* family. Rıdvan and Kulihan Aghas were thus exiled to Edirne in 1860. But Rıdvan and Kulihan Aghas'

[139] Duman Koç "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 296.
[140] Duman Koç "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 297.

other family members were not sent into exile. The sub-chiefs, İsa and Seyfi Agha were also not exiled to Edirne,[141] showing that the state did not want to cause a major revolt in the Muş district by exiling all the Hasenan's leaders. This indicates that state authorities eliminated the Hasenan leaders who created problems for them. But Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha were dissatisfied with their new situation in Edirne, and they began to send arzuhal (petitions) to the state saying how loyal they were to the Tanzimat order. They even emphasized how much they assisted the state during the Crimean War.[142] They also underlined that, thanks to their organization and settlement, previously deserted villages of Malazgird were now thriving.[143] Both Rıdvan and Kulihan had a common goal to present themselves as loyal and valuable assets to the imperial authorities, which they hoped would allow them to return to their native region.

Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha were in exile in Edirne, but they sent petitions to the Sublime Porte asking to be pardoned, insisting that they were loyal Ottoman subjects. At first their petitions were rejected,[144] but later they were pardoned by the state on the condition that they never commit a crime again. They had to avoid causing trouble in the region. Further, no peasant came forward to testify that Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha had violated their rights,[145] so they were pardoned in 1862.[146] Kulihan Agha would return to his homeland alone, however, as Rıdvan Agha died in 1862.[147]

[141] Duman Koç "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 298.
[142] Ibid., 298.
[143] Ibid., 298.
[144] BOA. A. MKT. UM. 494/78, 19 Safer 1278 (26 August 1861).
[145] BOA. A. MKT. MVL. 144/41, 14 Şevval 1278 (14 April 1862).
[146] BOA. İ. MVL. 463/020917, 6 Şevval 1278 (6 April 1862).
[147] BOA. MVL. 949/17, 7 Zilkadde 1278 (6 May 1862).

The main reason why the Ottoman government pardoned Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha was that the councils of Muş and Erzurum wrote reports on their behalf stressing their importance as authority figures over the Hasenan tribe. The reports also lauded their roles as intermediaries between the state and the tribal population and argued that they had frequently acted in the best interests of the state.[148] In conjunction with the fact that no peasants were brave enough to come forward as witnesses against them, this meant that the state had little choice but to set them free.

2.9 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I explored the relationship between the Ottoman state and the Kurdish emirates in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman state had minimal influence over Kurdish tribes until the 1830s to 1850s when, as part of Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman state started to abolish the ruling Kurdish emirates and attempted to assert more direct state influence over the Ottoman East. However, the state had little success in this venture because it did not have enough social, military, and economic power to build direct control over the region, and the abolishment of the Kurdish emirates created a power vacuum in Ottoman Kurdistan. Kurdish tribal leaders and sheikhs would emerge as the new power holders in the region to fill this vacuum. In this regard, the Hasenan were one of the largest and most powerful tribes in the Muş district and acted as a confederation with smaller tribes integrated into their power structure.

In the second part of the chapter, Rıdvan Agha and his cousin, Kulihan Agha, are presented as the first generation of Hasenan leaders who experienced the

[148] Duman Koç "Governing a Frontier Sancak," 299.

Tanzimat reforms, building a direct relationship with Ottoman authorities. The Hasenan leaders represented their tribesmen in their relationship with the state, pursuing policies in line with their self-interest and personal agendas. In this regard, the process of the sedentarization of the Hasenan tribesmen was difficult, and local Kurdish and Armenian peasants suffered a lot. Analyzing the reaction of the Hasenan aghas to the Tanzimat reforms is important in terms of showing us the perception of the Tanzimat reforms by local people in a peripheral region of the empire. In this sense, I examine the relationship between the state, peasants, and the Hasenan leadership in the Muş region. The important point here is that the Ottoman state became a more visible actor in the Ottoman East with the introduction of the Tanzimat reforms. Nevertheless, tribal leaders also pushed their own policies and played the game of power with the state.

The Ottoman state turned a blind eye to many crimes and violations by prominent Hasenan leaders in the interest of using them for control over the region. The state wanted to use the manpower and human resources of the Hasenan tribe. As a result, in most cases, the rights of peasants, regardless of being Kurdish or Armenian, were sacrificed, and they were not supported by the state in the eastern regions in the nineteenth century. In this respect, the case of Rıdvan Agha of the Hasenan tribe shows us that by the middle of the nineteenth century, a new, longstanding, symbiotic relationship was built between Kurdish tribes and the Ottoman state. There would be both collaboration and conflict from the Tanzimat into early Republican era, indicating that the state and Kurdish tribes depended on each other.[149]

[149] Klein, "Power in the Periphery," 125.

In short, I claim that in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state was thirsty for new material and human resources, so peripheral areas like Ottoman Kurdistan became the places where new power structures and dynamics were shaped which paved the way for Kurdish tribes to become new socio-political entities that would engage in power plays with the state. In the harsh modernization and centralization process of the Tanzimat, the Ottoman state attempted to engage itself in the daily life of local actors, causing conflict, as in the case of Rıdvan Agha of the Hasenan tribe.

CHAPTER 3

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HAMIDIAN REGIMENTS

3.1 Introduction

Scholars who study the structure and establishment of the Hamidian regiments generally understand their creation as a reflection of Sultan Abdulhamid II's Islamist policies to stop the growth of Armenian nationalism. The possibility that Russia might invade the eastern regions of the empire was also an important factor in the establishment of the regiments.[150] With the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, the state believed that it would be able to use Kurdish tribes as a military buffer on the Ottoman Eastern frontier. Hamidian officials also believed that this structure would "civilize" Kurdish tribes and bring them under state control.[151] The integration of Kurdish tribes into the Ottoman military system was supposed to pave the way for educating and civilizing them. In the words of Janet Klein, the state had a "manifold mission" in the formation of these regiments.[152] On the other hand, for Kurdish tribes who joined the regiments, this relationship had some advantages as well. For instance, Hamidian militias were exempted from paying several taxes. Members of the Hamidian troops could also only be tried in military courts. These were tempting privileges which convinced many Kurdish chieftains who lived in the northeastern part of Anatolia to join the Hamidian regiments.

In this chapter, I will first analyze how the formation of the Hamidian regiments affected the relationship between different leading families within the Hasenan tribe. In this context, sub-chiefs who had lesser positions within the tribal

[150] Kodaman, "Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları;" Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 14; Mazhar Ahmed, *1. Dünya Savaşı'nda Kürdistan*, 82-83.
[151] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 261.
[152] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 20-51.

hierarchy found the opportunity to claim higher positions within the Hasenan tribe, indicating that the new relationship with the Ottoman state was a game changer when it came to the internal affairs of Kurdish tribes. Therefore, the first part will be a detailed analysis of five Hamidian regiments formed by the Hasenan chiefs, followed by an examination of the intra-tribal conflicts of the Hasenan leaders. In the second part of the chapter, I will delve into the relationship between the Hasenan tribe and the neighboring Hayderan and Sepki tribes after the formation of the Hamidian regiments. Both the Hayderan and the Sepki tribes were powerful tribes who wanted to extend their sphere of influence, setting them against the Hasenan. The main goal here is to show that although these three tribes were part of the Hamidian regiments, they were not strictly under the Ottoman military structure, indicating that they had their own agendas, and for this reason there was little cooperation between these three neighboring tribes in the Malazgird-Patnos-Eleşkird triangle.

After Abdulhamid II became the 34th Ottoman Sultan in 1876, the policies of the Tanzimat era (1839-1876) began to change. Now, the power of the Sublime Porte would be gradually reduced, while the Sultan gained control of state affairs, revealing that the bureaucracy of the Sublime Porte was replaced with that of Yıldız Palace. In this vein, the power of Ottoman Pashas decreased as the Sultan created a loyal palace bureaucracy. Yet, even though the Hamidian regime had authoritarian tendencies, Yıldız Palace did not reject the modernization mission of the Tanzimat program.[153] Following the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, the Hamidian era would be tumultuous for the Ottoman state. The demographic structure of the empire also changed quickly in favor of its Muslim subjects following the influx of Muslim

[153] For detailed information on the reforms during the Hamidian era, see Fortna, "The Reign of Abdülhamid II," 38-61; Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 72-108.

immigrants from Russia and a loss of largely non-Muslim populated Balkan territories.[154]

The loss of Balkan territories and expansionist policies of the Russian Empire caused the Sultan to prioritize the integrity of the Asiatic provinces of the empire. The Ottoman East was particularly unstable. Following the Berlin Treaty of 1878, Armenian subjects of the empire drew the attention of European powers, and in this way, Armenian demands became internationally political, and the Sultan saw this as a new threat to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.[155] The Sheikh Ubeydullah Revolt in 1880 in the Ottoman East also posed a significant challenge for the Hamidian regime in its initial years.[156] Even though Sheikh Ubeydullah was not from the traditional Kurdish elite, as he was not from a notable Kurdish family, he gathered a great number of Kurdish people to revolt against Ottoman authority, indicating that along with tribal chiefs, sheikhs were also prominent figures in politics now. The Sheikh Ubeydullah Revolt illustrated to Sultan Abdulhamid II the importance of Kurdish sheikhs and tribal aghas as new intermediaries between the Ottoman center and the inhabitants of the Ottoman East. These people were now the new figures with whom the Sultan would have to work if he wanted to maintain the territorial integrity of the empire.

As mentioned earlier, during the Tanzimat era, the Ottoman state showed Kurdish tribesmen that it could force its will through violence by carrying out military expeditions. Now, it was a different era, and with this new era would come different requirements for both the Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes. In this manner, we see that the nature of state-tribe relations was often complex and dynamic. Rather

[154] Quartert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922,* 116.
[155] Bajalan, "Between Accomodationism and Separatism," 127.
[156] Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism,* 2-7; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement,* 75-101.

than embracing the harsher methods with which Tanzimat statesmen dealt with Kurdish principalities, Sultan Abdulhamid II collaborated with Kurdish tribes by adopting and stressing Islamist policies in the changing international politics of the late nineteenth century. Abdulhamid II's Islamism, however, was more operative rather than it was ideological, as is evidenced by his forming of the Hamidian regiments in order to use Kurdish forces to deal with the "Armenian question." The demand of the Armenian population for reforms in the international arena after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 was a problem for the Ottoman state. Shortly thereafter, Armenian revolutionary organizations were founded in the 1880s and 1890s, and these Armenian organizations sought to undermine Ottoman power in the region.[157] The Hamidian regime thus wanted to counter-balance Armenian demands by highlighting the Kurdishness of the region. Abdulhamid II extended his control over many Kurdish tribes, particularly Kurdish tribes inhabiting the Erzurum and Bitlis provinces, who were eager to join the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments.

By subduing Kurdish tribesmen, the establishment of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments acted as a crucial step towards the integration of the Ottoman East into the Ottoman system. The formation of the Hamidian tribal regiments was, therefore, a defining factor in state-Kurdish tribe relations, indicating that the Ottoman state was not shy about trying to make Kurdish tribesmen into docile Ottoman subjects. This would mean increasing the accessibility to the Ottoman center for the Kurdish tribes, but also reducing their mobility. In 1891, Şakir Pasha, who was the ambassador to St. Petersburg, and Zeki Pasha, the commander of the Fourth Anatolian Army, played leading roles in the establishment of the Hamidian

[157] Libaridan, "What was Revolutionary about the Armenian Revolutionary Parties of the Ottoman Empire," 82-112.

regiments.[158] In particular, M. Zeki Pasha had an essential part in building close relationships with Kurdish chiefs. The Hamidian regime passed the first legal regulations regarding the Hamidian regiments in 1891, and then shortly thereafter Kurdish tribal chiefs travelled to Istanbul to attend a ceremony at the palace, celebrating the official creation of the regiments.[159] The number of Hamidian regiments increased over the course of the decade. While there were 56 regiments in 1893, there were 63 regiments in 1899.[160] Although Kurdish tribes constituted majority of the regiments, there were also some Arab and Karapapak tribes that joined.[161]

After the formation of the Hamidian regiments, intra-tribal fights over who would claim superior ranks in the newly established paramilitary forces broke out. Many semi-nomadic and nomadic Kurdish tribal leaders threw themselves into the fierce struggle to assume leading positions. When certain segments within the same tribe began to compete with each other for leading positions in the newly established cavalry regiments, they actually, intentionally or unintentionally, ruined the traditional ruling hierarchy within the tribe. A tribal leader who came from a *torin* family traditionally held the right to claim supremacy over all the other clans. Although there were other strong households within the tribe, they would show deference to the *torin* leader. However, with the creation of the Hamidian regiments, the Ottoman state created new ranks, including kaymakam (lieutenant colonel) and binbaşı (colonel). Then, the Sublime Porte appointed leaders from multiple different clans within the same tribe (not just from the *torin* family) to the rank of kaymakam

[158] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 261. For detailed information about Ahmed Şakir Pasha's career path and his contribution to the formation of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments, see Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa.*
[159] Kodaman, "Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları," 443.
[160] Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh and State*, 186.
[161] Ibid., 186.

(lieutenant colonel) of Hamidian regiments. Hamidian tribal leaders who were not from the *torin* family but who now held the same rank in the Hamidian regiments as the *torin* leaders began to see themselves on equal footing with the torin family. Therefore, I argue that the establishment of the Hamidian regiments resulted in competition and fierce struggles over tribal leadership. Similarly, the hierarchical order within the Kurdish tribes began to change in the short run because many sub-chiefs now found a legitimate way to get into a position of tribal leadership. In this way, the establishment of the Hamidian regiments paved the way for further destabilization and fragmentation of larger tribal confederacies. A traditional ruling family of the tribe now had to compete and struggle with new rivals for holding leadership positions in the Hamidian regiments. I underline that achieving a high military rank in the newly established Hamidian regiments paved the way for gaining more power within the tribe, thus the tribal leadership changed hands more than ever before.

On the other hand, with the foundation of the Hamidian regiments, the state became a new authority to which Kurdish tribe chiefs applied more than ever before. Yıldız Palace intended to become more visible and respected in the eastern regions of the empire, and now, by giving newly created ranks to Kurdish tribal leaders, the state found a new legitimate way to claim guardianship and supremacy over Kurdish tribes. After the foundation of these paramilitary forces, the Ottoman state was now a substantial actor in the politics of Kurdish tribes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Furthermore, I argue that one of the main motivations behind establishment of the Hamidian regiments for Yıldız Palace was to close the gap between the Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes. The point here for the Hamidian

regime was not to abolish the past but to make a clean break from it.[162] Now, unlike his predecessor, Abdullhamid II claimed control over distant Kurdish regions by using his prestige and charisma.

According to an Ottoman document which shows the main centers of the Hamidian regiments in the Ottoman East, the Kurdish tribes who joined the Hamidian cavalry regiments were divided into seven military liva (brigade) under the supervision of Şakir Paşa.[163] As was mentioned before, the Hasenan tribe lived predominantly in the Malazgird, Bulanık, and Hınıs sub-districts, which means they were under the jurisdiction of the Bitlis province.[164] Malazgird was the headquarters of the third Hamidian liva (center). According to the table prepared by Şakir Pasha showing which Kurdish tribes were part of the Hamidian regiments, the Hasenan, Karapapak, and Sepki tribes were part of the Malazgird military liva (center). While the first, second, and third regiments were taken from the Sepki tribe, five Hamidian regiments came from the Hasenan tribe. Apart from the Hasenan and Sepki tribes, the seventh Hamidian regiment was made up of the Karapapak tribe in the Malazgird military liva (center).[165] This illustrates that the Hasenan chiefs who participated in the Hamidian regiments held onto power in the long run because they were able to form five regiments, indicating that more Hasenan tribesmen would be able to easily carry weapons.

[162] Deringil, *Simgeden Millete*, 211-213.
[163] Reza Ekinci, "1897 Tarihli Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları Taksimatı," 713; Kodoman, "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiment," 415.
[164] After the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78, when Bitlis was included in the Ottoman administrative system as a province, Muş became a sanjak (district) of the Bitlis Province. Örs, "Muş Bölgesi Aşiretlerinin İç Çelişkileri," 53.
[165] Reza Ekinci, "1897 Tarihli Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları Taksimatı," 715-716; Çakaloğlu, "Müşir Mehmed Zeki Paşa," 69.

3.2 The incorporation of the Hasenan tribe into the Hamidian Regiments

In 1891, shortly after the establishment of the Hamidian units, Fethullah Bey, grandson of Rıdvan Agha sent an arzuhal (petition) to Yıldız Palace. In this petition, Fethullah Bey voiced support for the idea of forming six Hamidian regiments from the Hasenan tribe. Fethullah Bey wanted one regiment for Ayaz Agha and Reşid Efendi each and two for himself, but he was opposed to the idea of Yusuf Agha having two. The problem here for Fethullah Bey was that even though Yusuf Agha, the son of Agid, did not come from his family, the *torin* family, he wanted to take command of two regiments. This was a clear sign of disobedience against his family, the *torin* family. Such a wish by Yusuf Agha would undermine Fethullah's authority within the Hasenan tribe. He emphasized in his petition that his family had offered tremendous support to the state, particularly during the Crimean War. Therefore, he kindly asked the state not to encourage Yusuf Bey's ambitions to rise above his place in the traditional hierarchy of the Hasenan tribe.[166]

Fethullah Bey clearly believed that the leadership of the Hasenan tribe was the hereditary right of his family, which is why he referred to his grandfather's support for the state during the Crimean war.[167] From his perspective, the Ottoman State should not give two regiments to a chief who came from another clan in the Hasenan tribe. This indeed shows that he accepted the authority of the Ottoman Sultan over his tribe. Also, this petition shows us that the relationship between Kurdish chiefs and the Ottoman State was a complex and dynamic one in which

[166] Y. PRK. AZJ. 18/100, 10 Ramazan 1308 (April 19, 1891).

[167] Even though Fethullah Bey stressed that his grandfather joined the Ottoman army during the Crimean war, it seems that the Hasenan tribesmen were not keen on joining the war on the Ottoman side because they were not familiar with the idea of joining the Ottoman regular army. The Tanzimat state still forced them to lend support during the Crimean war. After the war, the Hasenan chiefs were awarded. For detailed information, see Uluguna, "Şiddet Yüzyılı" İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 321-322.

tribal chiefs had the right to voice their expectations and frustrations. In other words, this relationship between these two sides was not just a relationship in which Ottoman rulers dictated their decisions to Kurdish tribes. Yusuf Bey was the son of Agid Agha, who was the brother of Kulihan Agha and cousin of Rıdvan Agha. He came from the Eshadiya clan within the Hasenan tribe (see figure 1). Command of the 26th Hamidian regiment was given to Yusuf Bey, while Fethullah Bey, who came from the *torin* family of the Hasenan tribe, became the commander of the 27th Hamidian regiment.[168] This indicates that Fethullah's demand to form two tribal regiments was not met by state officials. But Yusuf Agha was not able to form two regiments under his authority either. It seems that the Ottoman officials did not turn a blind eye to what the important leaders of Kurdish tribes thought when it established the Hamidian regiments. In the case of the Hasenan tribe, the Hamidian regime rather followed a policy of balance and tried to please the other sub-chiefs of the tribe.

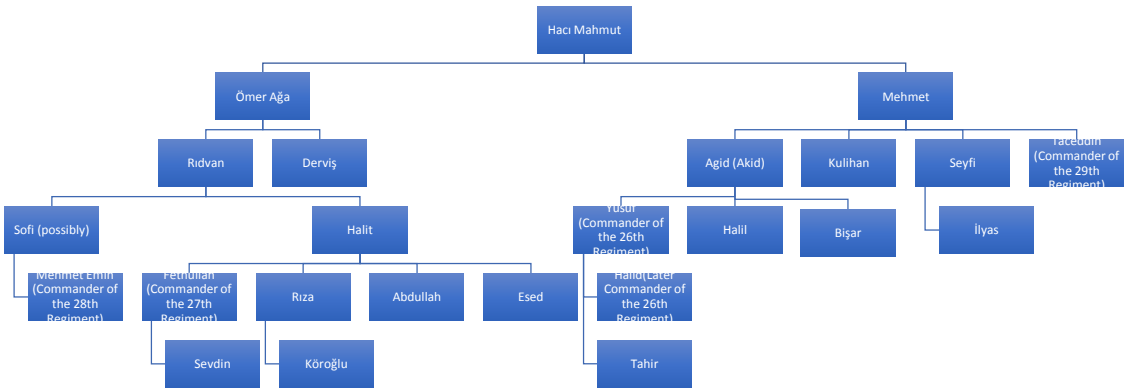

Figure 1. Family tree of the leading families of the Hasenan tribe

[168] BOA, Y. MTV. 82/70, 24 Safer 1311 (September 6, 1893).

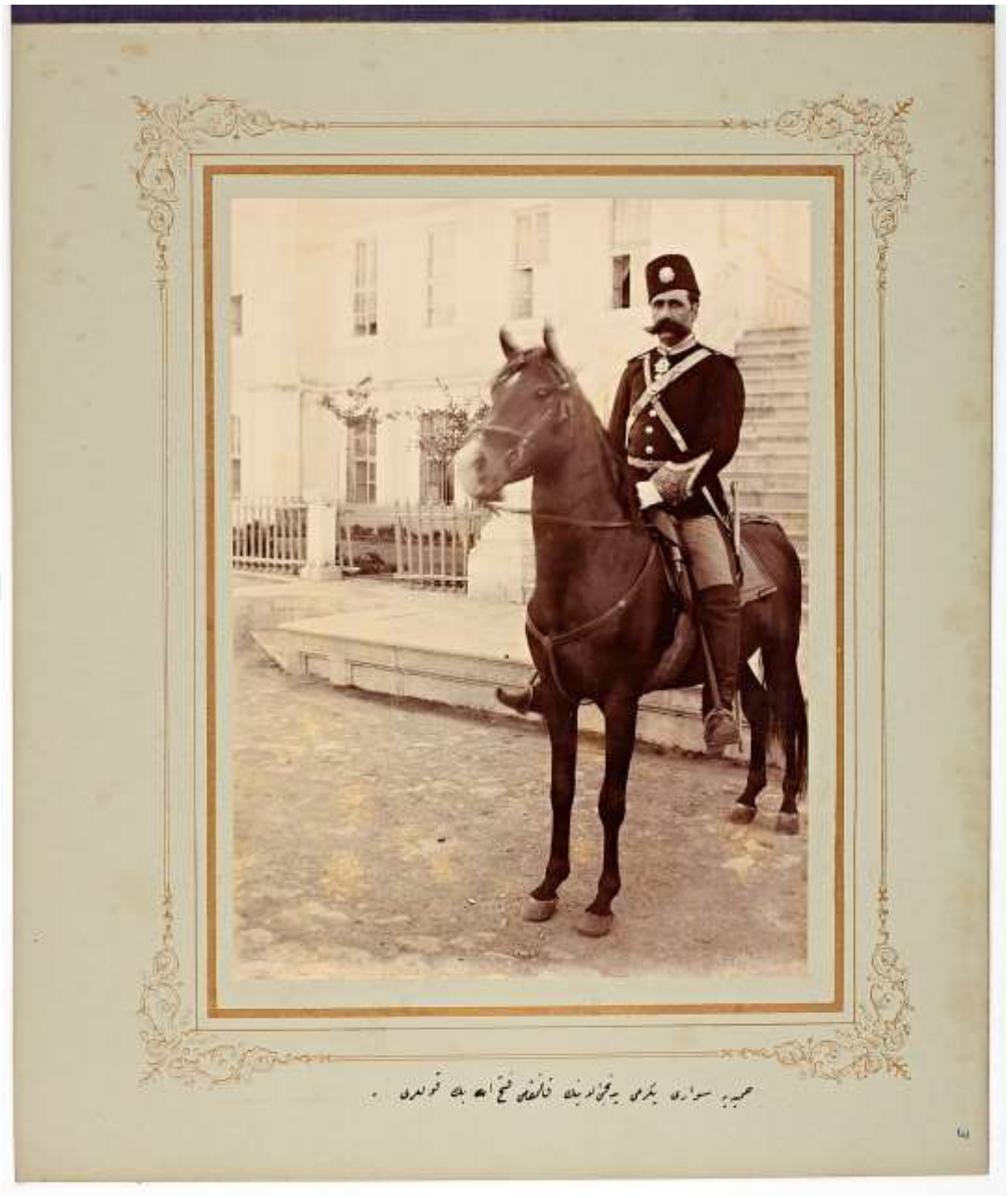

Figure 2. Fethullah Bey, commander of the 27th Hamidian Regiment
İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphane ve Dokümentasyon Daire Başkanlığı

According to oral sources, Fethullah Bey (see figure 2) came from the *torin* family of Emeriya clan, and, together with his brother, Rıza Agha, they were the most influential figures of the Hasenan tribe during this time period. They were the grandsons of Rıdvan Agha, and their father, Halit Agha, was killed by Hayderan

tribesmen because of a conflict over settlement problems between these two tribes.[169] Even though Ottoman sources do not clearly show who first established the 28th Hamidian regiment, it was most likely Sofi Pasha because, by 1897, his son, Mehmet Emin Bey, was the commander of the 28th Hamidian regiment.[170] Another document shows that Sofi Pasha's son, Mehmet Emin Bey, requested his father's medals and rewards, claiming that he was the commander of the 28th Hamidian Regiment.[171] An Ottoman document dated to 1890 shows that Sofi Pasha was given a fourth Mecidiye and a third Osmani medal, and that Fethullah Bey was rewarded with a fifth Mecidiye and a fourth Osmani. These two men were identified as the leaders of the Hasenan tribe.[172]

Although all the Hasenan chiefs, including Sofi, had "agha" as their titles in this document (see the appendix for a full explanation of these titles), he was called Sofi Pasha (brigadier general) in all later Ottoman documents. This shows that he assumed the highest rank of the Hamidian regiments amongst all the other Hasenan chiefs. It is most likely that Sofi Pasha was also member of the household of Emeriya because in clashes between Fethullah and a rival clan, Sofi Pasha was at Fethullah's side.[173] In addition to that, when Fethullah Bey complained in his petition that Yusuf Bey had no right to demand two regiments under his command, he clearly stressed that Sofi Pasha, as their leader, had to be appointed as the general head of all the Hamidian regiments composed from the Hasenan tribe.[174] Furthermore, when we

[169] Dengbej Kawis Axa, "Xèlito Mudurè Milazgirè."
[170] BOA, Y. EE. 81/39, 29 Rabiulahir 1315 (September 27, 1897).
[171] BOA, Y.MTV. 167/154, 22 Rabiulahir 1315 (September 20, 1897).
[172] "… Hasenanlı Aşireti Umum reisi Sofi Ağa dördüncü Mecidiye Istabl 'amire üçüncü Osmani üçüncü Osmani Fethullah Ağa beşinci Mecidiye Istabl-ı Amire dördüncü Osmani dördüncü Osmani…" BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 68/14, 4 Cemaziyelevvel 1308 (December 16, 1890).
[173] BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).
[174] BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 18/100, 10 Ramazan 1308 (April 19, 1891). Although I could not find any clear information in either oral or written sources that Sofi Pasha is Fethullah Bey's older brother, this is likely the case based on context clues.

examine the list of Hamidian tribal chiefs who were invited to the capital by the Sultan, Sofi and Fethullah along with other several Hasenan leaders had first rank, while Yusuf Bey, Rıza Agha and Taceddin Bey had second and third ranks respectively.[175] This list shows the importance of Sofi Pasha within hierarchy of the Hasenan tribe. The fact that he was named "Pasha," a rank given to only two others within the Hamidian regiments,[176] and yet, the fact that there was so little mention of him in Ottoman documents begs the question: Why was he made Pasha? Further, a telegram written by Zeki Pasha to Şakir Pasha states that Sofi Pasha died in August 1893 shortly after he returned from Istanbul.[177]

What happened next illustrates that the Hamidian regime shattered the hierarchical structure of the Hasenan tribe. Even though there were a number of more important chiefs within the Hasenan tribe than Yusuf Agha, he was able to establish a regiment under his authority, and this would elevate him from Agha to Bey. Taceddin Agha experienced the same upward mobility. According to the list which detailed tribal hierarchy within the Hasenan in 1893 when they went to Istanbul, Taceddin Agha, son of Mehmed Agha, was identified as the third level of importance amongst the Hasenan chiefs. His brother, Seyfeddin was ranked first level. In a number of documents dating back to 1888, Taceddin was even referred to as a "şaki" (bandit).[178] Yet, by 1895, Taceddin had been made commander of the 29th Hamidian

[175] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 70/96, 5 Şaban 1310 (February 22, 1893); Özcoşar and Ertekin, "Sultan ve Aşiret," 27-28.
[176] Kör Hüseyin Pasha and Milli İbrahim Pasha were two other important Hamidian tribal leaders who were called Pasha at the time. For detailed studies on Hüseyin Pasha of the Hayderan, see Abak, "Kürt Politikasında Hamidiye Siyasetine dönüş," 277-292; Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 269-314; Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 128-169. For a detailed analysis on İbrahim Pasha of the Milli tribe see Jongerden, "Elite Encounters of the Violent Kind," 55-84. For an explanation of these titles in the context of this thesis, see the appendix.
[177] BOA, Y. EE. 139/46, 25 Safer 1311 (September 7, 1893).
[178] BOA, DH. MKT. 1636/1, 11 Zilkade 1306 (July 9, 1889), BOA, DH. MKT. 1559/74, 25 Safer 1306 (October 31, 1888), BOA, DH. MKT. 1571/32, 30 Rabiulevvel 1306 (December 4, 1888), BOA, DH. MKT. 1571/94, 1 Rabiulahir 1306 (December 5, 1888), BOA, DH. MKT. 1606/64, 16 Recep 1306 (March 18, 1889).

regiment.[179] We can only speculate why Taceddin became the leader of the 29th regiment, even though his brother ranked higher than him. Seyfeddin may have died before 1895, leaving the regiment to his younger brother, but there is no documentation of this transition. What is clear is that Taceddin rose in status through his affiliation with the Hamidian government.

Taceddin was not the only Hasenan leader to be referred to as a şaki (bandit). Almost all the other Hasenan chiefs were also regarded as bandits in the years before the establishment of the Hamidian regiments. For example, after robbing what was probably an influential person, the Court of Erzurum sentenced Rıza Agha to five years in prison in absentia in 1888, referring to him as a bandit.[180] The court either couldn't find him or was unable to compel him to serve his sentence. Taceddin, in contrast, was actually imprisoned for his crimes. After killing a man in 1888, he was held in prison in Muş for at least a short amount of time.[181] After the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, these "bandits" would become allies of the Hamidian government. All their former crimes would be expunged. They became the new local collaborators with the state. Additionally, Ottoman documents show a major change in language during this time. Those who were once referred to as brigands and bandits would now have titles like Bey and Pasha, indicating that language produced by the government could change over time.

As a quick aside, I have detailed all the Hamidian regiments of the Hasenan tribe but one. There is little information on the 30th regiment except that in 1898 it was headed by İbrahim Bey. We know this only through a land dispute where he is identified as the commander of the 30th Hamidian regiment.[182] On the other hand,

[179] BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 32-61, 13 Cemaziyelevvel 1313 (November 1, 1895).
[180] BOA, DH. MKT. 1719-16, 27 Şaban 1307 (April 18, 1890).
[181] BOA, DH. MKT. 1571/94, 1 Rabiulahir 1306 (December 5, 1888).
[182] BOA, Y. MTV. 183/26, 7 Cemazeyilahir 1316 (October 23, 1898).

Avyarov claimed that the leader of 30th Hamidian regiment was probably Mehmed Said Bey. Yet, Avyarov was unsure who the leader of the 30th regiment was, though he said his sources told him the leader of this regiment might be Ayaz Bey.[183] On the other hand, there is no other information about İbrahim or his claim to leadership, but the fact that a previously unknown man could rise to command a regiment further illustrates how much the establishment of the Hamidian system in the Ottoman East upended and undermined tribal hierarchies. When traditional hierarchies within Kurdish tribes were broken, the balance of power began to deteriorate, and, as a result, fights for leadership within the tribe became the norm in the Hamidian era.

3.3 Intra-tribal fights amongst the Hasenan

According to a document sent from the Bitlis province to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs on January 10, 1893, the fierce struggle between different segments of the Hasenan tribe turned into a violent clash and many people were wounded and died. The document shows that they fought for three days, but state forces did not intervene.[184] Though this document does not state which households of the Hasenan tribe were involved in this battle, there was clearly a need for a Divan-i Harb (military tribunal) to stop possible violence. Five days later, on January 15, 1893, another petition was sent to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs by the governor of Bitlis. This time, the governor warned the officials in the Muş district about what would happen if they did not take precautions. This document highlights that there were more than three hundred people who were involved in this bloody clash and

[183] Avyarov, & Varlı, *Osmanlı-Rus ve Iran Savaşları'nda Kürtler,* 28.
[184] BOA, Y. PRK. DH. 5/76, 20 Cemazeyilahir 1310 (January 9, 1893).

people had been fighting for three days straight. The document once again called for a military tribunal in order to punish those who instigated the fight.[185]

Similarly, another document dated to 1893, shows that Muşir Zeki Pasha was put in charge of preparing a military tribunal for those Hasenan leaders who took part in the carnage.[186] Zeki Pasha wrote to the palace because he had a completely different perspective on the reasons behind why such a big fight broke out between the Hasenan households. Zeki Pasha stated that

> Even though the chiefs and sub-chiefs of the Hasenan tribe are lucky to receive the support of the state in becoming a part of such an important organization (Hamidian regiments), they still have the ambition to assume the highest rank within the organization and every leader wants to have absolute power. After they joined the organization, they did not cause many problems. However, recently, I received news that they suddenly became enemies again. Kaymakam Mahmut Beg was sent to the site of the incident in order to find out what happened. After the investigation, some tribesmen were called to the center of Fırka.[187]

When I examined Zeki Pasha's statement about the fight amongst the Hasenan households, I noticed that Zeki Pasha did not admit that there was a correlation between the establishment of the Hamidian regiments and an increase in violence within the Hasenan tribe. Rather, he presumed that after they joined the Hamidian units, they had generally avoided such fights. Further, he claimed that they had always fought amongst themselves and implied that these tribes indeed showed their true nature by constantly fighting.[188] Zeki Pasha believed in the advantages of

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[185] BOA, DH. MKT. 2042/103, 26 Cemazeyilahir 1310 (January 15, 1893).
[186] BOA, Y. A. HUS. 268/151, 29 Cemazeyilahir 1310 (January 18, 1893).
[187] "… Hasenanlı Aşireti efradı evsaf-ı mümtazeyi haiz iseler de ___ daiye-i teferrüt ve teveffukla hep yek diğerine rakib olduklarından bunlar arasında öteden beri yek diğeri aleyhte tecavuüz ve münazaa eksik olmaz. Teşkilat-ı Hayriye duhullarından beru icra olunan vesaya tesiriyle şimdiye kadar aralarında belli başlı bir hadise zuhur etmedi. Şu günlerde tekrar ve birdenbire yek diğeri aleyhine kalkışarak münazaa ve mukatele de bulundukları haber alındığından umum-i Hamidiye Kumandanlığı Erkan-ı Harbiyesine memur kaymakam Mahmud Beg'in icab edenlerle hemen mahalli vukaya izamıyla tahkikat ve meşhudatı neticesinin iş'arı Hamidiye kumandanlığına yazılmış idi…" BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).
[188] BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).

the Hamidian organization for both the state and the Kurdish tribes. This was a vital project to bring peace, prosperity, and civilization to these semi-nomadic and nomadic Kurdish tribes who had always killed each other. Zeki Pasha's telegram also reveals that the night of July 3, 1893 witnessed another major clash between two important households of the Hasenan tribe. Even though the cause of the fight was unclear, the competition to gain a higher position within the newly created Hamidian regiments seems to be the most logical reason why this fight would break out.

In this particular clash, Agidzade Yusuf Agha and his brother, Selim, Fethullah Bey's son, Sere, Sofi Pasha's wife, and his grandson, as well as many unknown tribesmen were killed. This was a major battle which broke out between two important households: the household of Emeriya and the household of Esadiya in 1893. The fact that even women were involved illustrates the magnitude of this bloodshed. In addition to that, important sub-chiefs like Rıza Agha and his brother Abdullah were also wounded. Both sides blamed each other for initiating the fight and state officials expected that the bloodshed would not end here because both Fethullah Bey's son and Yusuf Bey, the leader of the 26th Hamidian Regiment, were killed during the conflict.[189] These two powerful households of the Hasenan tribe now had a blood feud. The villages where these Hasenan leaders were residing were very close to the Hamidian base of the Malazgird sub-district. Yıldız palace warned Zeki Pasha to keep an eye on these Hasenan households because another round of bloodshed could destabilize the region. Further, Şakir Pasha emphasized that those who participated in such horrific bloodshed in the interest of their own families should be banished from serving in the Hamidian cavalry regiments because their

[189] BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).

behavior was unbefitting the Ottoman army.[190] Another important point here is that Şakir Pasha stated that

> They are nomadic and have such a lifestyle which makes the Hasenan tribesmen not adapt easily to Ottoman military rule, their bad behaviors and frequent fights are totally incompatible with our military rules, thus their punishment and even expulsion from the tribal regiments seems necessary.[191]

Yet, even though Şakir Pasha made it clear that the state would punish these Hasenan tribal chiefs who created an atmosphere of terror in their regions, we see that they would continue to be a problem until the beginning of the First World War.

Another important aspect of this document is that it shows a distinct discourse of "nomadism and savagery"[192] coming from both Şakir Pasha and Zeki Pasha in their attempts to explain the bloody conflict within the Hasenan tribe. For them, it seemed easy to explain away the fierce intra-tribal struggles of the Hasenan tribe as stemming from the savage and wild nature of Kurdish tribes. Therefore, for the Ottoman elites who were behind the creation of the Hamidian regiments, Hamidiye was not simply a paramilitary organization. Rather, it was a big project aiming to change the social and demographic structure of the Ottoman East. In this vein, Zeki Pasha even underlined that, thanks to the Hamidian units, these nomadic Kurdish tribes embraced military rules and Ottoman administration, thus the creation of the Hamidian paramilitary forces lessened the blood feuds and other types of clashes amongst Kurdish tribes.[193]

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[190] BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).
[191] "… bedavet hasebiyle bidayet-i emirde bu makule ahvalin zuhuru şayan-ı istiğrab değil ise de rızay-ı berayı ve bu cihetle rıza-ı aliye muhalif hareketleri zuhurunda afv ve iğmaz me'lüfiyetleri askerlik __ zihinlerinde birleşmesini mani' olub ca-be-ca bu gibi yolsuzluğa cür'etlerini müstelzim olacağından ve bu mukatelede muarızlardan başka taife-i nisadan dahi bir-iki nüfusu-ı zekiye telef olmuş bulunduğundan mücadele-i vakıaya sebeb olanların şiddetle muaheze olunmaları __ umurdan görünüyor bu noktayı nazardan bi'l muhakeme tahkikat-ı amika ve şedide icrası ve müsebbiblerin zahire ihracı ile keyfiyetin atibe-i süreyya mertebe-i Cenab-ı Hilafetpenahilerine arz olunmuş…" BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).
[192] For more on this discourse see Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery."
[193] BOA, Y. EE. 139/42, 9 Zilhicce 1310 (June 24, 1893).

Nevertheless, the fight between Fethullah Bey and Yusuf Bey shows that the creation of the Hamidian regiments indeed atomized different branches of the same tribe. It seems that these chiefs, who were raised together in the same house, now became rivals, competing with each other in the hopes of emerging as the most powerful man in the tribe.[194] The creation of the Hamidian regiments gave sub-chiefs of the Hasenan tribe access to communication with Yıldız Palace by being a part of the military and administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire. These sub-chiefs, their brothers, and their sons, got the opportunity to be more visible as local partners of the Ottoman State in the region. As Yener Koç shows, the imperial Ottoman state attempted to expand its power into tribal spaces,[195] creating factionalism within the Kurdish tribal hierarchy in order to endear certain tribal leaders to the Ottoman state, but Kurdish tribes were far from passive agents in this process.

During the Tanzimat era, these same Kurdish tribal leaders were given the opportunity to become heads of sub-districts and received monthly salaries. Yet, in the late nineteenth century, they became a more formidable force in the region through their direct collaboration with local officials and other powerholders, particularly after the establishment of the Hamidian regiments. Joining the Hamidian regiments also meant being a part-time military servant of the state in the region, leading these Hamidian chiefs to become the new apparatus of the state. According to Yaşar Tolga Cora, Kurdish tribal leaders as new socio-political actors provide us with an example of the permeable state/society divide, as these chiefs and sub-chiefs were state officials as well.[196] This shows us that the Hamidian regime still did not have its own established military force in the region. In order to make its power

[194] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 273.
[195] Koç, "A tribal confederation at the intersection of the Ottoman, Russian, and Qajar empires," 183.
[196] Cora, "Transforming Erzurum/Karin," 7.

visible in its Eastern periphery, it had to negotiate and collaborate with local powerholders. Therefore, the establishment of the Hamidian regiments was an important step in an imperial project to maintain the integrity of the Muslim population of the empire by building the support of local powerholders during the Hamidian era.

3.4 Marshal Mehmed Zeki Pasha and Ahmed Şakir Pasha as "the imperial masterminds of the Hamidian project"

This imperial project was carried out under the leadership of the Marshal (Müşir) Zeki Pasha. He had strong relations with both the sultan and with Kurdish tribal chiefs. M. Zeki Pasha built personal connections with those who joined the Hamidian regiments and often intervened to shield them from punishment, becoming their "protector" in a way. He became the protector of those who joined the Hamidian regiments by making personal connections with them. He was the most important representative of the Hamidian government in the Ottoman East. In this sense, Hamidian tribal chiefs who wanted special privileges knew they had to maintain good relations with him.[197] Zeki Pasha believed that if the government knew how to take advantage of the Hamidian regiments, they could be very useful for the state. In this sense, Zeki Pasha, as a high military general from the region, knew that these Hamidian regiments represented a new way of controlling the eastern periphery independent from the state bureaucracy. In this respect, when he had issues with

[197] There are many examples illustrating that Hamidian officers were under the protection of M. Zeki Pasha. For instance, the many violent behaviors of Mustafa Pasha of the Miran tribe were overlooked by Zeki Pasha despite there being many complaints. In general, Hamidian officers did not have friendly relationships with Ottoman military officials and civil servants. Instead, they saw the Sultan and then M. Zeki Pasha as their patrons, indicating that Zeki Pasha was the most important figure for the Hamidian tribal chiefs in the region. This created a "frustration of bureaucracy" because of the direct patronage provided to Kurdish tribal chiefs by the Mushir. BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 93-53, 12 Muharem 1311 (July 26, 1893).

other military and civil officers, he was able to get them fired or relocated through his strong relationship with Yıldız Palace.

According to a document dated to July 1893, Zeki Pasha claimed that İbrahim Pasha, the general commander of Hamidian regiments in the Muş region, did not have enough authority over Hasenan tribal chiefs, which is why the state had been unable to put an end to the fights between the Hasenan chiefs. If İbrahim were a stronger commander, this fight would not have even broken out in the first place. For Zeki Pasha, İbrahim Pasha was an incompetent and negligent commander who could not bring security and stability to the region.[198] Because Zeki Pasha disliked İbrahim Pasha, he was replaced with Bahaddin Pasha.[199] İbrahim Pasha's dismissal from his post showed that M. Zeki Pasha was the real authority in the eastern periphery of the empire. British Consul Graves at Erzurum stated, in 1893, that "Zeki Pasha is by far the most powerful man in influence throughout this part of Turkish Empire."[200] The main civil authorities in the Ottoman East had to do what he demanded if they wanted to stay in their posts. It seems that M. Zeki Pasha had the real authority and power to envision and create the Hamidian forces in line with his agenda. Since M. Zeki Pasha had strong relations with the palace, he could easily complain about governors and many other state officials. For example, M. Zeki Pasha complained that if he did not get enough soldiers from the center, the situation would look like that of Albania where Ali Pasha created huge problems for the government. He emphasized that İbrahim Pasha had not successfully integrated himself into the region, failing to build positive relationships with Hasenan leaders. [201] This document shows that M. Zeki Pasha tried to develop a state-center policy compatible with the

[198] BOA, Y. MTV. 79-176, 25 Zilhicce 1310 (July 10, 1893).
[199] BOA, Y. MTV. 79-176, 25 Zilhicce 1310 (July 10, 1893).
[200] As quoted in Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 79.
[201] BOA, Y. EE. 139-43, 15 Muharrem 1311 (July 29, 1893).

reality of the region. In this way, military and civil officers appointed from the center had to take the reality of the region into consideration.

Zeki Pasha also stated in the same document that although the Hasenan chiefs had problems with each other, they did not hesitate to show respect to appointed commanders. Zeki Pasha claimed that İbrahim Pasha was trying to create conflict and resentment between the Hasenan chiefs and the regular army commanders, despite the fact that there was no such conflict. Yet, appointed military officers and commanders did not like the Kurdish tribesmen who were part of the Hamidiye. They did not regard the region and the people as developed and civilized, and for this reason were not able to develop good relationships with these tribesmen.[202] This passage is important because it shows the discourse of "civilization" was embraced by these centrally appointed commanders and officers, and that they did not consider Hamidian regiments to be a real component of the Ottoman army. This is why they did not want to interfere in intra-tribal fights like that of the Hasenan tribe. It seems that majority of Ottoman military and civil officers had a binary perception of "civilized" versus "savage" when it came to explaining the reasons behind tribal fights.[203] Moreover, Ottoman regular soldiers and officers were resentful about the Hamidian regiments, as regular troops did not often have such comfortable

[202] "… Hasenanlı rüesası yek diğerine muhasim iseler de devlet muti' ve ba hususi askerlik rabıta-ı __ mukaddesesiyle merbut oldukları ve kumandanlarına itaatın ve hürmetin luzum ve vücudunu bilecek derecelerde mütefekkirdirler burasını İbrahim Paşa da bilur hal böyle iken kumandanlığın haysiyetine ve şan-ı askeriye asla tevafuk etmeyen şu hal cebinan bulunmasıyla iyi bir yürek taşımadığını ima ediyor nizamiyeden tayini buyurulan umera ve zabitanın mevkilerine vasıl olur olmaz şöyle bir meseleye karşı kumandanlıkda meşhud olan şu cebanetden ürkmüş olmaları şüpheden azade olmağla beraber diğer ordulardan ve ba husus Dersaadetden tayin buyurulan umera ve zabitandan ekseri zaten Hamidiye Alayları mevakini beğenmemekde ve oralar matlub derecede haiz umran olmadığından hane ve maişet hususundan dahi bi't tabi birkaç sene sakındı…" BOA, Y. EE. 139-43, 15 Muharrem 1311 (July 29, 1893).

[203] Many Ottoman reformers and officials of the late nineteenth century wanted to civilize nomadic groups who were seen as backward, including Kurdish tribes. However, the important issue here was that this civilizing discourse was instrumentalized in order to enable dominant powers to use their authority. For detailed information, see Deringil, Simgeden Millete, 211-213; Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."

accommodations and resources, while irregular Hamidian forces had extra privileges.[204] It seems that the bureaucracy and the army were perpetually frustrated with the Hamidian regiments. Additionally, a telegram by Şakir Pasha reveals that he completely believed that Kurdish tribesmen had an ignorant and uncivilized nature, and their wild nature was the reason behind their bad behavior. Şakir Pasha believed that the participation of these wild Kurdish tribesmen in the Hamidian regiments should discipline them. He also highlights that if they were not able to behave with military discipline, they would have to be punished and dismissed from the Ottoman army.[205]

At this point, Zeki and Şakir Pashas, two leading men behind the organization of the Hamidian regiments, had different ideas about how they could use these regiments. From Zeki Pasha's perspective, the Ottoman state should be tolerant with some of the Hamidian tribes' actions because they sided with the state, indicating that these tribal forces were a salient apparatus for the Hamidian regime. On the other hand, although Şakir Pasha also believed that the Hamidian regiments were an operational apparatus of the Ottoman state in a peripheral territory where it did not have enough power, the state did not have to let these paramilitary forces take actions incompatible with the Ottoman order. According to Şakir Pasha, if the state turned a blind eye to the aggressive actions of the Hamidian tribal units, it would encourage further bad behavior and bloody conflict. To this end, he believed that the state should not pardon tribal chiefs and tribesmen who committed crimes before the establishment of the Hamidian regiments.[206] The important point here is that justice,

[204] Hamidian chiefs were exempted from certain taxes such as temettü (income tax), emlak vergisi (property tax), ağnam (the sheep tax), and öşr (the tithe). Apart from being exempt from certain taxes, Hamidian officers were also not tried in civil courts when they committed a crime. BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 91-97, 7 Zilhicce 1310 (June 22, 1893).
[205] BOA, Y. EE. 139-45, 18 Safer 1311 (August 31, 1893).
[206] Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa,* 175.

a characteristic aspect of the Ottoman state, should not be corrupted by accepting the Hasenan chieftains who committed crimes before the establishment of the Hamidian organization. Therefore, I could say that unlike Zeki Pasha, who developed personal relationships with certain Kurdish tribal chiefs in the region, Şakir Pasha was more representative of the Ottoman bureaucracy, which was resentful at the Hamidian regiments.[207]

Ottoman state officials' main goal was to bring civilization to the Kurdish tribes and then make them more hierarchical (in the military sense, not in the tribal sense) and loyal to the state, indicating that civilizational discourse was an instrument used to justify Ottoman hegemony over Kurdish tribes. This hegemonic and dominant manner of rule also illustrated that there was a patron-client relationship between Yıldız Palace and the Kurdish tribes that joined the Hamidian regiments. In this vein, Hamidian regiments were not just paramilitary forces. Sultan Abdulhamid's Yaver-i Ekrem (aide-de camp), Miralay Vehbi even called Hamidiye a "Teşkilat-ı Hayriye" (Benevolent Institution).[208] In this regard, the Sultan himself had high expectations about the capabilities of these Kurdish forces because the atmosphere in the eastern regions was tense, and Ottoman authorities needed the

[207] The governor of Erzurum, Rauf Pasha, and the governor of Van, Şemseddin Pasha, tried many times to punish the tribal leaders of the Hayderan tribe and even tried to exile them, but Zeki Pasha, Commander of the 4th army in Erzincan, was the biggest obstacle to the punishment of the Hamidian chiefs. Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 138. Many governors serving in the region were dissatisfied with the Hamidian regiments. For example, the governor of Diyarbakır, Halit Pasha had a conflict with Zeki Pasha over Mustafa Pasha of the Miran tribe. Halit Pasha wanted to punish Mustafa Pasha for his misbehavior, but Zeki Paska wrote to the Palace that governors like Halit Pasha should be removed from the region if the government wanted to gain the support of Kurdish tribal chiefs. For detailed information, see Yiner, "Miranlı Mustafa Paşa Örneğinde Hamidiye Alayları Askeri Gücünün Kötüye Kullanımı," 458.

[208] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 235; Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa,* 174. Besides the Hamidian regiments, the Hamidian government opened the Hamidian tribal school in Istanbul in 1892 to educate children from Arab and Kurdish tribes. The main purpose was to raise the children of the tribal leaders to adopt the policies of the Ottoman state and turn them into loyal Ottoman subjects. For detailed information, see Akpınar, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Aşiret Mektebi;* Rogan, "Asiret Mektebi," 83.

presence of powerful Kurdish chiefs who embraced Sultan Abdulhamid's policies. Therefore, the Sultan prioritized not alienating them.

Şakir Pasha first came to Anatolia as an inspector in 1895 and noted that the incompetence and inexperience of these regular army officers created issues with the Hamidian chiefs.[209] In 1897, Şakir Pasha was given the authority to make new arrangements to solve some of these problems. Following a three-month investigation about how the state could better regulate the Hamidian regiments in his second spell as an inspector, he concluded that there was not a strong enough hierarchy within the regiments. He even indicated that there were some officers who took bribes from Kurdish tribal chiefs, which allowed them to build personal relationships, undermining the military hierarchy.[210] In light of the findings of Şakir Pasha, it might be said that the Hamidian regiments were, indeed, not as useful as envisioned.

These issues regarding the structure and functionality of the Hamidian regiments would not cease, as the fight mentioned above would not be the last. Throughout the 1890s, Ottoman documents show that intra-tribal struggles within the Hasenan tribe continued. As stated before, Fethullah Bey's son and Sofi Pasha's grandson were both killed by Yusuf Bey and his men, while Yusuf Bey and his brother, Selim, were killed in the same fight. After Yusuf Bey was killed, the leadership of the Esadiya Household passed to his sons, Halid and Tahir Bey. The problems between Fethullah and Halid Bey were never permanently resolved during the 1890s, showing how big the first fight after they joined the Hamidian regiments was. Hamidian officials could not comprehend the real reasons for these intra-tribal fights between the Hasenan chiefs during the 1890s. Rather, Ottoman officials,

[209] BOA, Y. EE. 139-46, 25 Safer 1311 (September 7, 1893).
[210] Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa,* 178

including M. Zeki Pasha, implied that these intra-tribal fights occurred because of "jealousy," "vanity," and "hostility" amongst the tribal chiefs.[211] The two powerful households of the Hasenan tribe ended up being enemies for many years.

By 1901, the governor of Bitlis, Hüsnü Pasha, reported that the problems between Fetullah Bey and Yusuf Bey's sons continued, resulting in the death of another of Fethullah's sons.[212] In the same conflict, Rıza Agha's son, Köroğlu and Fethullah Bey's grandson, Sabri, and Halil Agha, uncle of Halid and Tahir Bey, were all wounded.[213] Both sides wanted to take revenge on each other now. The sons of Yusuf Bey also did not seem to obey Fethullah Bey or the other Hasenan chiefs who were also commanders of the Hamidian regiments. They believed that they were the rightful heirs of the command of the 26th regiment, as their father, Yusuf Bey, was the leader of that regiment. The governor of Bitlis reported that they would need to get both Halid and Tahir Bey out of Malazgird since Fethullah Bey, Rıza Agha, and their cousin Süleyman Agha, son of Ahmet Agha, were likely looking to start another fight. The atmosphere seemed very tense and dangerous, as factions within the Hasenan tribe were crystalizing. The lieutenant colonel of the 29th regiment, Taceddin, uncle of deceased Yusuf Bey, and his cousin, major Bişar Agha came together against Fethullah Bey. For this reason, Hüsnü Pasha, the governor Bitlis, warned that the government had to take precautions in order to ease the tension between the Hasenan chiefs, otherwise another big fight between them would break out.[214] The report of the governor of Bitlis revealed that even though Halid and Tahir

[211] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 296.
[212] Although I have examined the Ottoman archives and Kurdish oral sources many times, unfortunately, I could not find any information about Fethullah Bey's children other than his deceased son, Sere. I was also unable to find any of the other names of Rıza Agha's sons other than Köroğlu. For detailed information, see Dengbej Sisa Mecit, *"Bave Koroxli."*
[213] BOA, Y. PRK. UM. 57/31, 16 Ramazan 1319 (December 27, 1901).
[214] BOA, Y. PRK. UM. 57/31, 16 Ramazan 1319 (December 27, 1901), BOA, Y. PRK. UM. 58/71, 19 Safer 1320 (May 28, 1902).

Bey were not officially members of the military class when the fight started between these two Hasenan households, they were not sentenced to prison. Because their father, Yusuf Bey, was a member of the Hamidiye, they were kept out of jail.[215] They were seen as important allies of the Hamidan regime, and their status was different from that of tribal chiefs who did not join the Hamidian regiments. Thus, both sides of the fight were summoned to the military court rather than the civilian court.[216] If the Hamidian regiments had not been formed, Halid and Tahir Bey would not have been brave enough to fight the *torin* family of the Hasenan tribe. The sociopolitical atmosphere, due to the formation of the Hamidian regiments, made them think that their father, Yusuf Bey, was on the same level as Fethullah Bey because the state had given the same post, kaymakam (colonel lieutenant), to both.

M. Zeki Pasha sent a telegram suggesting a way to put an end to the intra-tribal fights within the Hasenan tribe. According to Zeki Pasha, after Yusuf Bey's murder, the conflicts and fights between these two sides began to intensify and the two sides never permanently resolved their problems. Halid Bey, son of Yusuf Bey, claimed the right to become the new commander of the 26th Hamidian regiment. Zeki Pasha asserted that the other Hasenan tribesmen would not accept the authority of any chief but Halid Bey for command of the 26th Hamidian regiment. He also believed that if Halid Bey were not appointed to his father's post, that he would likely continue terrorizing and plundering rural areas. Besides that, M. Zeki Pasha claimed that if Halid Bey were appointed commander of the 26th Hamidian regiment, this would make Fethullah Bey think twice before attacking Halid and Tahir Bey and their households.[217] In this case, Halid Bey saw being part of the Hamidian

[215] BOA, Y. PRK. UM. 57/31, 16 Ramazan 1319 (December 27, 1901).
[216] BOA, Y. PRK. UM. 58/71, 19 Safer 1320 (May 28, 1902).
[217] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 182/26, 25 Safer 1320 (June 3, 1902).

paramilitary forces as an insurance for him and his family members against the aggression of Fethullah Bey and his men. Command of a Hamidian regiment, however, was not meant to be a hereditary post, even though Halid Bey saw it this way. Nevertheless, M. Zeki Pasha suggested that because laws regarding the Hamidian regiments were already not fully enforced and the state needed the support of these tribal elites, it would be appropriate to appoint Halid Bey as commander of the 26th Hamidian regiment.[218] This telegram by M. Zeki Pasha shows how Ottoman state officials could bend the rules.

The fact that Halid Bey was so persistent in claiming that he should be appointed commander of a group of paramilitary forces illustrates how attractive being a part of the Hamidian regiments had become. The Hamidian regime made many Kurdish tribes believe that they could not function without state support because a chief now could not easily lead his tribe without the backing of Istanbul. Many small Kurdish tribes even came under the umbrella of larger tribes like the Hasenan and Hayderan in order to protect themselves from the violence exerted by the Hamidian tribes.[219] From another point, Halid Bey's threat that if he were not appointed commander of the 26th Hamidian regiment the Muş region would become unstable, meant that these Kurdish tribal chieftains were not passive agents who accepted the demands of Istanbul. Rather, they had their own agendas and plans, prioritizing their own interests, thus Kurdish tribal chieftains who joined the

[218] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 182/26, 25 Safer 1320 (June 3, 1902).

[219] Because the Ademan tribesmen of the Diyadin sub-district of the Beyazıd district wanted to protect themselves from major fights, the Ademan chief accepted the authority of the Hayderan tribe while different sub-chiefs of the Hayderan tribe were involved in internal conflicts and fights. Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 308. The striking point here is that the Ademan tribe was also a Hamidian tribe, but because they were a small tribe and did not have enough men to form more than one regiment, they needed to ally with the larger Hayderan tribe. This illustrates that the order that the Hamidian regiments were supposed to bring to the region was a distant possibility. Similarly, Acemzade Reşid Bey from Malazgird allied with the Hasenan tribe, even though they did not have a particularly trusting relationship. BOA, DH. ŞFR. 204/143, 24 Zilhicce 1312 (June 18, 1895).

Hamidian ranks could pressure Istanbul to cede to their demands. By June 1902, Fethullah, Halid, and Tahir Bey were informed that the Sultan had pardoned them, thus they would not be prosecuted for their past crimes.[220] This incident between the Hasenan chiefs exemplifies how lesser chiefs who got their power from the Hamidian system within the Hasenan tribe began to challenge the authority of the main chief.

Another important point here is that those tribal chiefs who succeeded in establishing relations with the Hamidian regime, particularly M. Zeki Pasha, were able to subvert the traditional hierarchy of the tribe and challenge superior chiefs. In the case of the Hasenan tribe, there were many examples of sub-chiefs rising above their station after the formation of the Hamidian tribal units. For example, Ayaz and Dürri Aghas of the Hasenan were described as top-level chiefs when they were invited to Istanbul in 1893 but we do not see them forming any Hamidian regiments,[221] even though Halid Agha, a lesser chief, was appointed as the new leader of the 26th Hamidian regiment by M. Zeki Pasha.[222] This indicates that some of the Hasenan chiefs who used to have higher positions within the tribe were not able to maintain a strong enough relationship with the Hamidian regime to stay in power. At the same time, some lesser chiefs, including Taceddin, Rıza, and Süleyman were able to rise within the tribal hierarchy. Their dramatic rise within the Hasenan tribe illustrates how the Ottoman state began to establish itself as a force on its eastern periphery which could change the dynamics and hierarchy within a tribe. In this manner, the establishment of the Hamidian regiments did not ease the tension

[220] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 182/26, 25 Safer 1320 (June 3, 1902).
[221] Although Avyarov refers to Ayaz Agha as the commander of the 30th Hamidian Regiment, Avyarov was not sure about this information.
[222] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 182/26, 25 Safer 1320 (June 3, 1902) and BOA, Y. PRK. ASK.70/96, 5 Şaban 1310 (February 22, 1893).

between the chiefs of the Hasenan tribe. On the contrary, competition and rivalry between the Hasenan chiefs in order to assume positions of power both within the tribal hierarchy and the Hamidian regiments became common and normal during the Hamidian era, indicating that all these conflicts of interest and rivalries were historical rather than ontological. In other words, all these conflicts and fights had reasons and were conditional.

The fights between the Hasenan chiefs exemplified that the Hasenan chiefs were attacking each other's villages and places where salt was mined. They intended to carry out such raids on villages in the hopes of undermining the authority of the chief of these particular villages.[223] The Hasenan chiefs who were at war with each other thought that if they could scare the peasants by attacking each other's villages and burning fields, they would tarnish the reputation of the rival chief. In this way, they would be seen as the dominant authority in the area. In such attacks, these chiefs tried to burn fields and damage salt mines. The economy of the Muş region was based on animal husbandry. Hay and salt were both crucial products for the nutrition of sheep, thus the protection of salt mines and hay fields were two vital issues for these chiefs in order to maintain their authority. I may even go so far as to say that hay fields and salt mines were direct representations of the wealth and power of a Kurdish chief.

Yener Koç argues that the late nineteenth century witnessed the commercialization of pastoral production resulting in unending rivalries between Kurdish tribal chiefs.[224] In this manner, these intra-tribal fights led to great losses of life and property in the Muş region resulting in huge economic destruction for the region. However, Yıldız Palace did not take any judiciary actions against the Kurdish

[223] BOA, Y. EE. 139/46, 25 Safer 1311 (September 7, 1893).
[224] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 274-275.

tribes that joined the Hamidian regiments when bloody fights broke out between them. This was certainly true during this period in the case of the Hasenan tribe. M. Zeki Pasha adopted more traditional methods and utilized customary tribal laws to put an end to fights between the Hasenan chiefs. Instead of utilizing the court system and punishing the Hamidian leaders who committed acts of violence, he negotiated with them and tried to encourage them to settle their conflicts amongst themselves, though the Ottoman state still claimed hegemony over Kurdish tribes. In this way, the state could be flexible and pragmatic in solving problems. This approach was in line with Ottoman policies toward conflict in other geographies where they embraced the philosophy of "let bygones be bygones."[225] By embracing this method, the Ottoman state encouraged local powers to solve their own problems and the state held an observer role. However, in the case of the eastern regions, including the Muş district, as the next section shows us, Ottoman subjects needed the state to be a strong power and bring peace and security. Yet, it seems that violence and crime brought more material gain. For this reason, Rıza Agha, Fethullah Bey, and other Hasenan chiefs would be the initiators of collective violence in the Ottoman East for years to come.

In sum, the first part of the chapter examines the fights and conflicts between the two households of the Hasenan tribe. While the Household of Eshadiya first under Yusuf Bey and then his son and successor Halid Bey attempted to gain more power and control within the tribal hierarchy of the Hasenan, the Household of Emer under the leadership of Fethullah Bey tried to maintain their status and power as he came from the *torin* family. The important of this part is that the sub-chiefs did not shy away from changing the tribal hierarchy of the Hasenan, and local politics in the

[225] Deringil, *Simgeden Millete,* 211.

region began to change, causing many intra-tribal fights. The violence was now more systematic and common than ever before.

3.5 Inter-tribal fights between the Hasenan, Sepki, and Hayderan tribes

The Hasenan chiefs not only fought amongst themselves, but also engaged in conflict with other neighboring tribes, including the Sepki and Hayderan tribes, throughout the Hamidian period. The main motivation behind these conflicts and fights was to gain control of villages and pasturelands so that these Kurdish chiefs could receive revenue from these villages. Indeed, these Kurdish tribes had been in conflict with each other before the formation of the Hamidian regiments. For example, the Hasenan and Sepki tribes had a major battle resulting in the death of 16 people from the Hasenan and 20 tribesmen from the Sepki tribe in 1869.[226] However, the Hamidian officials, including Zeki Pasha, thought that the establishment of the Hamidian regiments would minimize intra and inter-tribal fights. On the contrary, these tribal fights and disputes continued and even increased after the establishment of the Hamidian regiments. In this way, the law and order that the Hamidian government intended to bring to the Ottoman East did not come. In the second part of this chapter, I will focus on the power struggle between the Hasenan, Sepki, and Hayderan tribes. The main point here is to illustrate that the establishment of the Hamidiye did not put an end to violent conflict between these three neighboring tribes. Rather, strong tribal figures, including Fethullah Bey and Kör (Blind) Hüseyin Agha (as he was known before, he was later given the rank of Pasha, for more on these titles see the appendix), would rise to power and would appropriate the lands and properties of those who they considered weak and powerless.

[226] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 436/35, 11 Zilkade 1285 (February 23, 1869).

In this chaotic atmosphere, Fethullah Bey and Blind Hüseyin Pasha were two important rivals indeed. Both Hamidian chiefs were extremely active in acquiring the lands, properties, and livestock of weaker tribes. They also had a close relationship with their patron, M. Zeki Pasha. Therefore, they seemed free to monopolize the use of violence in the rural areas between the Muş and Patnos regions. To understand better the relationship between the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes, we should first understand the rise of Blind Hüseyin Agha within the Hayderan tribe and then unpack why these two neighboring Hamidian tribes kept fighting during the Hamidian era. On the other hand, the Sepki tribe was also involved in these fights because it was also a part of the Hamidian regiments. The Sepki chiefs were also in pursuit of lands, thus conflict with the neighboring Hasenan and Hayderan tribes became inevitable. Therefore, by the middle of the 1890s, the Hasenan tribe was in ongoing conflict with the other two neighboring tribes (see figure 3), and this made the atmosphere of region between the Muş and Beyazıd districts more chaotic and violent. Particularly, the conditions for both Armenian and Kurdish peasants, who were the majority in this region, were extremely difficult because of these conflicts between these three neighboring tribes.



Figure 3. Territorial map of the major tribes in Northeastern Anatolia

3.6 The rise of Kör (Blind) Hüseyin Pasha

Hüseyin Agha was a sub-chief of the large Hayderan tribe, located in the area between the Muradiye, Erciş, and Patnos districts. The Hayderan tribe was a border tribe with sections in both Ottoman and Iranian territory. For this reason, Hamidian officials believed that incorporating them into the Hamidian regiments would bring them closer to the Ottoman state, making the Ottoman border with Iran more secure. In this regard, Hüseyin Agha became one of the first tribal chiefs to join the Hamidian regiments in 1891. Blind Hüseyin Agha, along with many other Kurdish tribal chiefs from different tribes, went to İstanbul in 1891 to attend the special induction ceremonies. When he returned from the capital, he was now Blind Hüseyin Pasha (brigade general).[227] Following Hüseyin Agha's induction into the Hamidian organization, he also became the Kol Müdürü (director of security) of the village of Patnos. Along with his two cousins, Hacı Temir and Emin Agha, Blind Hüseyin

[227] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 137; Özcoşar and Ertekin, "Sultan ve Aşiret," 28-29.

Pasha became one of the most influential tribal chiefs within the Hayderan tribe.[228] In this manner, when the state made Blind Hüseyin Pasha the director of security of Patnos, the Hamidian regime hoped to make the Hayderan settle on the Ottoman side of the border, delineating their territory and minimizing their movement to the Iranian territory. This policy of territoriality embraced by the Hamidian regime was not unique to the Hamidian era. As mentioned in the second chapter, Tanzimat-era officials also embraced the same policy of settlement and territoriality because tribesmen were seen as important human resources for the Ottoman state to tax and draft into the army. When tribes settled, the state could also more easily expand its power into the tribal landscape.[229]

As in the case of the Hasenan sub-chiefs, the case of Blind Hüseyin Pasha also illustrates that Hamidiye as a paramilitary organization paved the way for lesser Kurdish chiefs to rise easily within the tribal hierarchy. He engaged in a power struggle with his two cousins, Hacı Temir and Emin Agha, in order to assume the main leadership of the tribe. By the 1890s, he managed to become tribe leader, but Hacı Temir and Emin Agha were at least able to get some regions under their control.[230] In this sense, as in the case of the Hasenan tribe, the Hayderan chiefs also fought amongst themselves in order to achieve higher positions both in the hierarchy of their tribe and in the Hamidiye organization. In this regard, the establishment of the Hamidian regiments was one of the primary factors behind the intensification of

[228] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 136; Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 319; Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 282.
[229] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 151.
[230] The struggles between the Hayderan leaders were very similar to those of the Hasenan chiefs. The Hayderan leaders, Hacı Temir and Emin Agha, did not want the balance of power to change to their disadvantage. For this reason, especially in the 1890s when the regiments were formed, leadership conflict between the three big leaders of the Hayderanlı tribe became common, causing the destruction of many villages. Hacı Temir and Emin Agha formed an alliance in order to curb the power of Blind Hüseyin Pasha. This shows that Kurdish tribal leaders sometimes did not comply with state orders when to do so conflicted with their agendas and plans. Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 294-309.

intra and inter-tribal fights. Blind Hüseyin Pasha was an example of the rapid rise of a Kurdish tribal chief due to his connections with Yıldız Palace.

3.7 "Local" Hamidian chiefs

The Sepki tribe was the other strong tribe located in the region between Karakilise, Eleşkird, Tutak, and Hamur. The Sepki tribe was the northeastern neighbor of the Hasenan tribe, and the first, second, and third Hamidian Cavalry Regiments were made up of the Sepki tribe.[231] In other words, the Sepki tribe also enjoyed the protection afforded by M. Zeki Pasha. In this regard, the Sepki tribal chiefs, including Hüseyin Agha, Hasan Bey, and Hacı Yusuf Pasha, were attempting to expand and consolidate their power in their respective regions.[232] To put it another way, these Sepki leaders attempted to gain special privileges by joining the Hamidian regiments, enabling them to take over the property, livestock, and lands of neighboring tribes. It is also possible that since the Sepki tribe was geographically located between the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes (see figure 3), the Sepki tribal chiefs wanted to become part of the Hamidian regiments in order to protect themselves and their tribesmen from possible future aggression from the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes. However, after their participation in the Hamidian regiments, Sepki tribal chiefs also used violence as a tactic in their daily affairs. In this manner, all these tribal chiefs appeared to be usurpers who used violence to appropriate land, property, and livestock.

Hüseyin Pasha was in a different position from other tribal chiefs, including Fethullah Bey of the Hasenan tribe, within the Hamidian paramilitary organization

[231] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 315.
[232] BOA, Y. MTV. 55/29, 10 Rabiulevvel 1309 (October 14, 1891).

because he had a more intimate relationship with M. Zeki Pasha. He also had stronger connections with Yıldız Palace, highlighting his superior position amongst the other Hamidian tribal chiefs. This gave him greater control over the region between the Muş and Bayezid districts. Generally, scholarship has explored three important Hamidian tribal chiefs who were the most powerful tribal figures: Blind Hüseyin Pasha of the Hayderan, İbrahim Pasha of the Milli tribe, and Mustafa Agha of the Miran tribe.[233] It appears that these three powerful tribal chiefs were the first to join the Hamidian ranks before other Kurdish chiefs saw the benefits of the Hamidiye, thus their positions were stronger within the Hamidian organization.

However, apart from these three figures, there were other important Hamidian chieftains who held incredible power in their respective regions. In this regard, these strong "local"[234] Hamidian chieftains, including Fethullah Bey, should not be underestimated. It appears that these local Hamidian chieftains did not have any direct link with the capital, but they received the support of M. Zeki Pasha. Therefore, they were also trying to strengthen their position by fighting each other, or, sometimes, they plundered and intimidated peasants living in the villages of the enemy tribal chief in the hopes of enhancing their positions in their respective regions. In this regard, Fethullah Bey and his brother Rıza Agha were extremely influential "local" Hamidian chieftains, though they probably did not have the power

[233] For detailed information about these three important Hamidian leaders, see Klein, *The Margin of Empire;* Süphandağ, *Büyük Osmanlı Entrikası;* Jongerden, "Elite Encounters of a Violent Kind," 55-84.

[234] By local, I refer to strong Hamidian figures who did not cultivate direct personal relationships with Marshall Zeki Pasha but still enjoyed his protection. They would prove to be powerful in their particular areas. On the other hand, the other three important figures of the Hamidian regiments were the ones that were more integrated into state networks. We often see their influence in foreign sources as well. In addition, among these three names, Milli İbrahim Pasha and Hüseyin Pasha were able to establish closer contacts with the palace and, at a certain point, communicate with the palace without Zeki Pasha. By 1901, one British Consul noted that İbrahim Pasha ruled his own empire around Urfa. Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 99. For this reason, I prefer to refer to Kurdish tribal leaders like Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha as "local," indicating that they did not have a direct connection with Yıldız Palace. However, these local Hamidian tribal chiefs still engaged in conflict with the other three major names of the Hamidian regiments when it was in their interest.

and influence that Blind Hüseyin Pasha had in the broader region. Yet, they were not passive figures who were completely under the authority of the government. Rather, both Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha had the power to shape local political and social affairs in the Muş region. Like the other big three of the Hamidian regiments, Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha had their own agendas and monopolized violence within their territories by plundering land and property and intimidating peasants. In this sense, Fethullah Bey did not see Blind Hüseyin Pasha as his superior even though he had a closer relationship with M. Zeki Pasha. In this regard, I argue that the rapid rise of Kör Hüsayin Pasha within the Hamidian regiments was not a guarantee that other local Kurdish chiefs would obey him. There were some other important local dynamics that shaped the relationship between Kurdish tribes. In this regard, I believe that there was a personal competition between Fethullah Bey and Blind Hüseyin Pasha, causing the tribal fights between these two powerful tribes to escalate. The bloodshed between the ruling family of the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes was also an important factor which escalated the tension between these two tribes. I will show in the following lines that the conflicts between the Hasenan, Hayderan, and Sepki tribes resulted partly from the fact that these Hamidian chiefs were not willing to give up their own interests even though they did not align with the expectations of the Ottoman military.

Şakir Pasha's telegram to Yıldız Palace in the fall of 1895 remarked that Hüseyin Pasha of the Hayderan displayed bad behavior by attacking the villages of Erciş and Adilcevaz districts. Armenians were the majority in these villages, and their property and animals were stolen. For this reason, these Armenian peasants sent petitions to Şakir Pasha indicating that their conditions were terrible, and they could

not find any security.[235] In this regard, the telegram from Şakir Pasha shows us that material and financial motivations were the primary reason behind why Hüseyin Pasha organized such an attack on the Armenian villages of the Erciş, Adilcevaz, Malazgird, and Hınıs regions. Additionally, we can see that these Armenian peasants were able to find ways to reach Hamidian officials for help. However, the second part of the telegram is interesting because it reported that while Hüseyin Pasha attacked these Armenian villages, the other two "local" powerful Hamidian commanders from the Hasenan tribe, Fethullah Bey and Taceddin Bey, tried to defend the villages in the Malazgird and Hınıs sub-districts against Hüseyin Pasha. Şakir Pasha criticized Hüseyin Pasha's actions, while he praised Fethullah and Taceddin Bey, and both tribal chiefs were awarded with silver medals.[236]

The telegram illustrates that these Hamidian chiefs' desires came before the interests of the state. There was no absolute trust between the Ottoman state and the tribes. In this manner, Fethullah Bey and Taceddin Bey organized their own regiments to protect villages in their respective domains against the aggression of Blind Hüseyin Pasha, which is why Şakir Pasha believed that the Hamidian regiments could be utilized to defend villages from the aggression of other chiefs. Although Blind Hüseyin Pasha was not punished because of his raids on the Armenian villages, both Fethullah Bey and Taceddin Bey were rewarded with silver medals. This indicates that there was not a strong punishment mechanism to prevent Hamidian chiefs from brutalizing people in the region. In reality, no one even expected that Blind Hüseyin Pasha would be court martialed because he had strong connections with M. Zeki Pasha. In addition, he was the main leader of the Hayderan

[235] BOA, Y. PRK. MYD. 17/27, 19 Cemaziyelevvel 1313 (November 7, 1895).
[236] BOA, Y. PRK. MYD. 17/27, 19 Cemazeyilevvel 1313 (November 7, 1895), BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 32/61, 13 Cemazeyilevvel 1313 (November 1, 1895).

tribe, one of the most populous tribes in Northeastern Anatolia, so it was not easy for ordinary people to testify against him.[237] However, the stance of Fethullah Bey and Taceddin Bey against Blind Hüseyin Pasha shows us that "local" Hamidian chiefs' role in the daily politics of the region should not be underestimated. These "local" Hamidian chiefs had the power to oppose strong Hamidian tribal leaders if they could ally together.

The Hasenan, Hayderan, and Sepki tribes shared pastures in close quarters, making them rivals for resources. When one of them weakened, this opened up an opportunity for the other two. In 1893, Hüseyin Tahsin from the Sepki tribe, the commander of the 3rd Hamidian regiment, claimed that after Sofi Pasha and Fethullah Bey had already attacked their village, now Blind Hüseyin Pasha of the Hayderan tribe intended to raid them. In his petition, Hüseyin Tahsin Agha did not explain why they attacked his village or whether they had united against the Sepki tribe or not. However, it was obvious that he was pleading for the state to send regular army units for help.[238] This fight between the Hasenan, Sepki, and Hayderan tribes resulted in the death of many tribesmen and the theft of many animals. The theft of animals and the burning of fields were the most common result of the fights between these neighboring tribes. Even though all these figures mentioned in the petition were important names in the Hamidian organization, the state could not prevent them from engaging in this kind of conflict. This shows us that these Hamidian chieftains had their own goals and agendas based on concrete material gains.

Another report from the Hınıs district in May 1898 indicated that twenty horsemen attacked the Çevirmen village in Hınıs and stole three thousand animals.

[237] Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 138.
[238] BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 27/111, 19 Rabiulevvel 1311 (September 30, 1893).

Because of the fight between the Hasenan and Sepki tribes, nine men from the Hasenan died and five were wounded. The Sepki tribe also lost three men and two tribesmen were badly injured.[239] It is clear that the main motivation behind these attacks and conflicts was to plunder animals and moveable property from weaker villages. Also, seizing village lands and plundering property were effective ways of intimidating peasants and convincing them that they needed the protection of the stronger Hamidian chiefs. In this regard, violence against the peasantry, irrespective of their religion, was a method to send a strong message to the rival tribe that it had control of the attacked village.

In the summer of 1900, another major fight broke out between these three neighboring tribes due to the theft of animals and goods by Hasenan tribe members. State officials reported that they were able to recover the animals and goods that were stolen. Eight tribesmen from the Hasenan tribe were killed and nine men were wounded. Both the Hayderan and Sepki tribe lost three tribesmen. Also, those who were involved in this fight were taken to the Hamidian headquarters in Malazgird.[240] As these reports show, most of the raids and attacks resulted in the appropriation of lands and the theft of moveable property and goods, causing peasants to leave their villages in order to save their lives. On the other hand, when it came to clashes between the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes, I should highlight that the blood feuds between these two tribes should not be underestimated. As discussed earlier, Halid Agha, the father of Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha, was killed by Hayderan tribesmen, so the members of the *torin* family of the Hasenan tribe did not have a good relationship with the ruling family of the Hayderan tribe. Due to both this slightly indirect blood feud and the ongoing competition between the Hasenan and Hayderan

[239] BOA, Y. PRK. A. 11/93, 29 Zilhicce 1315 (May 21, 1898).
[240] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 161/165, 5 Safer 1318 (June 4, 1900).

tribes, an alliance between Fethullah Bey and Blind Hüseyin Pasha would not be possible, despite the fact that they were both part of the Hamidian organization. It was thus easier for the ruling members of the Hayderan tribe to make alliances with the Sepki tribe. For example, in the summer of 1900, the Hayderan and Sepki tribes together attacked the villages under the control of Süleyman Agha, a major in the 27th Hamidian regiment. The attack resulted in the death of eight tribesmen from the Hasenan tribe while nine were wounded. Also, more than a thousand of Süleyman Agha's animals were stolen. Since these three tribes were part of the Hamidian regiments, their case had to be delivered to the Fourth Ottoman army commander rather than the governor of Bitlis.[241] Later the major leaders of these three tribes were called to the headquarters of the Hamidian regiments in Malazgird, where M. Zeki Pasha forced them to reconcile.[242]

It is obvious that when M. Zeki Pasha dealt with the Hamidian chiefs, he embraced temporary fixes over long-term solutions. For this reason, the problem between these powerful Hamidian chiefs was not solved in line with the rule of law. Because these Hamidian chiefs were under the protection of M. Zeki Pasha, the state did not use its judiciary power to punish them. M. Zeki Pasha even bypassed the regulations of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiment. According to the regulations, Hamidian unit commanders who were involved in fights and conflict for their own interests had to be tried in the regular nizamiye courts.[243] Yet Hamidian chiefs, including Fethullah and Blind Hüseyin Pasha, did not worry about prosecution because they knew that they were an integral part of the Hamidian regime in the eastern regions. Both tribal leaders had established their power in their respective

[241] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 87/40, 11 Safer 1318 (June 10, 1900), BOA, DH. ŞFR. 247/95, 28 Muharrem 1318 (May 28, 1900).
[242] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 90/5, 10 Rabiulevvel 1318 (July 8, 1900).
[243] Kodaman, "Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları," 471.

areas, and their sphere of influence was not limited to the areas where they physically stayed. For example, the case of the Ahlat region in the fourth chapter of this study shows us the operative and functional power of the Hasenan tribe in the Bitlis province. In this way, it was not easy to limit the power and mobility of these two chiefs during the Hamidian era.

The first quarter of the twentieth century also witnessed bloody fights between these neighboring tribes in the triangle of Patnos, Malazgird, and Eleşkird. 1901 and 1902 were the most intense years of conflict between the Hasenan and Sepki tribes. I argue that after a decade as a part of the Hamidian regiments, the Hasenan tribal leaders were at the height of their power, which may have made them feel invincible because whatever crimes they committed, they were not properly punished by the state authorities. Therefore, the years between 1900 and 1903 might have been the golden years for the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes. Just one year after M. Zeki Pasha had these Hasenan and Sepki chiefs make peace, Hasenan tribesmen attacked the Karaağac village of the Sepki tribe. In September 1901, the Hasenan chiefs, Süleyman, Halil, Mustafa, and Cündi gathered approximately 150 horsemen and attacked the Karaağac village of the Sepki tribe in Tutak. The Hasenan tribe lost four tribesmen and the Sepki lost three. The report sent by the governor of Erzurum to M. Zeki Pasha stated that both tribes were participants in the Hamidian regiments, so the Fourth Ottoman army was responsible for handling both the Hasenan and Sepki tribesmen in this case.[244] The participation of Süleyman Agha was important here because, before this fight broke out, Sepki tribesmen had attacked villages under his authority. This demonstrates that, apart from financial motivations, retaliation and blood feuds were also important motivations behind this aggression. Yet economic

[244] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 174/17, 24 Cemazeyilevvel 1319 (September 8, 1901).

motives and the hope of material gains were still the most important factors in the violence between these three neighboring tribes in the northeastern region. In this sense, I argue that the violence between these three neighboring tribes should be historicized rather than considered normal, intrinsic, or expected. In this chaotic atmosphere, there was a process of collective use of violence based not in primordial clashes but in gaining material wealth, bringing about instability, social turmoil, and plundering.

Furthermore, many incidents between the Hamidian chieftains illustrate that Hamidian regiments were not monolithic units in which all commanders obeyed the authority of the main leader. On the contrary, a Hamidian major could act completely independently from what his lieutenant colonel ordered. In the case of the Hasenan raids on the village of the Karaağac, major Süleyman collected other majors within the 27th Hamidian regiment to seize the properties and goods of this particular village of the Sepki tribe. We do not, however, see the name of Fethullah Bey, the main commander of the 27th Hamidian regiment, in this document.[245] It is not clear whether or not these majors organized this attack without the consent of Fethullah Bey, but the result illustrates that these majors cared little for military hierarchy. Rather, there was a complex network of agency illustrating that not just Hamidian colonels but also Hamidian majors were actors who made influential decisions. In this sense, the following chapter will show us that Rıza Agha, the major of the 27th Hamidian regiment and the brother of Fethullah Bey, along with several other Hasenan majors within the Hamidian organization became very influential actors during the Hamidian era.

[245] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 174/17, 24 Cemazeyilevvel 1319 (September 8, 1901).

At the same time, fights continued between these three neighboring tribes. In fall of 1906, another conflict broke out between the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes. This time, each side gathered six hundred cavalry members. The governor of Erzurum sent a telegram to the district governor of Beyazıd stressing that the mufti (religious leader) of Tutak and several influential neutral men had to be sent to Tutak in order to solve the problems between these tribesmen. The governor of Erzurum warned both Fethullah Bey and Blind Hüseyin Pasha that they must ease the tension between their tribes. Hüseyin Pasha reported, however, that Fethullah Bey and his camp stole eight hundred sheep from him, and he demanded that his sheep be returned. In this case, the Fourth Ottoman army intervened and ensured that Blind Hüseyin Pasha got his sheep back.[246] It seems that the unlawful activities of these tribes did not stop even after they became members of the Ottoman military by joining the Hamidian units. The incident between these two neighboring tribes demonstrates that they had consistent conflict like sheep theft and field burning, and these could easily turn into larger inter-tribal violence. The state's approach to stopping this aggression was clearly ineffective as bloody conflict continued. These examples indicate that the Fourth Ottoman army commander, M. Zeki Pasha, was the only real authority who could solve the conflicts amongst the Kurdish tribes. At the same time, the regional governors did not take the initiative to punish Kurdish tribal leaders who engaged in these fights. In this regard, Marshal Zeki Pasha embraced customary tribal laws to reconcile the tribal chiefs because he did not want to lose their support.

In December 1906, a report by the Bitlis governor, Ömer Bey, indicated that the Hasenan tribesmen raided a caravan owned by Blind Hüseyin Pasha in the Ahlat

[246] BOA, DH. TMIK. M.231/27, 21 Şaban 1324 (October 10, 1906).

sub-district of the Bitlis province. After receiving this news, Hüseyin Pasha mobilized his cavalry and opened fire on the caravan of the Hasenan tribe in the Topvanın and Kığrış villages of Ahlat. This attack, led by Hüseyin Pasha, resulted in the death of two men. Hüseyin Pasha also seized one hundred oxen along with other goods from the caravan. Both the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes mobilized two hundred cavalrymen and began to terrorize the villages of the Ahlat region.[247] The reports revealed that the Bitlis governor took no action to prevent the Hayderan cavalrymen from entering his territory. The number of Ottoman military personal was not enough to stop the aggression of both the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes. M. Zeki Pasha was the only one who could ease the tension between these neighboring tribes as governors and other state officials, like the governor of Bitlis, were hardly respected by these tribal chiefs. There were no clear signs of any further investigations regarding these attacks by the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes in the region. Ahlat is 95 km away from Patnos, which was the major hub of Kör Hüseyin Pasha, and it is almost 55 km away from Malazgird, where the Hasenan leaders resided. The important point here is that geography was no barrier for the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes when they wanted to attack each other.

3.8 Conclusion

After the destruction of the Kurdish emirates, Kurdish tribal chiefs became the new major socio-political actors in the region, taking the role of intermediary between the Ottoman center and the local people in the Ottoman East. After Abdulhamid II came to power in 1876, he began to change strict Tanzimat policies by embracing a more Islamist discourse and newer policies. Unlike his predecessors, the Sultan utilized his

[247] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 232/36, 16 Ramazan 1324 (November 3, 1906).

prestige and personal charisma in order to build direct contact with his subjects living in the periphery. In this vein, he built a strong relationship with certain Sunni Kurdish tribes by establishing the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments in 1891. The formation of the Hamidian regiments was not simply a military project but also a sociopolitical imperial Ottoman project intending to incorporate Kurdish tribesmen into the state system more than ever. The main goal in establishing the Hamidian regiments was to make Kurdish tribesmen loyal subjects of the state so that the mobility of Kurdish tribesmen would decrease. However, Kurdish tribal chiefs had their own local policies and agendas, thus what the Hamidian regime expected of them, and what these tribal chiefs did, were often quite different, revealing that there was a state of illusion.

There were two parts of this chapter. In the first section, I focus on the leadership struggle between two important households of the Hasenan tribe. In this way, I illustrate that after the creation of the Hamidian regiments, fierce struggles and disputes in the hopes of assuming the highest position within the Hamidian regiments and the tribe occurred between different households of the Hasenan tribe. The state became a part of the social structure of the Hasenan tribe, upending the traditional hierarchy. Before the beginning of the Hamidian regiments, it would have been unthinkable for Yusuf Bey or his sons to try to violently challenge Fethullah Bey and the *torin* family. But because the Ottoman state had given Yusuf the leading position in a Hamidian regiment, his connection to the state structure emboldened him to fight for power beyond his traditional place in the tribe.

The state had now inserted itself into the social structure of the Kurdish tribe. In the previous generation, with Rıdvan and Kulihan, the social glue of the tribe had held and the hierarchy had been maintained, even in the face of betrayal. But in

Fethullah's generation the state's penetration into the social fabric of the tribe would be so deep that longstanding hierarchies would not be enough to maintain tribal unity. Once the traditional hierarchy had been fragmented, there would be no removing the state from the tribe. The sub-chiefs who had less power within the tribe found a way to compete with the *torin* family of the Hasenan. In a general way, the formation of the Hamidian units paved the way for disintegration and factionalism within large tribal entities. The chiefs of each section within the Hasenan tribe could build contact with high-ranking Ottoman military officers, including M. Zeki Pasha, in order to eliminate their rivals and assume higher positions within their respective Hamidian regiments.[248] In this manner, the tribal hierarchy and the structure of the Hasenan tribe were damaged after the formation of the Hamidian regiments.

In the second part of this chapter, I analyzed the fights and conflicts between three neighboring tribes, the Hasenan, the Hayderan and the Sepki. These were three important tribes which were very close to each other in terms of location. Therefore, the proximity of the hinterlands and operational areas where tribesmen affiliated with these three tribes roamed and grazed their flocks were the reasons behind some of their conflicts. These three tribes had conflicting material interests, such as conflict over land and livestock, leading them to become violent towards each other. Another important factor that triggered the fights between these three neighboring tribes was the fact that they knew they would not be punished severely because they were part of the Hamidian regiments, indicating that Hamidian tribal chiefs were considered part of the military class and were tried in military courts. Temporary solutions did

[248] Even though I could not find any documents which point to a direct connection between the Hasenan leaders and M. Zeki Pasha, it is very likely that M. Zeki Pasha made contact with Fethullah Bey because the Hasenan tribe formed five regiments and their headquarters was also one of the centers of the Hamidian regiments. M. Zeki Pasha was also a figure who had a patron-client relationship with certain important Kurdish tribal chiefs.

not work to stop fights between these three neighboring tribes, and governors of the provinces and other civil and military Ottoman officials did not have enough power to punish Hamidian tribesmen without consulting M. Zeki Pasha. M. Zeki Pasha was the most influential figure in the region, and he had a direct patron-client relationship with most of the Hamidian tribal chiefs. My goal is to illustrate that, unlike what the Hamidian regime had envisioned, the formation of the Hamidian regiments did not prevent Kurdish tribes from having intra and inter-tribal fights. In this sense, the formation of Hamidian regiments was an important factor behind the climate of violence and terror initiated by Kurdish tribesmen in the late nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 4

HASENAN VIOLENCE AND THE PEASANTRY

4.1 Introduction

Even though the Ottoman state encouraged Kurdish chiefs to adopt a more sedentary and agriculturalist lifestyle, they remained semi-nomadic. For this reason, investing in grazing lands and pasturelands for their flocks and supplying meat and dairy products for city-dwellers were two critical economic activities for tribesmen during the Hamidian era. Kurdish tribal leaders engaged in the sheep trade and the production of meat and dairy products, indicating that they continued their pastoral way of life during the Hamidian period. Nevertheless, there were many Kurdish chiefs who were salaried officials of the state and many of them were also tax-farmers. Further, the direct correlation between being a tax farmer and a leading tribal chief in a Hamidan regiment is undeniable. The process wherein Kurdish tribal chiefs became part of the local economic and administrative system accelerated in the 1890s and early twentieth century. Yaşar Tolga Cora defines this period as the "New Imperial Order."[249] In this new imperial system, the Hamidian chiefs were the guardians of the Hamidian regime in the Ottoman East. These Kurdish chiefs were both local state officials and representatives of their respective tribes, blurring the line between the state and society.

In this sense, this chapter first analyzes the importance of Hamidian Kurdish chiefs, including the Hasenan chiefs, as tax farmers in the Ottoman East. This chapter also illustrates that the Ottoman state was not as weak as one might think during the Hamidian era. Even though sources regarding the late Hamidian era

[249] Cora, "Transforming Erzurum/Karin," 156-157.

highlight the shortage of the state's military power in the Ottoman East, I argue that the Hamidian regime held a discursive power, making the state a strong actor capable of changing the direction of events. As Albert Hourani elegantly emphasizes, rulers from the city had the forethought to use the discourse of Islam against tribe.[250] In this sense, I argue that the Hamidian regime made the choice to share "legitimate" state power with the tribes in order to use force in cooperation with the Hamidian militias in the region. Elke Hartmann underlines that the Ottoman state was not as powerless as one might imagine in the late nineteenth century. Instead, in its relationship with the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs, the state had a political will, helping tribal leaders strengthen their authority at the expense of the peasantry in the region.[251] Later, I discuss the relationship between the Hasenan leaders and Armenian and Kurdish peasants in the region. In this regard, these weaker groups of peasants were harassed by the Hamidian chiefs, indicating a chaotic and insecure atmosphere in the region during the Hamidian era. Systematic and large raiding campaigns in bigger villages, where there were large tracts of fertile agricultural and pasture lands, were the new reality of the Hamidian era in the Muş region. While the raids in Ahlat show how the operative power of the Hasenan extended into the city center for the first time, the Derik case is the best example that illustrates the evolution of ordinary tribal raids into more intense and larger raiding campaigns in order to obtain "booty." For this reason, I do not consider these attacks in Ahlat and Derik to be ordinary raids carried out by a group of nomadic Kurdish people. Rather, these raids were large campaigns aimed to accumulate wealth and make ordinary Kurdish tribesmen more loyal to and dependent on their leaders. The Hasenan leaders were the leading instigators of this chaotic atmosphere in the Muş district, and their main goal was to accumulate wealth

[250] Hourani, "Conclusions," 310.
[251] Hartmann, "The Central State in the Borderlands," 185.

as much as possible. As a result, this chapter shows the peak of the Hasenan chiefs' power, specifically Rıza Agha, and to what extent these Hasenan chiefs used their Hamidian image in order to strengthen their authority in their respective regions.

4.2 The mixed lifestyle of Kurdish tribes

Not only did the Hamidian chieftains have political power, but also their power stemmed from the extent to which they engaged in economic activities in their respective regions. As is mentioned before, tribal leaders emerged as new socio-political actors in the Ottoman East in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, long before the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, many Kurdish tribal chiefs were appointed by the Ottoman state as sub-district governors in their respective regions during the Tanzimat era. In the case of the Hasenan tribe, Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha were appointed as official governors of their sub-districts,[252] and thus were salaried officials of the state. However, when these Kurdish chiefs became the salaried officials of the state, their salaries did not come from the central or local treasuries. The aghas' income came from ordinary tribesmen.[253] Ordinary tribesmen were also responsible for paying their ağnam rüsumu (sheep taxes) and kışlak rüsumu (wintering taxes) while they continued their pastoral way of life and transhumance.[254] When Kurdish tribal chiefs became village headmen, they recognized the power of the state, revealing that they became the state apparatus that represented the Ottoman state in the periphery. By becoming state representatives, these Kurdish chiefs obtained powerful positions to maintain strict authority over the villages they controlled. In this regard, the method of using Kurdish chiefs as salaried

[252] For those sources see the second chapter.
[253] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 185, 203.
[254] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 191.

officials had its roots in the Tanzimat era. Additionally, because ordinary Kurdish tribesmen did not quit their nomadic lifestyle, grazing flocks and raising and trading livestock were two crucial ways of generating income for both tribesmen and tribal chiefs as state officials during the Tanzimat era.

I argue that the Hamidian regime supported Kurdish chiefs not only as military figures but also as economic figures. In this manner, the Ottoman state not only overlooked abuses by Kurdish chiefs during their tax farming tenure, but also financially supported them. According to a government report dated to 1894, the Hamidian government, in encouraging Hamidian Kurdish chiefs to breed animals, had Ziraat Bank provide financial support for Hamidian Kurdish chiefs who wanted to raise livestock.[255] This document reveals that the government saw the Hamidian regiments as economic units as well. The Hamidian regime encouraged these Kurdish tribal chiefs to take credit and get financial support in order to maintain the Kurdish chiefs as allies in the region.

Even though the state encouraged Kurdish tribes to settle in villages so that they would embrace an agriculturalist lifestyle, the semi-nomadic and pastoral lifestyle of tribesmen continued during the Hamidian era. Therefore, the state did not entirely force Kurdish tribesmen to quit their transhumant lifestyle. In fact, raising livestock was still one of most important economic activities for Kurdish tribesmen in the eastern provinces. Kurdish tribesmen did not altogether embrace an agriculturalist lifestyle. Instead, as Yener Koç notes, they transitioned to a semi-nomadic lifestyle, moving between their settled villages and pastures.[256] Pasturelands and grazing lands were very important for Kurdish tribesmen in order to raise their livestock. Sheep were raised in order to supply meat and milk to the imperial market

[255] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 98/4, 13 Şevval 1311 (April 19, 1894).
[256] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 251.

in the harsh climate conditions of places like the provinces of Erzurum and Van.[257] In this sense, as Yonca Köksal and Mehmet Polatel elegantly show, with the growing importance of dairy products, meat, and wool, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes became an important part of the imperial economic structure in the nineteenth century.[258] In other words, Kurdish tribesmen were performing a significant economic function in the region. It is thus misleading to only emphasize the damaging aspects of nomadic Kurdish tribes for the local economy. In this regard, even though the Hamidian regime had an inherited policy from the Tanzimat era regarding the settlement of the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, the application of settlement methods was flexible. Therefore, apart from being tax farmers, Kurdish tribal leaders engaged in sheep trade and raising livestock. As a result, purchasing tax farming rights was not the only source of income for Kurdish chiefs who joined the Hamidian regiments even though tax-farming rights generated a larger income.

It should be noted that the demand of Kurdish chiefs to become governors and headmen of their respective townships and villages put significant pressure on Ottoman officials to provide the Kurdish chiefs with local administrative positions. According to a report from the Ministry of Domestic Affairs for the Erzurum province in 1897, the appointment of Hamidian Kurdish chiefs as sub-district governors was not a desired first choice for the Ottoman center.[259] Yet, the pressure coming from Kurdish chiefs on provincial authorities to secure such positions prompted Istanbul to accept tribal leaders as sub-district and township governors. According to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs report, even though appointment of

[257] For more detailed information about the operations of the sheep trade and its importance in the Ottoman imperial market, see Cora, "Transforming Erzurum/Karin," 234-246; Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 236-253; Köksal & Polatel, "A Tribe as an Economic Actor," 97-123.
[258] Köksal & Polatel, "A Tribe as an Economic Actor," 100.
[259] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 681/1, 15 Ramazan 1314 (February 17, 1897).

the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs as sub-district governors was not what the state had initially envisioned, making the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs comfortable with the regime's approach was an important step toward purchasing their loyalty to the state. Furthermore, tribespeople were the majority in such townships and sub-districts where these chiefs wanted to be sub-district governors, hence the state chose the pragmatic and practical strategy by appointing them as sub-district governors.[260]

The important point here is that this socio-political power was also based on the financial stability of these Kurdish chiefs. Kurdish chiefs received financial support from the Hamidian regime because they were tax farmers in the Ottoman East. Tax farming further strengthened the positions and prestige of these Hamidian Kurdish chiefs. Yener Koç underscores that these "tribal chiefs were given exclusive rights over taxation, conscription, and implementation of law in their tribal spaces in return for their loyalties for the empire."[261] The Hamidian regime had a clear objective to nurture the support of these Kurdish tribal leaders by integrating them into the administrative and economic system of the empire on the ground.

However, these privileges given to the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs caused numerous problems in the Ottoman East. Some Kurdish tribes that joined the Hamidian regiments gained power and prestige at the expense of other tribes who did not participate in the regiments, leading Hamidian tribal chiefs to act unlawfully towards peasants and other tribesmen in many instances. Yener Koç argues that, during the Hamidian period, the economic and political gap between tribal commoners and tribal leaders widened.[262] This illustrates that while the Kurdish chiefs who joined the Hamidian regiments had the opportunity to become wealthy

[260] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 681/1, 15 Ramazan 1314 (February 17, 1897).
[261] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 296.
[262] Ibid., 296.

and prestigious, a lower stratum of Kurdish tribesmen and ordinary peasants, irrespective of their religion, witnessed impoverishment and dispossession of their land. In addition to that, Kurdish chiefs who refused to join the Hamidian regiments and those who were rejected by the Hamidian government also did not benefit from the privileges of being on the pro-government side. This unfair distribution of power in the region was a state project, aiming to bolster the subjecthood of Kurdish tribes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

4.3 The economic activities of the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs

Before explaining how both the Armenian and Muslim peasantry were oppressed and hurt by the Hasenan chiefs, I will explain the importance of being a tax farmer for the Hamidian chiefs. Because they had significant fiscal power, the Hamidian chiefs maintained a strong authority over the villages they controlled. After the Kurdish chiefs adopted a semi-nomadic lifestyle, agriculture became an important aspect of their life. This does not, however, mean that Kurdish tribesmen entirely quit their pastoral lifestyle. Sheep trade and raising livestock were still very important for tribesmen in the Ottoman East. Yet, as the Hasenan tribe shows us, they did not continue their regular long-distance seasonal migration because tribal chiefs were now important figures in the local Ottoman administrative system, making them more geographically settled in their territories. However, they did not usually engage directly in agriculture, but rather they chose to benefit from profits produced by ordinary agriculturalists. Many Hamidian Kurdish chiefs were not only the heads of their villages, but they were also tax farmers in their respective regions. Hamidian chiefs collected one tenth of the tithe from peasants and no other regular taxes, yet

over-taxation was the norm during the Hamidian era.[263] There were many examples illustrating that villagers were oppressed and overtaxed by the Hamidian chiefs.

After the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, they had the right to carry weapons, helping them intimidate and subdue tribal commoners and peasants. Further, over-taxation and dispossession of land caused villagers to become sharecroppers who were working for the profit of the Hamidian chiefs. Many Armenian and Muslim notables were afraid of bidding for the rights to collect tithe and sheep taxes in the Northeastern provinces of the empire, including the Muş region.[264] The governor of Bitlis, Ömer Sabri Bey, sent a report to both the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and the Ministry of Finance asking for help to solve the problem of how to receive taxes from villages in the Malazgird, Bulanık, and Varto sub-districts as well as the Oğnut village. He was confused about the status of the Hamidian chiefs of the Muş region, and he wanted to know about the procedure for Kurdish chiefs being tax farmers in the region. The report highlighted that the Hasenan tribe and other Kurdish tribes of the region wanted to gain tax farming rights at low prices, emphasizing that they were representatives of the people who lived in the Muş region. The governor, however, did not favor the idea that Kurdish chiefs should gain rights to collect taxes in the region. Indeed, both reports from the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and the Ministry of Finance demonstrate that the Ottoman center did not want the Hamidian chiefs to be the only tax farmers in the Muş district. Yet, other alternatives, like other local notables or peasants becoming tax farmers, did not seem possible because they did not have enough manpower to assert their authority over the region. According to the report, the peasants avoided making the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs angry, which is why they did not participate in

[263] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 283.
[264] Akarlı, "Economic Policy and Budgets in Ottoman Turkey," 448.

auctions in order to gain tax farming rights. In fact, in most instances, there were no auctions, thus Kurdish chiefs easily obtained the rights to collect tithe taxes in the Muş district.[265]

It seems that the Ottoman state could not find an alternative way to collect taxes without making the Hamidian chiefs tax farmers. Additionally, the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs were confident that they would become tax farmers because they knew that the state did not have enough functional military power to intervene in tax farming auctions. Kurdish aghas realized that they were sharing power over the region with the state, making them more arrogant towards the ordinary peasantry and urban settlers. Uğur Bayraktar underscores that from the Tanzimat onward, there was a flexible centralization in the Ottoman Empire,[266] showing the interdependence between the Hamidian regime and Kurdish tribal leaders. In the meantime, incorporating Kurdish chiefs into the administrative mechanism meant that the state had the opportunity to manipulate the tribesmen, indicating that the state was a formidable actor in the local affairs of Kurdish tribes.

Since the Kurdish chiefs were backed by the state, they easily intimidated local notables and ordinary peasants during Abdulhamid's reign. The Hamidian chieftains were formidable enough to purchase the rights to collect taxes in their respective regions. Thanks to this new system of receiving revenues from villages, the Hamidian chiefs had enough financial power and stability to maintain their strict control in their respective regions. Other local state officials and local notables knew that these chiefs were the representatives of the Hamidian regime, which is why they did not have the power to intervene. Instead, these local officials made the process of

[265] BOA, DH. TMIK. S. 13/62, 7 Rabiulahir 1315 (September 5, 1897), BOA, DH. TMIK. S. 13/36, 22 Rabiulevvel 1315 (August 21, 1897).
[266] Bayraktar, "Reconsidering Local versus Central," 701.

tax farming easier for Kurdish chiefs who were the representatives of Abdulhamid's policies. Therefore, those who had enough financial and military power on the ground were also strong enough to gain tax farming rights. This means that tax farming practices were generally made to align with the interests of those who had a good relationship with the Hamidian regime.

The Ottoman officials believed that if they convinced the Hamidian chiefs to engage in agriculture, then the state would receive enough taxes from tribespeople. Therefore, the Hamidian chiefs were encouraged by the Hamidian regime to purchase the rights to collect the tithe. At times, the Hamidian regime was content with the fact that the Hamidian chiefs obtained the right of tithe-farming in lieu of pay. For example, Rıza Agha of the Hasenan was given the right to collect tithe in some villages as "pay" for his services in the Hamidian regiments.[267] This case of allotting tithes as payment for services in the Hamidian regiments showed that the state did not follow its own rules. Further, McDowall pinpoints that when the state did not provide salaries for the Hamidian chiefs, the state often offered the rights of the tax collection as a solution to relieve these Kurdish chiefs.[268]

The most important benefit of making Kurdish chiefs tax farmers was to make them settle, highlighting the importance of territoriality as a new identity for the Kurdish tribes. The settlement of nomadic Kurdish tribes was one of the most important priorities of the Ottoman state from the Tanzimat era to the early twentieth century. As a result, one might claim that having the Hamidian aghas as tax farmers within the fiscal mechanism of the state was a means for the state to settle Kurdish tribes. In this vein, Yıldız Palace did not take into consideration the abuses and oppression that ordinary peasants experienced at the hands of the Hamidian aghas.

[267] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 141.
[268] McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds,* 59-60.

Yet the number of complaints increased, and both Armenian and Muslim peasants sent a number of petitions to the capital, indicating that the level of social unrest and oppression was high in the Ottoman East. Therefore, in 1895, Ahmed Şakir Pasha was sent to the region in order to investigate tax farming abuses indicated in the petitions by the peasants. A reform program was issued. With the introduction of the reform program, the rights of tax collection would be purchased by both tax farmers and peasants at auction.[269] The goal of the reform program was to prevent tax farmers from intimidating ordinary peasants. If there was no purchaser to gain tax collection rights, then state agents would be responsible for obtaining tax revenues.[270] But the problem here was that it was not clear who these state agents were because the Kurdish chiefs who joined the Hamidian regiments were also technically state agents. Therefore, it was unclear, when the reform program made state agents responsible for receiving tax revenues, how this actually changed anything.

Still, Kurdish aghas who wanted to be tax farmers found new ways to intimidate peasants into not trying to obtain tax rights at auctions. Sometimes, some Kurdish chiefs obtained tax collection rights by allowing their fellow tribesmen to participate at auctions on their behalf. In some instances, Kurdish chiefs obtained the right to collect taxes through illegal means. When they asked a person from their close circle if they could get the right to collect taxes in their name, that person did not have the power to reject their request, thus these chiefs were able to keep tithe collection in their possession.[271]

[269] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 269.
[270] Ibid., 269.
[271] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 284.

Apart from tax farming practices, there was another patronage system through which Kurdish aghas wielded a certain degree of socioeconomic influence over Armenian peasants. There was a double taxation process, wherein Armenian peasants were forced to pay taxes to both Kurdish aghas and to the Ottoman state. This was an illegal tax called "khafir." In return for collecting khafir, Kurdish aghas protected Armenians from dangers coming from other tribes.[272] Many Kurdish chiefs collected "khafir" taxes from Armenian peasants in order to accumulate more and more wealth with little regard for the conditions of the peasantry. Therefore, over-taxation of Armenian peasants became a major issue for the Ottoman state because state officials feared that Armenians would flee from the region, causing depopulation, which would lower tax revenues.[273] Therefore, the government decreed that the Hamidian chiefs would no longer be tax farmers for Christian villages, but the tax farming rights for Muslim villages were still open to them.[274] Peripheral places like Malazgird, Bulanık and Beyazıd had large populations of Armenians, thus many Armenian villages were, under this new decree, supposed to be protected from the aggression of Kurdish tribes. Yet even though the code was enacted in order to protect the Armenian peasants from the oppression of the Hamidian chiefs, Kurdish aghas were still extremely powerful and able to dictate their will over the region. Further, this decree did not bring about any positive change for the Muslim peasants who were also under the pressure of Hamidian chiefs, indicating that Muslim peasants in the region were also very weak and vulnerable to the raids of Hamidian Kurdish perpetrators.

[272] Hoffman and Koutcharian, "The History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations," 8.
[273] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 270.
[274] BOA, DH. TMIK. 21/76, 27 Cemazeyyilevvel 1316 (October 13, 1898), For detailed information, see also Özbek, "Anadolu Islahatı," 59-85.

4.4 The methods adopted by the Hamidian chiefs to seize property and land

Abusive tax farming practices were not the only way to oppress and intimidate Armenian and Muslim peasants. Other ways included theft, raids, and grain hoarding. Hamidian chiefs also took land at the expense of ordinary peasants in their respective regions. In this part, I will delve into the means and methods adopted by the Hamidian chiefs in order to enrich themselves at the expense of the Christian and Muslim peasantry. In this regard, the case of the Hasenan leaders shows how enterprising these Hamidian chiefs were in their ability to appropriate lands and organize raids in order to seize moveable properties. The Hasenan chiefs were strong usurpers who employed several means to acquire the property of peasants. Forceful takeovers and stripping peasants of land and property through trickery became the reality of the period. In other words, besides tax farming, there were other ways for the Hasenan leaders to get a significant stream of revenue during the Hamidian period. In the following lines, I focus on the relationship between the Hasenan chiefs and Armenian and Kurdish peasants regarding fields, moveable property, meadows, and villages.

A petition from the Yoncacı village in the Muş region indicated that the Hasenan tribe raided the village in 1892. The Imam of the Yoncacı village and the council of elders complained about the raid by sending a telegram directly to the governor of Bitlis. According to this telegram, agricultural activities stopped due to the raids carried out by the Hasenan landlords, and the elders stressed that their oxen and cows were stolen by these Hasenan thieves.[275] The remarkable point about this telegram is that the Hasenan chiefs, including Yusuf Agha and Taceddin Agha, who

[275] Even though the document does not say anything regarding the tribal affiliation of the Yoncacı village, it was likely either an "independent" village or under the control of an enemy tribe of the Hasenan at the time. BOA, BEO. 87/6477, 20 Rabiulevvel 1310 (October 12, 1892).

were commanders of the 26th and 29th regiments respectively, did not hesitate to attack these Muslim villages. When the Yoncacı incident is examined, it is not that easy find a concrete reason why the Hasenan tribesmen attacked the village, but the Hasenan chiefs gathered 500-600 cavalrymen to carry out this attack, meaning that this was a major campaign inflicted upon the local Muslim population.

In this regard, in examining the location of the Yoncacı village, it is likely that the arable fields and pasturelands of this village were important factors which drew the attention of the Hasenan chiefs. The village was big and had large tracts of grazing lands and fields. Hasenan tribesmen, who continued their semi-pastoral lifestyle, wanted to take control of this village in order to control the village's economy. Two commanders of the Hamidian regiments were the organizers of this attack, showing that they were not afraid of Ottoman authority if the peasants of Yoncacı complained about this raid. On the other hand, Muslim villagers did not want to be silent after this attack because it placed them in an extremely insecure and vulnerable position. Therefore, they submitted a petition to the governor of Bitlis.

One thing that is striking about the Yoncacı incident is that despite the fact that they were terrified of the Kurdish perpetrators, the Muslim villagers did not act like passive people who were ready to accept their fate. Instead, they asked the government officials what kind of precautions the state planned to take to stop the systematic violence committed by these militia squads, indicating that the peasants were not completely unaware of penal codes. Another point here is that when the Hasenan tribesmen attacked villages, there were generally concrete and material motivations behind it. Even though, with each attack and looting, the line between Kurds and Armenians became more politicized and tense, the Hasenan chiefs' aggression derived from their motivation and "hunger" for material gains. The

Hasenan chiefs intended to solidify their dominance in their respective regions by using collective and systematic violence against the peasantry irrespective of their religion. In this sense, Kurdish villagers also lived under the threat of the Hasenan chiefs if they were not affiliated with a strong tribe to protect them from the raids. Even though the Hasenan chiefs mostly harassed Armenian villages, there were also a significant number of Kurdish villages plundered by Hasenan tribesmen.

In some cases, being tax farmers was simply not enough for these tribal chiefs. When a tribal chief became a tax farmer, he extracted wealth from villages under his control for himself and his close family members. However, there were other tribespeople who were also asking for income to support themselves, showing that these tribesmen were not totally integrated into agricultural life. Therefore, I argue that, at times, raids were carried out in order to supply property and resources for armed men from whom these chiefs derived their power. There were many armed men under the authority of these tribal leaders, and these men had to be economically supported. Therefore, it is likely that these armed men considered these attacks and raids "booty."

Many Ottoman documents about the Ottoman East had a language of grievance, meaning that incidents were brought to light when someone complained about them, highlighting violence in the Ottoman East over other concerns. That being said, the Ottoman documents and reports of the time show us that these raids were part of an economic cycle helping Kurdish militia forces loot the goods and property of peasants in the Ottoman East. In this regard, there was a close circle of Kurdish aghas who needed to raid in order to make a living. These tribesmen in the Hamidian regiments were allowed to carry weapons, making it easier to raid. I speculate that when a Kurdish agha raided villages and looted property and goods,

this likely paved the way for many ordinary tribesmen to rush to his side in order to revel in the spoils of raids as well. But sometimes they raided simply for the thrill of it.

When the Hasenan chiefs found a vulnerable Kurdish village, they did not hold themselves back from raiding that village simply because it was Kurdish. Control of pasture lands and fertile fields were very crucial for the economic activities of the Hasenan leaders, so they would take them wherever they could. Mehmet Polatel underlines that lands were commodified, and the economy was monetarized in the late nineteenth century in the Ottoman East, leading the peasant masses to be dispossessed. In this way, the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs became new landlords who had individual, exclusionary property rights.[276] In this regard, even ordinary Kurdish tribesmen were deprived of some of their customary rights, such as using pasture lands, and, along with the peasants, these Kurdish tribesmen became a labor force and tenants for Hamidian Kurdish landlords. Therefore, I point out that the Hamidian regime enlarged the gap between Kurdish tribal leaders and ordinary tribesmen, leading Kurdish chiefs to be wealthier while ordinary tribespeople were demoted to the status of sharecropper. This made these tribesmen more aggressive and enthusiastic about carrying out raids on villages.

Nadir Özbek argues that both tax farming practices and the "pillage economy" by semi-nomadic Kurdish groups overlapped in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[277] The pillage economy was based on choosing weak groups of people so that these tribal leaders could easily exploit them. There was an arbitrary use of violence, and coercion was adopted as a method by the Kurdish aghas, thus the conditions of the peasantry, irrespective of their religion, were terrible in the

[276] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 61.
[277] Özbek, "Anadolu Islahatı," 78.

Ottoman East. Erdal Çiftçi notes that the notorious activities of the Kurdish tribes affiliated with the Hamidian regime were not monitored by the state, causing the complaints of the peasantry to be ignored at the time.[278] For this reason, the conditions of the small-scale peasantry were deteriorating, leading to a transformation of the agrarian structure of the eastern provinces at the expense of the peasants in the Hamidian era. In this regard, the pillage economy was not based on real agrarian production and strong trade connections, but rather it was based on a system of looting, providing "booty" for the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs and their close circle. Not only ordinary peasants but ordinary tribespeople also became tenants, marabas, and sharecroppers, while Kurdish chiefs registered large tracts of lands in their names and enlarged their flocks. As a result, it brought about the depopulation of villages in the short run. The pillage economy also prevented peasants and tradesmen from inhabiting the eastern regions, which limited economic integration with other parts of the empire in the long run.

In sum, the Hamidian chiefs might not have been the initiators of all crimes against the peasantry, but it is certain that all these raiding campaigns helped them expand their authority and spheres of influence. In this manner, it should be noted that, as the documents show, material gain was one of the most important motivations behind these crimes committed against ordinary peasants. The important point is that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century economy of the Ottoman East had violent actors who carried out their economic activities and had financial stability at the expense of unprotected everyday people, indicating that the chaotic atmosphere was the leading factor in the economic dynamic of the region. However, as Yener Koç emphasizes, it should be noted that this chaotic and politicized

[278] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 215.

atmosphere of the late Hamidian era was the product of certain historical economic and political conditions.[279] In other words, all these raids, skirmishes, and counter-raids should be contextualized, and we must understand that local politics and power balances were shaped by certain social and economic patterns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

4.5 The aggression of the Hasenan tribe towards the Armenian peasantry

Considering the conditions of the late Hamidian period, Armenian villagers were one of the weakest groups in the region. Edip Gölbaşı reveals that even though Kurdish peasants also became a target for the Hamidian regiments, Armenian peasants were the most vulnerable group of people, making them an easy target for Hamidian perpetrators in the Ottoman East. Therefore, the Hamidian chiefs knew that when they attacked Armenians, they would not be strictly punished by the Ottoman government.[280] For example, the Mutasarrıf of Muş warned the government that the volume and intensity of pressure and raids on the Armenian peasants had increased in the Muş region, and that the perpetrators were not afraid of the consequences of their actions. Yet, he did not have enough military power to stop the Hasenan and Hayderan chiefs who committed crimes against peasants.[281]

In this violent atmosphere, Kurdish chiefs were important social and economic actors in the region, and they were protected by the regime, so it was not hard for them to oust the Armenian peasants from their villages and then register the lands of Armenians in their own names. The punishment was not harsh enough to stop the Hamidian chiefs' aggression, even though the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs were

[279] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 125.
[280] Gölbaşı, "Hamidiye Alayları," 175.
[281] Gölbaşı, "Hamidiye Alayları," 173.

summoned to military courts and imprisoned a number of times because of major local incidents. Therefore, I argue that the scale, intensity and number of raids on Armenians increased during the Hamidian era. There were attacks and raids on weak, vulnerable groups, including Armenian peasants, before the Hamidian era as well. However, I emphasize that small-scale attacks transformed into large raiding campaigns during the Hamidian era. What was different was that now the Hasenan chiefs relied on a group of armed tribesmen who were dependent on looting and raids, leading to major looting campaigns.

As the examples of raiding campaigns on Kurdish villages showed, the need for material resources was the main motivation behind the oppression of Armenian peasants. In particular, the Hasenan chiefs appropriated vast lands in the Bulanık and Malazgird sub-districts. There were some specific villages where Hasenan tribesmen could easily extend their influence. Examining the maps which show the villages in the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts, it is clear that the villages which were under constant attack and pressure were not highland villages which might have a possible defense mechanism. On the contrary, these were villages chosen on purpose by the Hasenan chiefs because of their fertile lands and easily accessible geographic locations.

First, these villages were big villages which had large tracts of fertile land and grazing lands, which is why the Hasenan forces raided, looted and plundered them. Also, the Hasenan chiefs likely wanted to gain control of these fertile lands in order to produce enough grain for their flocks. Large tracts of grazing lands in these villages were also useful for Hasenan chiefs who had large flocks and engaged in animal husbandry. Second, these villages had an Armenian population who did not carry weapons, and these people were simple peasants who were not the warrior-like

tribal Hasenan forces. As in the case of Sason and Zeytun,[282] there were some Armenian villages inhabited by an armed Armenian population, but these villages were not located on the Murat River. Moreover, the villages that were frequently attacked were very close to the main hubs of the Hasenan chiefs, thus I argue that these villages were within easy reach of the Hasenan chiefs, making them more vulnerable to Hasenan aggression. In addition to the fertile lands and grazing fields of these villages, the villages in the Malazgird sub-district were very close to the Murat River. Nearly all the villages which were raided by the Hasenan tribesmen in Malazgird were located on the river, illustrating that having control over these villages meant that the Hasenan tribesmen might more easily use the Murat River for their flocks and other necessities.

The villages, such as Şeyhyakub and Miribar, which were raided by the Hasenan chiefs in Bulanık (see figure 4), were close to the Haçlı Lake, meaning that they had strong irrigation methods and water resources for flocks and agriculture. Irrigation was extremely necessary for agriculture, thus those who could control the waterways were more easily able to irrigate their fields. When these tribesmen gained control over the waterways, it was easier to irrigate grazing lands as well, making pastoral lands more productive. Therefore, these villages were attractive places for Hasenan leaders because they were close to water sources and had fertile lands and grazing lands. It was also possible that the villagers in these more frequently raided villages objected to the actions of the Hasenan tribesmen, such as grazing in the pasturelands of the villages, escalating clashes into major raids.

[282] For detailed information about the massacres of 1894-97, see Polatel, "The Complete Ruin of a District," 179-198; Gölbaşı, 1895-1896 Katliamları," 164-175; Mazhar Ahmed, *1. Dünya Savaşı'nda Kürdistan,* 237-240.



Figure 4. Map of the villages targeted by the Hasenan tribe in Bulanık Houshamadyan

The Hasenan chiefs did not always use coercive methods to force Armenians to give up their lands and moveable property. At times, the Hasenan chiefs embraced some alternative methods to dispossess the Armenian peasants. Several telegrams sent by the Erzurum and Bitlis governors to the Fourth army center in 1896 showed how the process of property and land transfer happened on the behalf of the Hasenan chiefs, including Rıza Agha. It was reported that Bişar Agha of the Hasenan seized vast lands from the village of Khotanlu (Kotanlı), while Rıza Agha began to seize large tracts of land in the Hüseyin, Khanigegh (Hanoğlu), and Aynakhodja (Aynalıhoca) villages and, in exchange for the deed, he paid just 100 lira. Moreover, Major Süleyman Agha of the 27th Hamidian regiment seized lands belonging to people in the Tenderan village and also paid just 100 lira for the deed to the land. In addition to that, Mehmed Emin Agha, son of Sofi Pasha, took possession of 24 fields in the village of Şeyhyakub (Güllüova) in Bulanık by paying the owners just 100 lira. In this case, there was a process of property transfer at the expense of the peasants

who lived in these villages of the Bulanık and Malazgird sub-districts (see figures 4 and 5).[283] The governor of Bitlis, Ömer Sabri, ordered civil servants to investigate these property transfers thoroughly. Further, he asked influential religious men to convince the Hamidian chiefs not to engage in violent actions against the interests of the state. The telegrams clearly revealed that even though some state officials were not happy with such property and land transfers, they did not have enough military power to stop these Hasenan chiefs.



Figure 5. The villages targeted by the Hasenan tribesmen in Malazgird
Houshamadyan

On the other side of the story, it seems that the Hasenan chiefs divided the Armenian villages amongst themselves. Rıza Agha came from the ruling family of the Hasenan, thus he was strong enough to seize the lands of three villages, while other sub-chiefs of the tribe put their efforts toward usurping lands and fields in the other remaining Armenian villages. The crucial point here is that the Hasenan chiefs not only used brute force here to appropriate lands in these villages, they also

[283] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/15, 16 Şevvel 1313 (March 31, 1896).

benefitted from their strong state-backed image of being Hamidian chiefs, making it easy for them to manipulate and force the Armenian peasants to give up their lands. They forced the Armenian peasants in this example to sell their lands to them, saying that the peasants did not have power to protect their lands from raids carried out by other tribes.

According to the documents, they made the Armenian peasants believe that selling their land at a low price was better than losing it for nothing. In some cases, they did not even pay the Armenian peasants, and still seized their deeds, claiming that they were protecting those lands from other Kurdish tribes. Therefore, the Hasenan chiefs found ways to expand their territory through the promise of protection. In the cases of the appropriation of lands in the villages in the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts, the Armenian peasants who were threatened by other tribes were not content with the protection of the powerful Hasenan chiefs.

Another telegram from the governor of Bitlis to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs showed that the theft of cattle and oxen was another important reason behind raids on villages. Ömer Sabri Bey, the governor of Bitlis province, complained about how powerful Rıza Agha was in the region since he was the brother of Fethullah Bey, the commander of the 27th Hamidian regime. Rıza Agha stole 45 oxen and cows from the Miribar (Üçtepe) village in Bulanık, and he forced ordinary peasants to give him cash, and no one dared to oppose him. Further, Rıza Agha had authority over members of the local assembly in the Muş region, leading the members of the local council to turn a blind eye to what he had done in the region.[284] The document noted that Rıza Agha was protected by local government officials at the expense of poor peasants. There were strong pragmatic connections between Rıza Agha and local

[284] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 10/94, 12 Safer 1314 (July 23, 1896).

authorities, which made him strong enough to exploit and oppress the peasantry in the region.

Other Hasenan chiefs also benefitted from the fact that the state shared power with them in the region, enabling them to easily take Armenian lands. For example, a certain chief of the Hasenan tribe and major of the 29th Hamidian regiment, Bişar Agha built several houses on the border of the Rüstemgedik and Kotanlı villages in the Malazgird sub-district. When he built these houses, he did not have a permit, frustrating the Christian peasants of these villages. The Armenian peasants claimed that Bişar Agha banished them from their villages after building houses on the border of these two villages. In 1897, an order from the governor of Bitlis showed that the state was supposed to protect its subjects from the persecutions and atrocities of the Kurdish aghas. The Armenian peasants should be settled in their old places, which had been occupied by Bişar Agha.[285] According to provincial authorities of Muş, the construction of the houses was illegal, so they ruled against Bişar Agha even though he was a member of the Hamidian regiments. However, the issue here is that Bişar Agha knew that such an overstep would not be severely punished by the state, so he took his chances and tried to take advantage of his position as a Hamidian officer. It seems that building a house on the border between two villages was a strategy aimed at obtaining territory and property at the expense of the rightful owners of these places. Also, because the Hamidian regime had a policy of sedentarizing Kurdish tribes, some Kurdish chiefs could use this to manipulate the government by appropriating lands from peasants in their tribal space.

A similar case happened in the Beyazıd district. In 1897, Salih Bey, commander of the 37th Hamidian regiment and chief of the Celali tribe, started to

[285] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 41/45, 22 Cemazeyilevvel 1315 (October 19, 1897).

build a house in the Meryeman village, which had a significant Armenian population. Local authorities informed the government that Salih Bey's attempt was not legal, saying that he was forcing the peasants to work on the construction of his house. The tension cooled when Zeki Pasha intervened, helping Salih Bey build his house there. Later, Zeki Pasha punished the Mutasarrıf of Beyazıd by sending him into exile because he stood up against Salih Bey's attempt to build a house in the Armenian Meryemana village.[286] Both the cases of Bişar Agha and Salih Bey show us that there was an atmosphere of conflict and violence, causing the Hamidian chiefs to usurp the lands and property of peasants in the region. Both cases indicate that the Hamidian chiefs had multiple approaches and strategies to seize lands, fields, and meadows in the region at the expense of the peasantry. In the case of Ibrahim Bey being sent into exile, Zeki Pasha was the sole authority who had conflict with the provincial authorities regarding the status of the Hamidian chiefs. In this vein, Zeki Pasha was ready to sacrifice many things in order to secure tribal loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, the frustration of the Ottoman bureaucracy toward Zeki Pasha was not a major concern for him. Nevertheless, it seems that not all Ottoman authorities shared the same ideas regarding the role of the Hamidian chiefs, despite the full support of the Sultan and M. Zeki Pasha.

4.6 Raids and aggression in the Ahlat Region

The Hasenan tribe was a large tribe that formed five tribal regiments, thus the Hasenan tribesmen were not just active in Malazgird. Sub-districts like Ahlat, Bulanık, Varto, and Eleşkird were under the constant pressure from the Hasenan tribesmen. In these districts, the Hasenan chiefs exploited farmers and took their

[286] Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes," 290.

animals and crops. Between 1897 and 1898, the raiding campaigns of the Hasenan tribe extended to the center of the Ahlat sub-district in the Bitlis province, revealing how powerful the Hasenan tribe was. The Ahlat sub-district was not inhabited by a strong Kurdish tribe, making it vulnerable to attacks and looting by Hasenan tribesmen. For the first time, Hasenan cavalrymen carried out raids in a city center far from their main base when they entered the Ahlat sub-district. In this respect, even though the Ahlat sub-district was not close to Malazgird, it was still within the territory of the Hasenan tribesmen. Rıza Agha was the main perpetrator of the attacks in Ahlat and Bitlis. In the Ahlat sub-district, the military infrastructure and manpower of the state failed to stop the aggression, causing the Hasenan perpetrators to gain more control.

Another important feature of these attacks was that the British Consulate in Bitlis got involved in the Ahlat incidents. A report by Ömer Sabri, the governor of Bitlis, highlighted that the Hasenan cavalries under Rıza Agha had enough power to attack trade caravans. Villages between the Bitlis province and the Ahlat sub-district were under the threat of attack by Rıza Agha and his men, posing a threat to tradesmen who engaged in trade in this region as well. The importance of the Hasenan's raids in the Ahlat region is that they now began to organize raids in places far from their main base. As established earlier, they had originally attacked villages that were close to their main settlement, but now they were going much further to raid in the Ahlat region. This is one of the reasons why the Ahlat case is so important. Moreover, like in the other raid cases, a number of Armenians were hurt and killed in addition to the property theft. However, the Ahlat incidents would be much more politically consequential because the British Consulate would get involved in these incidents.

The governor of Bitlis revealed that Rıza Agha and his men attacked a caravan coming from the Erzurum province, and it was not enough that they stole 58 oxen, which were supposed to be given to the Armenian peasants by the British Consul in Ahlat, they also stole an important bag owned by the English Deputy Consul in Bitlis.[287] When they stole the oxen of the British charity organization, the government officials feared that the British government would intervene in the problems in Ahlat. In this vein, as the document illustrated, the theft of oxen, cattle, and sheep was so widespread that the Hasenan tribesmen stole 58 oxen which were meant to be provided as relief for the Armenian peasants. The crucial point here is that the British Consul engaged in this instance, asking the reasons behind why the Hasenan tribesmen stole oxen and cattle. Looking at the agricultural structure of the region, it becomes clear that cattle and oxen were very important parts of the production process of agricultural output. Mehmet Polatel remarks that there was agricultural cultivation by small-scale peasants, illustrating the dependency on cattle and oxen for agricultural production.[288] This shows us why the Hasenan chiefs prioritized stealing cattle and oxen: because they needed these animals to engage in agriculture.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned the Bitlis governor that those who were involved in such crimes had to be punished.[289] However, because there was no strong military power in the region, it was difficult to dictate state authority. According to a report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were only 200 regular troops in the Bitlis province, thus the governor of Bitlis did not have enough military men to exert his authority over the Hasenan tribesmen. Another important piece of

[287] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/47, 5 Safer 1315 (July 6, 1897).
[288] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 136.
[289] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/47, 5 Safer 1315 (July 6, 1897).

information in the document is that M. Zeki Pasha gave the order to withdraw four battalions of troops from Bitlis and then these soldiers were sent to the Malazgird sub-districts. The document highlighted that the withdrawing of four battalions from the Bitlis center was wrong while urban dwellers of the Bitlis center were feeling Rıza Agha's aggression and pressure.

Even the center of Bitlis was now vulnerable to the raids of the Hasenan tribesmen.[290] M. Zeki pasha was criticized by the governor because he was responsible for giving such an order. Following that order, Rıza Agha knew that he was the real authority on the roads between the Bitlis province and the Ahlat sub-districts because the governor did not have M. Zeki Pasha's support. On the other hand, the document does not show us why M. Zeki Pasha sent four battalions of soldiers to the Muş district while there were security problems in the Ahlat region. Nevertheless, it is highly possible that four battalions were sent to Malazgird in order to prevent the Hasenan tribesmen from engaging in fights with each other or other tribes in the region.

Another telegram sent to the Porte by the governor of Bitlis on July 31, 1897 showed that Süleyman Agha of the Hasenan returned 25 stolen oxen to their owners. In addition to that, some of the owners of the stolen oxen were sent to Malazgird to get their oxen back, while they asked the Erzurum governor to force the Hayderan tribesmen to return 20 oxen that they had stolen from the Ahlat region. Besides that, the governor of Bitlis underlined that there was not a single complaint about Rıza Agha in the Ahlat region, which is why he did not take any action towards Rıza Agha, but he was in touch with the mutasarrıf of Muş.[291] This document shows that these Hamidian tribes, including the Hasenan and Hayderan, were powerful enough

[290] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/47, 5 Safer 1315 (July 6, 1897).
[291] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/47, 5 Safer 1315 (July 6, 1897).

to extend their authority beyond their main bases. These two were big tribes which aimed to take control of the Ahlat region, thus they competed to build their powerbases in the region. Further, the raids on caravans in the Ahlat sub-district illustrated that besides agriculture, the Hamidian regiments also had a negative impact on trade as well.

By late August of same year, a report from the British Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that the Hasenan aggression and attacks under Rıza Agha were far from over in the Bitlis province. The report clearly indicated that they had attacked the Zağaç and Berukav villages in the Ahlat region. Apart from usurping land in the villages of the Ahlat sub-district, Rıza Agha attacked the caravans coming from Erzurum, stealing 55 oxen. These attacks showed that Rıza Agha and his men were completely in control of the road between the Bulanık and Ahlat sub-districts. The Bitlis governorate replied that Rıza Agha and Süleyman Agha harassed some villages in the Bitlis province, but the stolen property was partially returned to the peasants. As a result, the governor of Bitlis claimed that Rıza Agha had not created any problems for the villagers recently.[292]

According to the Bitlis governor, Ömer Sabri Efendi, committing robbery and atrocities was not a new thing for the Hasenan chiefs, thus he believed that if the state changed the attitudes of the Hasenan chiefs, then it would be easy to discipline other tribesmen.[293] The governor of Bitlis's perspective in this situation was naïve. By only focusing on tribal chiefs, he underestimated ordinary tribesmen and assumed that they would never commit crimes without their leaders. But ordinary tribesmen also had their own economic motivations for the crimes they committed. Moreover, in dismissing the Hasenan chiefs by saying that they were simply violent because

[292] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/51, 26 Rabiulevvel 1315 (August 25, 1897).
[293] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/51, 26 Rabiulevvel 1315 (August 25, 1897).

they were accustomed to committing crimes, he underestimated the economic motivations and power dynamics which formed the strategies of Hasenan chiefs.

Another reason why I underline the Ahlat case is because it was a political case as well. The British Consulate was now a player in the incident caused by the Hasenan tribesmen in the Ahlat region,[294] indicating that the notorious activities of the Hasenan chiefs were now getting more politicized. International diplomacy would now focus on the Hasenan chiefs, specifically Rıza Agha. This was an issue which Ottoman authorities feared could lead to an increase of foreign pressure for administrative and economic reform on the behalf of the Armenian population in the Ottoman East.[295] According to a document dated to February 1898, two particular Hamidian majors were seen as responsible for the attacks in the villages of the Ahlat sub-district. Although Rıza Agha's name was not mentioned, it is not difficult to infer that Rıza Agha was one of these majors.[296]

On June 27, 1898, the Bitlis government sent another telegram to the Sublime Porte complaining about the insufficiency of regular troops in the Ahlat region. A telegram sent by the Sublime Porte to the Fourth Army center on June 30, 1898 showed that the Fourth Army had to provide soldiers from another province in order to alleviate the problems caused by the Hasenan chiefs.[297] It was noted that the Hasenan chiefs gathered 200 cavalrymen and raided the villages in Ahlat, going all the way to the center of Ahlat itself. There were not enough regular troops to prevent the Hasenan cavalrymen from committing crimes against Armenian peasants in the villages of the Ahlat sub-district, indicating that the Sublime Porte had serious

[294] BOA, HR. SYS. 2792/59, 25 Rabiulahir 1315 (September 23, 1897).
[295] In 1895, Ahmed Şakir Pasha was sent to the region in order to supervise financial and administrative reforms after social unrest increased among inhabitants of the region. Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa.*
[296] BOA, BEO. 1077/80765, 16 Ramazan 1315 (February 8, 1898).
[297] BOA, Y. A. HUS. 386/51, 10 Safer 1316 (June 30, 1898).

security problems on its periphery. The local council of Ahlat submitted a petition to the governor of Bitlis complaining that even the center of Ahlat was under threat from Hasenan cavalrymen.[298] This petition pointed out that the Hasenan chiefs not only created problems for ordinary peasants, but also for city dwellers who engaged in trade who had now become targets for the Hasenan leaders. Still, the Hasenan officers did not hold themselves back from causing turmoil so long as the victims were weak groups of Armenian and Kurdish peasants.

On June 5, 1898, a telegram from the governor of Bitlis to the Sublime Porte underlined that Hasenan tribesmen carried out several raids on the Armenian villages of Bitlis, stealing 166 oxen and cattle provided by an English charity organization. Yet, the governor of Bitlis also wrote that the allegations that Kurds had attacked three Armenian churches and looted them were not true. On the contrary, while the Sağaç Church was protected by local forces, the Verşa Church was under repair, so there was certainly no attack on the Armenian churches.[299] In addition to that, the document showed that Ohannes Efendi, a member of the local council of the Hizan region, was not murdered by the Hasenan, revealing that fedais[300] who were terrorizing the Ottoman East had murdered Ohannes Efendi and Arto.[301] Moreover, the governor of Bitlis claimed that Rıza Agha was on trial because of complaints from the inhabitants of the Derik village, thus it was unlikely that he attacked these Armenian churches and villages.

[298] BOA, Y. PRK. DH. 10/64, 7 Safer 1316 (June 27, 1898).
[299] BOA, HR. TH. 212/88, 15 Muharrem 1316 (June 5, 1898).
[300] Fedais were the armed Armenian bands that sought the liberation of the Armenian people in the Eastern provinces. Armenian fedais formed armed groups between 1885 and 1896 in the Muş region in order to fight the local Ottoman authorities and the Kurdish aghas who were seen as oppressors. They embraced and developed terror tactics. For detailed information see Miller, "Sasun 1894," 47-50.
[301] BOA, HR. TH. 212/88, 15 Muharrem 1316 (June 5, 1898).

Further, the governor of Bitlis informed Istanbul that the mutasarrıfs of Hizan and Muş had warned him that the Hasenan chiefs, Bişar Agha and Süleyman Agha, were sentenced to prison in Erzincan, but they could not find where these two Hasenan chiefs were hiding.[302] The statements of the governor of Bitlis were conflicting in that he admitted that the Hasenan chiefs had attacked some villages in the Ahlat and Bulanık sub-districts, but he did not take the British Consulate's allegations that the Hasenan cavalrymen had attacked the Armenian churches and killed Ohannes Efendi and Arto into consideration.

This telegram illustrates that reality was not as simple as one might imagine. Both the British and Ottoman sides had different reflections about what happened in the Ahlat and Bulanık sub-districts at the time. The governor of Bitlis claimed that he was now able to exert state authority, saying not only that major crimes like looting did not occur, but also that smaller robbery incidents had not happened thanks to the power of the state.[303] Yet the same governor insisted in his earlier reports that they did not have enough military power to stop atrocities committed by the Hasenan tribesmen. Therefore, this report has conflicting information about what was going on in the Ahlat region.

Blaming Rıza Agha for the attacks on Armenian villages was not so simple because he had problems with the Derik peasants at the time too. However, it seems that the looting of villages and the stealing of oxen and cattle may have been carried out by Bişar Agha and Süleyman Agha, but we do not know whether they acted independently of Rıza Agha and Fethullah Bey or not. I argue that even though Rıza Agha did not actively participate in the last incident in the Ahlat and Bulanık sub-districts, such major raids on the villages of Ahlat, stretching to the center of the sub-

[302] BOA, HR. TH. 212/88, 15 Muharrem 1316 (June 5, 1898).
[303] BOA, HR. TH. 212/88, 15 Muharrem 1316 (June 5, 1898).

district itself, would not have been possible without Rıza Agha's assistance and consent. An important point here is that although Süleyman and Bişar Aghas were sentenced to prison in Erzincan after their raiding campaigns in the Ahlat region, state authorities did not know where they were after these attacks, highlighting that the Hasenan chiefs had strong and widespread networks that could hide them from the state. Unlike their misdeeds before the formation of the Hamidian regiments, they were still acting as if they were bandits, but this time they knew that the state needed them more than ever, giving them leverage to maneuver in their relationships with the Hamidian regime.

After a short time period, the Hasenan chiefs were pardoned by the state even though they had committed major crimes in the Ahlat region. This was the first time that the Hasenan felt powerful enough to attack a city center, in the case of Ahlat. The regime, however, embraced a protective strategy towards Rıza Agha and the other Hasenan chiefs because the regime's fears about Armenian fedais reached a paranoid level, preventing it from seeing the problems and suffering of Armenian peasants at the hands of the Hasenan chiefs. For the Ottoman authorities, the fedais were the leading actors terrorizing the region. In other words, the Hasenan chiefs benefitted from the fear that the Armenian fedais would create great chaos at the expense of Ottoman authority. As a result, the Hamidian chiefs found a good excuse with which to demonize Armenian peasants, accusing them of helping the Armenian fedais. Therefore, it was easy for the Hasenan chiefs to refute accusations against them by triggering the fear of the Hamidian regime about Armenian fedais and foreign state intervention.

Apart from the Hasenan chiefs, the urban notables of Ahlat also accused Armenians of committing terrorist acts. For example, 33 Armenians were imprisoned

while Şeyh Emin Efendi and Hacı Necmeddin, who held some property deeds that were less than legal, were released from prison. The telegram sent from Bitlis to the Sublime Porte did not show what kind of deeds Şeyh Emin Efendi and Hacı Necmeddin had, but 33 Armenians were accused of treasonous political crimes against the Ottoman state.[304] This incident was an interesting case, illustrating that Armenians were an easy target for the tribesmen and local urban notables to attack because people like Şeyh Emin Efendi could claim that ordinary Armenian peasants had connections with Armenian political organizations, which were seen as the enemy of the Hamidian regime. Indeed, in this case of the imprisonment of these Armenians as traitors, the role of urban notables was striking. The main goal of such assaults against Armenians was to accumulate wealth by seizing the goods of Armenians. Hacı Necmeddin was a member of the administrative council in the city, while Şeyh Emin was a prominent religious figure who enjoyed significant influence. Therefore, as Kurdish tribal chiefs attacked Armenians physically, these influential figures attacked Armenians legally.[305] As a result, the Ahlat incidents show that local prominent notables and religious figures were also intimidating figures who harassed Armenian peasants in the region.

This case illustrated that not only Hamidian tribal chiefs, but also urban notables, were incorporated into the administrative system of the state by playing important roles in local politics as members of local administrative councils in the region. In addition to that, religious names like Şeyh Emin were closely affiliated with the Hamidian regime, as there were many Khalidi tekke (lodges) which were exempted from taxes in the Ottoman East.[306] As a result, I argue that while Hamidian

[304] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 620/47, 5 Safer 1315 (July 6, 1897).
[305] Mehmet Polatel, "The Armenian Massacre of 1895," 63.
[306] Polatel, "The Armenian Massacre of 1895," 64.

Kurdish chiefs had a strong protector in M. Zeki Pasha, Armenian peasants were easily labeled as state enemies, making it easy to take Armenian lands or commit crimes against Armenian peasants. In this case, there was a strong possibility that Şeyh Emin Efendi and Hacı Necmeddin accused these Armenians of being traitors so that they could protect themselves from being imprisoned because of their fake deeds.

The documents regarding the Ahlat incidents showed that with the inclusion of the British Consulate as a side in Ahlat, the social atmosphere was quickly politicized, revealing that the Hasenan chiefs were demonized as actors behind social unrest amongst Armenian peasants in the region. Another document dated to July and August of 1898 illustrates that Ottoman authorities managed to alleviate the chaos by sending two battalions of soldiers under the command of İbrahim Pasha, who was the commander of the Hamidian regiments in the Malazgird sub-district. This shows that the number of regular troops was not sufficient, hence irregular Hamidian troops came from Malazgird to Ahlat in order to cool the tension.[307]

The paradox here is that even though it was not clearly said in the document, these forces, which came from Malazgird, were probably the Hasenan and Cibran tribesmen, thus they first caused social unrest and chaos and then the state recruited them to bring stability to the Ahlat sub-districts. This case was a clear example of the Hasenan chiefs being the real authority and even a manipulative power in the region because they had enough manpower to play two roles, one as the perpetrator and the other as Ottoman irregular troops.

On the other hand, even though the state was not very powerful due to its insufficient number of regular troops in the Bitlis province, Yıldız Palace did still

[307] BOA, HR. TH. 215/73, 22 Rabiulevvel 1316 (August 10, 1898).

have the authority to deploy irregular tribesmen under the command of an Ottoman military officer. This shows that Ottoman officials were adopting new patterns of military and bureaucratic rule in the eastern regions. In this sense, the state shared the monopoly of legitimate force with the Hamidian tribal leaders in the Ottoman East. Elke Hartmann argues that by delegating its power to local forces, the Hamidian regime partially accepted becoming an authority that shared its power to use coercion and violence. This was the pragmatism of the state in allowing the notorious Hamidian chiefs who mixed their own interests with the agenda of the Hamidian regime to cause social unrest amongst ordinary people. The state became an influential power and fulfilled its own goals without assuming responsibility for the actions of the Hamidian chiefs,[308] giving the state room to maneuver in order to avoid taking responsibility for protecting its subjects.

4.7 The case of the Derik village

Rıza Agha's role in the Ahlat incidents was a complicated matter, but his relationship with the inhabitants of the Derik village will be discussed here as it reflects one of the typical examples of systematic violence in the Muş region. Both petitions from the inhabitants of Derik to the Armenian Patriarchate and the reports from the Bitlis governorate to the Porte clearly show Rıza Agha's brutal determination to seize the lands of the Derik village by force. The Derik (Çayırdere) village was an Armenian settlement located 12 km from the center of the Malazgird sub-district (see figure 5). I suggest that the arable lands of the Derik village for the Hasenan tribesmen's livestock might have been a significant factor which led Rıza Agha to raid the

[308] Hartmann, "The Central State in the Borderlands," 180-181.

village. Also, the Derik village was not a highland village, making it more vulnerable to Hasenan raiding campaigns.

Owen Miller underlines that with the advent of the telegraph, the voice of non-state actors began to be heard more, highlighting that the telegraph permitted the stories and narratives of events in the Muş region to be heard more frequently in İstanbul.[309] In this vein, on June 15, 1898, the Armenian peasants of the Derik village submitted a petition to the Armenian Patriarchate, complaining about atrocities committed by Rıza Agha. This was one of the first petitions where the Derik peasants attempted to raise their voices in Istanbul. As a community, they considered the Armenian Patriarchate their representative in Istanbul, thus they communicated directly with the Patriarchate rather than with Ottoman authorities. The importance of the petitions written by the Derik peasants is that the Armenian peasants were not passive people who put up with systematic violence. Instead, the Armenian peasants were determined to find a way to protect themselves from Rıza Agha's raiding campaigns. Because the village of Derik was not in the mountains, it was not armed, making the inhabitants vulnerable to attacks from Hasenan cavalrymen. According to the inhabitants of Derik, Rıza Agha had been persecuting them for three years, taking hundreds of their cattle, thus the peasants needed the protection of the state.[310]

A report written by the Bitlis governorate to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs on July 21, 1900 showed that Rıza Agha's goal was to seize the village's fertile land and take the village's livestock, and the peasants complained that it was not possible to work in the fields without their livestock. Further, this report illustrated that Rıza Agha was taken into custody and then was sent to central Bitlis, indicating that the

[309] Miller, "Sasun 1894," 78.
[310] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 73/93, 30 Rabiulevvel 1317 (August 8, 1899).

state was not entirely happy with what the Hamidian chiefs had done.[311] However, there was a clear problem that civil authorities could not take any actions against him because he was a member of the Hamidian regiments. Another petition written to the Armenian Patriarchate in August of 1900 gives us detailed information about the charges against Rıza Agha. According to this petition, Rıza Agha began his first attacks in 1892, right after joining the Hamidian regiments. Collecting money by using force, stealing livestock, killing ordinary peasants, seizing fertile lands, burning houses and fields were various crimes he committed against the inhabitants of Derik. The village headman and other important figures from the village revealed that they had become landless due to Rıza Agha and his men's constant exploitation. Both petitions and reports regarding the Derik village illustrate that the inhabitants of Derik were unable to resist the increasing attacks of the Hasenan tribesmen. The villagers of Derik complained about how systematic these attacks had become in recent years. In addition, the Armenian peasants of Derik pointed out that Rıza Agha had committed many crimes that were against the public order, so if he were sent to a military court rather than a civilian court, this would be a miscarriage of justice.[312] This is important because it illustrates that a faction of the Ottoman bureaucracy was opposed to treating the Hamidian tribal leaders as members of the military class. In other words, there were many people within the Ottoman bureaucracy who believed that the Hamidian chiefs had to be penalized in order to limit their notorious activities.

While Rıza Agha was in central Bitlis, he was powerful enough to threaten and intimidate those who came to central Bitlis to testify against him in court. There were numerous complaints against Rıza Agha in the Bitlis courthouse, not only from

[311] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 73/93, 30 Rabiulevvel 1317 (August 8, 1899).
[312] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 73/93, 30 Rabiulevvel 1317 (August 8, 1899).

Christians but also from Muslim peasants. Thus, Ottoman authorities emphasized that Rıza Agha should be disciplined.[313] Yet, the shadow of M. Zeki Pasha was hovering over the civil bureaucracy, and he held Rıza Agha and other Hamidian tribal chiefs under his protection. It is undeniable that Rıza Agha threatened those who complained about him and even attacked them without hesitation or fear while he was waiting for the court in central Bitlis, proving that Rıza Agha held a formidable position in the Bitlis province.

Another important point about the Derik case is that Armenian peasants did not stop launching complaints against Rıza Agha even though he was such an intimidating figure in the region. It is possible that the inhabitants of Derik came to a level where they could no longer withstand the oppression and violence of the Hasenan tribe. Derik was not a village under the control of the Hasenan tribe, which is one reason why Rıza Agha committed regular and systematic violence against the vulnerable peasants of Derik. All the petitions from the Derik village over the years show that Rıza Agha wanted to bring this village under his firm authority. In this vein, Janet Klein argues that the Hamidian chiefs used violence, threats, raids, and robbery as a strategy in order to take lands and plunder property and livestock at the expense of local inhabitants of the region.[314]

According to another petition submitted by Kigork, who was the headman of Derik at the time, to the Armenian Patriarchate, 800 inhabitants of the village threatened to leave the village unless the state stepped in to protect them.[315] This illustrates that there was a significant danger of depopulation in some areas due to the systematic violence committed by the Hamidian perpetrators in the Ottoman

[313] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 73/93, 30 Rabiulevvel 1317 (August 8, 1899).
[314] Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 142.
[315] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 73/93, 30 Rabiulevvel 1317 (August 8, 1899).

East. In this way, when the villagers left their fields, they were reduced to forced labor and sharecropping, indicating declining economic conditions for free peasants under the authority of the Hamidian Kurdish aghas in the region. Still, it would be an oversimplification to claim that the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs wanted to depopulate agricultural areas. Kurdish tribal leaders needed peasants to cultivate lands in order to receive tax revenues. As a result, I argue that the Hamidian chieftains did not want to allow Armenian peasants to leave their villages, but rather they sought to put them in a position of forced labor in order to keep their strong economic gains in their hands. Klein points out that both Muslim and Armenian peasants became targets of systematic violence committed by the Hamidian aghas because of the vulnerable status of their property and lands to raids and administrative abuses.[316]

The Bitlis government sent three telegrams to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, pointing out that Rıza Agha was in central Bitlis, and they were awaiting orders from the Sublime Porte to conduct his trial, so they needed appointed military officers who would judge him. However, the telegraphs revealed that the government could not decide what to do with Rıza Agha, so the Ministry of Domestic Affairs did not send military personnel to the Bitlis province for a long time.[317] For more than a year, from November of 1899 until September 1900, the Bitlis governorate sent reports, writing that Rıza Agha's case was still pending, thus Rıza Agha was free and not in custody.

In the meantime, Kigork and other Armenians of Derik submitted another petition to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, and not the Armenian Patriarchate, because the Armenian peasants did not believe that the Patriarchate would be able to solve their problem. They emphasized that Rıza Agha had not stopped his unlawful

[316] Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 142.
[317] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 684/18, 26 Recep 1317 (November 30, 1899).

acts, so they needed to find a new place to live in order to protect themselves from Rıza Agha's cruelty. This became a crucial warning for the Ottoman officials to finally form a military court in the Bitlis center. According to the order sent by the Porte to the governor of Bitlis on 10 October 1900,

> The military court was under the chairmanship of Mirliva [major general] Ali Pasha. Other court members were deputy of Ali Pasha, Miralay [colonel] İsmail Bey, Kaymakam [district governor] Mustafa, binbaşı [major] Ahmed Fehami, Hacı Mehmed, Süleyman Ziver, and lastly Kasım Efendi.[318]

Rıza Agha was charged with murder, pillaging, and land theft, and he was called to the military court. Therefore, this time, the Hamidian regime finally initiated a judicial action to deal with Rıza Agha's misdeeds in the Derik case. Yet, the tension between Rıza Agha and the Armenian inhabitants of Derik would not stop here.

It appears that the commission formed to investigate the demands of the Derik villagers could not find sufficient evidence to sentence Rıza Agha to prison. After Rıza Agha's return to Malazgird in July 1901, he carried out another raid on the Derik village. Rıza Agha stole property worth nearly 5000 lira and his men murdered three Armenians. This time, however, Rıza Agha put together a different strategy before he attacked the Derik village. He prepared fake documents which indicated that the peasants of Derik owed him a great sum of money, and he submitted these fake documents to the local court in Malazgird. While some villagers came to Malazgird in order to attend the trial, Rıza Agha and his men raided Derik.[319] The inhabitants of Derik sent a petition to the Armenian Patriarchate, complaining that because of Rıza Agha's fake document trial, their property and

[318] "… Divan-i Harbde tedkiki lazım geleceğinden Mirliva Ali Paşa riyasetinde olmak ve azası Miralay İsmail ve Kaymakam Mustafa beglerle Binbaşı Ahmed Fehami ve Hacı Mehmed ve Süleyman Ziver ve Kasım Efendilerden mürekkeb bulunmak üzere Bitlis de bir Divan-i Harb teşkiliyle orada icra ı muhakemesi hususi fi 31 Ağustos sene 315 ve fi 29 Kanun i Evvel sene 315 tarihlerinde…" BOA, Y. MTV. 207/76, 16 Cemazeyilahir 1318 (October 11, 1900).
[319] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 106/33, 1 Rabiulahir 1319 (July 18, 1901).

livestock were taken, so the Derik peasants went to Malazgird to try to get their property back. However, deputy commander Tayyib Bey refused to give them their livestock, rejecting their demands. Without their livestock, the villagers' prospects looked grim as they were dependent upon their livestock for survival.[320] This would not be the end of the story of Derik and the Hasenan, as the Hasenan chiefs continued their misdeeds. As a result, some of the Armenians of Derik began to migrate from their village because Ottoman authorities could not seem to stop Rıza Agha.

When he was put in prison in Erzurum after this incident in July 1901, Rıza Agha knew that he would not stay in prison for long, so he encouraged his son and close men to attack Derik again. This raid was carried out to intimidate Kigork and his friends, hoping that the Armenian peasants would not persist in their complaints against Rıza Agha, which would result in his release from prison. As a result, Rıza Agha's son and men raided Derik and carried off 640 batmans of wheat.[321] Further, they killed two Armenian peasants and injured another. Besides that, they surrounded the Derik village, hoping that villagers would not maintain their complaints about Rıza Agha. This was a common practice used by Kurdish tribesmen in order to intimidate and manipulate people in the region. The inhabitants of Derik were put under extreme pressure. In this regard, the tension between the Derik peasants and the Hasenan tribe turned into a local crisis.

The Armenian Patriarchate was perhaps the main place where Armenians tried to make their voices heard. However, this time, the petitions submitted by the inhabitants of Derik to the Armenian Patriarchate were also sent to different governors in the Ottoman East because the peasants probably wanted to reach as

[320] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 109/54, 27 Cemazeyilevvel 1319 (September 11, 1901).
[321] Batman was the unit of measurement used in the Ottoman period. With a law enacted in March 1882, one new batman was equal to ten kilograms. For more detailed about batman, see Kallek, "Batman," 199-200.

many important bureaucrats as possible in an attempt to make their plight visible at the government level.[322] Yet, the Hasenan continued their aggression and attacks. In this sense, Armenian peasants in the Ottoman East encountered many challenges and struggles, including poverty, plundering, discrimination, and socioeconomic instability. They were often subject to harsh treatment and exploitation by the Hamidian aghas who became their landlords. Both the Diyarbekir and Mamüretü'l Elaziz governors were even informed about the difficult conditions of the Derik villagers under the pressure of Rıza Agha and his men.[323]

It is remarkable that while all these conflicts and problems were continuing between Rıza Agha and the Armenian inhabitants of Derik, Fethullah Bey's name was not mentioned in the Ottoman documents, indicating that the Armenian inhabitants of Derik did not have a specific problem with Fethullah Bey. Government officials also did not refer to Fethullah Bey, showing that he was not part of the crimes committed against the Derik village. In this period of the early twentieth century, Rıza Agha's name became the symbol of crimes and atrocities against the Armenian and Kurdish peasantry. On the other hand, Fethullah Bey usually engaged in inter-tribal conflict and problems during the Hamidian period. I suggest that Fethullah Bey might have been a hidden actor who encouraged Rıza Agha to attack the Armenian villages from behind the scene. It is unlikely that Rıza Agha would be so aggressive and militant towards the Armenian peasants in the region without his brother's knowledge and consent. Yet, it should also be noted that in many instances of raids on villages, the Hamidian chiefs could have taken initiative without informing their superiors. However, when the intensity and scale of the aggression against the Derik village is taken into consideration, it is hard to imagine that Rıza

[322] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 106/33, 1 Rabiulahir 1319 (July 18, 1901).
[323] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 106/33, 1 Rabiulahir 1319 (July 18, 1901).

Agha persistently raided the Derik village without Fethullah Bey's at least tacit approval.

Rıza Agha's aggression towards Armenian and Muslim peasants was far from over. By the summer of 1902, Rıza Agha was an active raider and brigand again. There is, however, no documentation about the Derik village between 1901 and 1908 and it is not clear whether or not Rıza Agha interacted with the Derik peasants in the aftermath of his release. Rıza Agha and other prominent names from the Hasenan tribe, including Reşid Agha and Süleyman Agha, carried out raids on the Hanoğlu and Evgün villages in the Malazgird sub-district, taking numerous moveable properties and livestock. In the complaint prepared by the Armenians of the Hanoğlu village, they referred particularly to how much they paid in taxes to the state, stressing that they were more valuable subjects for the state than a bunch of tribal Kurds. In other words, the Armenians of the Hanoğlu village emphasized their two important aspects when they made a comparison between themselves and the Hasenan Kurds. First, they stressed that they paid 4000-5000 guruş tax to the Ottoman state per year, thus they were part of a productive agriculturalist class, which the state greatly needed and valued. Second, they highlighted that the Hasenan Kurds were uncivilized.[324]

By March 1904, several telegrams were exchanged between the Bitlis government and the Porte illustrating that Rıza Agha was arrested in Malazgird due to the allegation that he killed a man. After his arrest in Malazgird, he was sent to the center of Bitlis. The British Consulate put pressure on the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasizing that Rıza Agha was released from prison in Bitlis, and that this was a security problem for those who filed complaints against him.

[324] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 129/14, 6 Cemazeyilevvel 1320 (August 11, 1902).

However, the Bitlis government pointed out that Rıza Agha spent all of 1903 in prison because of the allegations against him. Yet, while he was in prison, no one came to the Bitlis center to testify, which is why he was released. According to the government officials, these allegations about him were slander, and Armenians were not trustworthy in their complaints about Rıza Agha because they hated Kurdish tribesmen. As a result, officials decided not to keep Rıza Agha under arrest anymore since no one brought a lawsuit against him while he was being held in Bitlis.[325] The important point here is that the British consulate now had negative views about the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs. Further, it seems that Armenian people began to build more contacts with international powers in order to make the atrocities committed against them more visible. The Ottoman officials were skeptical about the role of the British Consulate in Ahlat, stressing that this was a local incident. However, when the British Consulate engaged in the cases brought against Rıza Agha, it made things more complicated, and now Rıza Agha had attracted attention of Ottoman officials more than ever. Therefore, he would have to be more careful when he interacted with Armenian peasants. However, the language of the documents shows that Rıza Agha had a solid relationship with local officials, which helped defend him against Armenian complaints.

4.8 Border mobility

The Hamidian regime did not want to lose local inhabitants, as they were paying taxes to the state, so the state finally formed a military court to prosecute Rıza Agha. However, the Armenian peasants tried to escape to other countries in order to protect their families from trouble. The sense of panic was so widespread that the number of

[325] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 685/30, 19 Zilhicce 1321 (March 7, 1904).

the Armenians escaping from Ottoman territories increased to an unprecedented level. After the Armenian peasants lost their cultivated lands, moveable properties, and livestock, migrating to Russia or other countries in order to make a living seemed like the only solution.[326] The reasons behind Armenian flight were likely multifaceted, as they may have been running away from violence in their villages, but they also may have been going in search of better economic opportunities. Owen Miller underlines that the Ottoman state began an internal passport regime in order to prevent Armenians from leaving their places of origin.[327] There were, however, some people, including the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs and local state officials, who helped Armenians cross the Ottoman border. In this way, those who committed crimes against Armenian peasants also, at times, helped them escape. New patterns of setting up an internal passport regime in order to prevent Armenians from fleeing their villages would not be a sufficient precaution. Since some Hamidian tribal leaders, including Rıza Agha, helped Armenians come to the Ottoman Empire and vice versa, it was difficult for the state to secure the Ottoman-Russian border.

Kurdish tribesmen helped Armenian revolutionaries in order to receive a hefty payment. In other words, some Kurdish tribal groups received money from the Armenians, and in return, they helped Armenians cross the border from Russia without any issues. For instance, a document from the Erzurum government to the Porte claimed that because a Hamidian regiment was tasked with protecting the Ottoman-Russian border, the state had not send any regular troops to the border. Yet, the Kurdish forces who were responsible for border security benefitted from the situation at the expense of state interests.[328] It seems that governor of Erzurum did

[326] For more detailed information about the pull and push factors behind the Armenian migration from the Ottoman Empire to abroad, see Gutman, "The Political Economy of Armenian Migration," 42-61.
[327] Miller, "Sasun 1894," 53.
[328] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 642/25, 24 Recep 1318 (November 17, 1900).

not trust the Hamidian Kurds and blamed a group of the Hasenan tribesmen under Rıza Agha's leadership for the border movement of Armenian revolutionaries. On November 22nd 1900, another telegraph from Erzurum to the central government underlined that

> The Armenians who escaped to Russia have now returned to Ottoman provinces and Russian officials did not prevent them from crossing the Russian border. Hamidian colonel Yusuf Bey, Majors Rıza, Mustafa, Bişar, and Süleyman Agha helped the Armenians cross the border in return for receiving half a lira to a lira and a half per person. These Hasenan chiefs came to the Hasdur, Keşişin, and Karakilisa villages in the Eleşkird sub-district, the Konak village in the Antab and Tutak regions in order to help these Armenians. After they took the Armenian groups, they went to the Bulanık and Malazgird sub-districts without facing any obstacles.[329]

The document revealed that the Porte was upset about such border mobility and its instigators, Hamidian Kurds. However, it was not that easy for the state to prevent border movement.

In addition, this border security problem was not specific to the Hasenan leaders. This was, rather, a socioeconomic form of trade based on human trafficking and smuggling, and this had connections to many Kurdish paramilitary groups. In this regard, Erdal Çiftçi underlines that Hüseyin Pasha of the Hayderan assisted Armenian revolutionaries, and for his efforts received financial compensation.[330] The governor of Van also reported to the Ottoman center that the lines between Kurds and Armenians were blurred, and Kurdish tribesmen could make alliances with Armenian revolutionaries against the interests of the Ottoman state.[331] Both reports

[329] "Rusya'ya firar eden ve Memalik-i Şahaneye avdetleri memnu' olan birçok Ermeni'nin Rusi memurlarından müşkilat görmeksizin mütemadiyen hududi geçerek Hamidiye Süvari Alayları Kaymakamlarından Kozibanlı Yusuf Beg ve Kazinkalı? Binbaşı Rıza Ağa ve Monla Mustafa kariyeli Bişar Efendi ve Terzek kariyeli Süleyman Beg nüfus başına yarım liradan bir buçuk liraya kadar bir ücret i'tasıyla ve mumaileyhin adamlarıyla Eleşkird muzafatından Hasdur Köyü Keşişin köyü Karakilisa Kalesi ve Antab mülhakatından Kotak __ Dutak köylerinden __ Malazgird ve Bulanık'a kadar gelmek de ve __ vesait ile avdet etmek de oldukları Tiflis Baş Şehbenderliği'nden Hariciye Nezaretine buyurulmakla…" BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 642/25, 24 Recep 1318 (November 17, 1900).
[330] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 329.
[331] Ibid., 329.

from the Erzurum and Van governorates illustrated that the Ottoman bureaucracy did not consider the Hamidian Kurds to be trustworthy, and they warned Yıldız Palace about the illegal acts of these Hamidian Kurds. On the other hand, both the Hasenan and Hayderan chiefs benefitted from the difficult conditions of the Armenian people by receiving payments from them. Overall, however, we cannot say that there was a full-time state of hostility between the Hamidian Kurds and Armenians.

These reports clearly showed that the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs embraced policies based on pragmatic and economic motivations. They regularly tried to increase their income. In some instances, those who were close to the Hamidian chiefs took the initiative to help Armenian peasants cross the border in exchange for payment. For example, 53 Armenians were captured by the local officials in the Hınıs sub-district while they were trying to escape to Russia. Following their interrogation in Hınıs, it became clear that Halid Agha's servant and Yusuf Agha's son, from the Hasenan tribe, helped these Armenian peasants cross the border, and in return Armenian peasants paid them 45 guruş per person. After the interrogation, these Armenians were secretly sent to their villages, and there was no indication that Halid Agha's servant or Yusuf Agha's son were punished.[332] This shows us that Hamidian regiments did not have a monolithic stance towards Armenians.

The important point here is that even though the government did not want to let Armenians leave their villages, many Armenians found ways to migrate by paying money to the Hamidian Kurds, who were, at the same time, perpetrators of violence towards the Armenians in the region. From another perspective, Yıldız Palace tended to consider Armenian peasants to be revolutionaries who were seditious towards the Ottoman state. This shows that the Ottoman state had a knee-jerk reaction towards

[332] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 186/1, 1 Ramazan 1322 (November 9, 1904).

ordinary Armenians who were mobile on the Ottoman-Russian border. Nevertheless, the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs did not have these automatic assumptions about Armenians even though the atmosphere was becoming more and more politicized with each passing day. Instead, Kurdish chieftains were very pragmatic and flexible in their relationship with Armenians. Therefore, economic matters were always at the center of the devastation caused by the Hamidian regiments.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter examines how the power of the Hasenan chiefs reached its peak during the Hamidan era. Most of the Hasenan chiefs, including Rıza Agha, were also tax farmers, thus they had ways to accumulate wealth. In order to maintain their economic power and keep their close men under their control, the Hasenan chiefs also carried out major raids on Armenian and Muslim villages. In particular, the Armenian people were targeted and victimized because they were the most vulnerable and weak group. Rıza Agha of the Hasenan enjoyed significant power in the late nineteenth century, and he terrorized the countryside even though there were many complaints about his notorious activities. He was one of the main perpetrators in both the Ahlat incidents and the Derik case.

In this chapter, the Ahlat incidents and the Derik case are important in terms of reflecting the typical and systematic violence in the region during the Hamidian period. By examining the Ahlat incidents, this chapter discusses a process in which Rıza Agha and other Hasenan chiefs became more politicized, indicating the attention of the British Consulate on the relationship between the Hasenan chiefs and the Armenian people. Moreover, the Ahlat incidents revealed that the Hasenan leaders had the power to extend their raids even to the center of Ahlat and central

Bitlis. Further, the Ahlat region was not a place where strong Kurdish tribes resided, making it an easy target for the Hasenan cavalrymen to loot. One more important point about the raids in the Ahlat region is that Ahlat was not geographically close to Malazgird, but the Hasenan were strong enough to raid in the Ahlat sub-district, indicating that the Hasenan chiefs had enough logistical and military power to gain control over the roads between Ahlat and the Bitlis center for a period of time.

On the other hand, the Derik case shows that the Armenian peasants tried to raise their voices against Rıza Agha's misdeeds. Therefore, they were not a passive group of people, but they were still vulnerable to the raids of the Hasenan tribesmen. The Derik case was also a good example of the intensity and scale of the raids on a village by a strong Kurdish tribe without fear of consequences. In this period, the Hasenan tribesmen could organize raiding campaigns and surround villages for long times without hesitation, proving the systematic and ruthless violence of the Hasenan tribe, supported by the Ottoman state. In the Derik case, we see that the Hasenan tribesmen were strong enough to carry out raiding campaigns. However, neither the Derik case nor the problems in the Ahlat region can be used as evidence of the weakness of the Ottoman state because it failed to stop Hasenan aggression. On the contrary, this chapter has argued that the Hamidian regime did not want to upset its allies, the Kurdish chiefs who joined the Hamidian regiments in the region, thus Yıldız Palace made a choice regarding sharing its power with the Kurdish aghas. During the Hamidian era, those Hamidian Kurdish tribes shared the right of the use of violence with the state as a means to gain as much profit as they could.

CHAPTER 5

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

5.1 Introduction

After the Derik case, Rıza Agha's notorious activities drew attention more than ever, as Ottoman authorities feared that foreign intervention would be inevitable due to the land problems caused by Rıza Agha and other Hamidian Kurdish chiefs. Here, the relentless opposition of the inhabitants of Derik was crucial to drawing the attention of the Porte. The power of the bureaucracy, which was generally in opposition to the Hamidian regiments, also seemed to increase in the last years of the Hamidian regime. Even though Rıza Agha and Fethullah Bey were still free to run rampant through their territory, the political atmosphere of the empire began to change. The Hamidian regime had to act more quickly and carefully in its relations with the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs.

In the meantime, Rıza Agha and other Hasenan chiefs did not cease committing atrocities against local people because it was the easiest way for them to generate income for themselves and their close circle. For example, they attacked the Kuşçu, Aynelhoca, Koşçiyan, Karaçoban, Govendik, Kerimkaya, and Salıveri villages in the Malazgird and Hınıs sub-districts. Nearly all these villages were not far from the center of the Malazgird and Hınıs sub-districts, which explains why the Hasenan tribe raided these villages. The main reason behind the raids on these villages was that these villages had large cultivated areas which produced a great amount of wheat and barley. Further, these villages likely had a certain number of livestock which was vital for the economic prosperity of both villagers and the Hasenan tribesmen. In this regard, economic motivations were the main factors

which prompted the Hasenan chiefs to carry out attacks on both Armenian and Kurdish villages.

In this respect, while Taceddin Bey forced Armenian peasants to work for him without pay, Rıza Agha and Fethullah Bey raided these Kurdish and Armenian villages in order to accumulate wealth and seize lands. After the raids, when they seized these lands, particularly pasturelands and fields, they tried to register the fields in their own names as an attempt to find a legal and legitimate defense against possible future legal battles. In addition to that, Taceddin Bey forced the tradesmen of Karaçoban to sell their property to him at half price.[333] Further, Taceddin Bey had large houses built for himself in the Kerimkaya and Salıveri villages in the Hınıs sub-district. He was acting as if he were the owner of these villages.[334] In this regard, the practice of forced labor and registering land parcels in their name was very common for Hamidian Kurdish chiefs. Moreover, when Kurdish chiefs registered parcels in their name in particular villages, they brought other tribesmen with them and then settled the tribesmen in those villages which were now under their control. This was a sort of small-scale demographic engineering which aimed to make these Hamidian aghas the present and future owners of the villages in the region. This means that the demographic structure of some Armenian villages changed at the expense of the Armenian population during the Hamidian period.

According to Mehmet Polatel, violence was a significant factor in the transformation of the agricultural structure of the Ottoman East.[335] Polatel argues that during the Hamidian period, a great number of Armenians who were once free

[333] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 254/2, 4 Şaban 1325 (September 12, 1907), BOA, BEO. 3105/232815, 9 Cemazeyilahir 1325 (July 20, 1907), BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 241/24, 7 Rabiulevvel 1325 (April 20, 1907), BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 233/15, 16 Şevval 1324 (December 3, 1906).
[334] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 254-2, 4 Şaban 1325 (September 12, 1907).
[335] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 201.

cultivators lost their lands and were forced to become marabas, serfs, and laborers.[336] In this regard, with the changing agricultural relations in the region, Hamidian chiefs began to become large landowners because they had the power to register as many parcels of land as they wanted in their name. Further, the lack of rule of law in the Ottoman East negatively led to a decrease of agricultural output, disturbing and deteriorating trade in the region. Nearly all the petitions regarding Rıza Agha's atrocities and that of other Hasenan chiefs highlighted that they lost their livestock and lands, depriving them of the resources necessary to engage in agriculture.[337] These petitions noted that the main form of trade was selling agricultural products in the small provincial markets in the region. Therefore, when local peasants were deprived of agricultural tools and resources, trade stagnated. In this regard, the pillage economy resulted in declining trade and agricultural output in the Ottoman East, while Kurdish aghas were concentrating wealth in their hands.

In this manner, this chapter analyzes the major structural changes in the relations between the state and Kurdish tribal units in the case of the Hasenan tribe. I argue that in the last years of the Hamidian regime, the approach of the state towards the Kurdish tribal leaders began to shift in a more negative direction because the power that these tribal chiefs held disturbed the state bureaucracy more than ever. For example, according to a document from the general staff, Rıza Agha, colonel of the 27th Hamidian regiment, was sentenced to exile for two years in the 20th regular cavalry unit in Diyarbekir because of his inappropriate behavior in June 1907. By sending Rıza Agha to serve in the 20th regular cavalry unit for two years in Diyarbekir, the government believed that he would learn discipline and order,

[336] Ibid., 201.
[337] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 254/2, 4 Şaban 1325 (September 12, 1907), BOA, BEO. 3105/232815, 9 Cemazeyilahir 1325 (July 20, 1907), BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 241/24, 7 Rabiulevvel 1325 (April 20, 1907), BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 233/15, 16 Şevval 1324 (December 3, 1906).

minimizing the trouble he could make in the Muş region.[338] This illustrates that the government did, at times, try to take strong action to punish these Hasenan chiefs. As I will show in this chapter, the Ottoman state began to take harsher measures against Kurdish chieftains from 1907 onwards. This document by the general staff shows that the Ottoman state's lax policies toward these Hamidian chieftains in the 1890s began to change from 1907 onwards. Although Rıza Agha was sentenced to exile, there is no evidence that he actually went, as he was still in Muş in the years after his sentence.

Following the proclamation of the constitution, the CUP regime tended to build contact with the Armenian leadership in order to curb the power of Kurdish aghas, who were seen relicts of the Hamidian era. However, after 1910, the CUP developed more pragmatic policies towards the Kurdish aghas in order to use their manpower. Armenian peasants did not, however, recover the lands and properties which were stolen from them. Yet, even though the CUP regime attempted to maintain the status quo and feudal order at the expense of the Armenian and Kurdish peasants after 1910, CUP officials would not develop personal relationships with the Kurdish chiefs. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that the relationship between the Kurdish aghas and the CUP government was tense because the Kurdish tribesmen did not want to lose their economic power and they resisted embracing the more centralist policies of the CUP regime. In this chapter, I examine the twilight of Rıza Agha and Fethullah Bey's power in the Ottoman East. They would fall out of favor with the state and during the First World War, and Fethullah Bey would be labeled a fugitive. In this manner, this chapter examines the last phase of the relationship and dynamics between the Ottoman state and Hasenan tribe.

[338] BOA, Y. MTV. 293/28, 7 Zilhicce 1324 (January 22, 1907).

5.2 Shifting policies before the establishment of the Second Constitution

The Hasenan chiefs were still strong enough to seize the property and lands of both Armenian and Muslim peasants in the region before the proclamation of Second Constitution. They were still formidable local political actors who enjoyed the protection of M. Zeki Pasha. Yet, the burden of the Hamidian regime had begun to increase, while the patience of the local peasantry was decreasing, thus Yıldız Palace had to take action to prevent foreign powers from intervening in its domestic affairs in the Ottoman East. Nevertheless, petitions submitted by Armenians to the Sublime Porte increased, setting off alarm bells that Kurdish tribal units posed a strong threat to the integrity of the empire. Several years before the establishment of the Second Constitutional regime in 1908, the demands of many Armenians regarding the return of their properties seized by the Kurdish chiefs increased significantly. In this regard, a report from the Porte to the governorates of Erzurum, Van, and Bitlis in September 1907 pointed out that the Kurdish tribesmen who were part of the Hamidian regiments inhabiting these provinces had to obey to the rule of law, and that these tribal units had to return lands and properties to their real owners. Otherwise, regular troops from the 8th Regiment would intervene in the property process and land transfers.[339] This report is important because it illustrates that regular Ottoman troops were prepared as a sort of judiciary force to bring justice on the behalf of local inhabitants who lost their lands and property. Therefore, the Ottoman state warned the Hamidian tribes in these three provinces that they would face the consequences of their notorious actions if they did not stop their aggression. The report's language admitted the misdeeds of the Hamidian tribal chiefs in the region. Anything became possible as the Hamidian regiments looked to push through a difficult period.

[339] BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 673/39, 23 Recep 1325 (September 1, 1907).

The Hamidian regime was serious about putting an end to the aggression of the Hamidian regiments in the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts. The Bitlis government prepared gendarmerie forces to prevent the Hasenan forces from attacking Christian villages in these two sub-districts. The Bitlis government even asked for two battalions from the Fourth Army center but received a negative response. The message stated that they could not provide two battalions, but gendarmerie forces could come to aid. Yet, it was stated that the tribal forces were composed of almost 200 armed men, thus gendarmerie forces would likely not be enough.[340] This telegraph between the Fourth Army center and the Bitlis government shows that the attitude of the state towards the Hasenan tribal forces began to shift in a negative direction in the last two years of the Hamidian regime. But there was another problem: the state did not have enough military personnel to exert its authority in the Bitlis province.

Rıza Agha was still a barrier to the consolidation of state power in the Bitlis province. For example, in December 1907, Rıza Agha went to the office of the Mal Müdürü (property director) of Malazgird, attacked him and forced him to give him a property deed.[341] In other words, Rıza Agha still had the power to dictate his demands to a civilian state official, and he even beat him up in the state office. However, the document showed that the Porte was decisive in taking action against Rıza Agha. Another document from the Mutasarrıf of Muş to the Porte in December 1907 illustrated that the Hasenan chiefs, including Rıza and Süleyman Agha, Fethullah, Mehmet Emin, Halid, and Yusuf Beys, were taken into custody after the Ağviran raid. All these chiefs were sent to the Erzurum center, but Rıza Agha came up with the excuse that he was sick, and thus could not handle a long trip from

[340] BOA, BEO. 3177/238207, 26 Ramazan 1325 (November 2, 1907).
[341] BOA, BEO. 3221/241530, 28 Zilkade 1325 (January 2, 1908).

Malazgird to Erzurum. However, the Mutasarrıf of Muş, Safvet, did not believe him and Rıza Agha was also taken into custody.

The important point here is that all of these Hasenan chiefs were significant names, but after the Ağviran raid, a typical raid on a village, the state no longer allowed them to roam freely in the Muş region. They were all sent to prison in Erzurum. Further, the document pointed out that Rıza Agha was the most brutal one of these Hasenan chiefs.[342] Rıza Agha was clearly not a trustworthy man in the eyes of state officials now. Even though the Ağviran raid was an ordinary raid carried out by the Hasenan tribesmen, nearly all the major figures of the Hasenan tribe, including Fethullah, were taken into custody, revealing that the Hamidian regime began to see the Hasenan forces as dangerous and not conducive to state interests.

Indeed, Rıza Agha and other Hasenan chiefs were never seen as trustworthy to state officials, including M. Zeki Pasha. Nevertheless, their actions were tolerated in general because they were part of the state structure, and M. Zeki Pasha supported the Hamidiye as a paramilitary organization. A short time before the establishment of the Second Constitution on July 23, 1908, Ottoman officials became more aware of the atrocities committed by the Hamidian chiefs. As a result, the downside of supporting and enabling Hamidian tribal units became more visible through reports and telegrams which were exchanged between the Porte and provincial officials.

The power of M. Zeki Pasha waned, however, in the last years of the Hamidian regime. Between 1890 and 1907, M. Zeki Pasha was a strong intermediary figure between the Porte and provincial officials when it came to discussing the actions of the Hamidian chiefs. However, a short time before the declaration of Second Constitution in July 1908, his strong commitment to the idea of a loyal and

[342] BOA, BEO. 3227/242004, 7 Zilhicce 1325 (January 11, 1908), BOA, BEO. 3227/241973, 5 Zilhicce 1325 (January 9, 1908).

effective Kurdish paramilitary organization seems to have changed. It is likely that Sultan Abdulhamid II himself might have also believed that the Hamidian chiefs caused more damage than benefit in the Ottoman East as both the demands of the Armenian people and foreign pressure regarding the resolution of the land issue increased. For this reason, by the beginning of 1908, Rıza Agha was in prison in the Bitlis center because of his notorious actions against the people of Ağviran and the Mal Müdürü (property director) of Malazgird.

Rıza Agha had, of course, been put in prison before, and the complaints of the Derik peasants had put him on the radar of the British Consulate in Ahlat. However, this time, it was more difficult for the Hasenan chiefs to maintain their power because the political atmosphere of the empire had begun to change at the expense of their interests. But Rıza Agha would not stay in prison for long. After spending a short time in prison in central Bitlis, he was released from prison in Bitlis in April 1908, after which he carried out another raid on the village of Derik.[343] He would not, however, be put into prison after the complaints of inhabitants of Derik because Second Constitution was proclaimed on July 23, 1908.

After his raid on the Derik village, another report from the chief of staff dated to June 1908 illustrated that Rıza's men attacked a caravan carrying boxes of gas. This caravan was owned by both local and foreign tradesmen. Therefore, according to the report, Rıza Agha was taken into custody while the investigation about the attack proceeded.[344] The important point, which illustrates the changing attitude of the state towards Rıza Agha, is that he was easily taken into custody even though there was no concrete evidence regarding who the actual raiders were. The document clearly pointed out that the officials did not have enough evidence to put Rıza Agha

[343] BOA, BEO. 3295/247051, 15 Rabiulevvel 1326 (April 17, 1908).
[344] BOA, BEO. 3327/249520, 5 Cemazeyilevvel 1326 (June 5, 1908).

in prison,[345] but he was in prison because the state wanted to show that it was the real power in the region. In addition to that, the fear of foreign intervention due to the security of foreign tradesmen probably added additional pressure to put Rıza Agha in prison. This example also shows us that Rıza Agha was no longer trusted and praised. Most Ottoman documents dated to one or two years before the establishment of the Second Constitution referred to Rıza Agha as a brutal and cruel person who committed violence against innocent people in the Muş region.[346] The changing language of state documents indicated that the Hasenan leaders no longer had the absolute support of Yıldız Palace. This was a sign that a year or two before the restoration of the Constitution, the state began to evaluate its positions regarding the existence of the Hamidian regiments in the region.

In this sense, I emphasize that, in the last years of the Hamidian regime, we see the beginnings of a policy shift towards the Hamidian regiments. Scholarship has generally operated on the assumption that the relationship between Kurdish tribes and the Hamidian regime was consistent until the CUP government came to power in 1908.[347] Upon further consideration, however, we see that from around 1907 onwards, the relationship between Kurdish tribes and the Ottoman state was beginning to fray. Yıldız Palace began to realize that the imperial project of the Hamidian regiments would never materialize in terms of bringing peace and prosperity to the region while minimizing the influence of Armenians. On the contrary, Armenian political organizations were actually becoming more powerful and widespread in the region. In light of information coming from the Eastern

[345] BOA, BEO. 3327/249520, 5 Cemazeyilevvel 1326 (June 5, 1908).
[346] BOA, BEO. 3227/241973, 5 Zilhicce 1325 (January 9, 1908), BOA, BEO. 3227/242004, 7 Zilhicce 1325 (January 11, 1908).
[347] See, Klein, *The Margins of Empire;* Kodoman, "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiment," 420-421; Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa*.

provinces, the Ottoman center began to see that the Hamidian regiments were not as militarily useful as they had hoped they would be. Therefore, the Ottoman state did not want to delegate its power to the Hamidian regiments in the region anymore.

5.3 The Second Constitutional period

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Ottoman empire was in a weak economic and military position in comparison to European powers. Abdulhamid II's autocratic rule caused many opposition groups, including the CUP, to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, the CUP was the most prominent political organization which emerged against Hamidian absolutism.[348] In 1907, the CUP and the Ottoman Freedom Society in Salonica united,[349] increasing the opposition to Sultan Abdulhamid II even more. Those who were against the Hamidian regime claimed that because of the despotic rule of Yıldız Palace, the Ottoman State was in a weak position in the international arena. They believed that if the Sultan were eliminated, then an Ottoman identity would be embraced by all the communities that were still part of the Ottoman State. The Sultan himself was seen as a figure representing all evil and an obstacle to the reforms which the Young Turks wanted to carry out. In this way, the Young Turk movement was a coalition between different political factions that were united with the goal of ending the absolutism of the Hamidian regime in 1908. The Young Turks were a group of political activists who believed that they had a mission to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. In this vein, the CUP cadres believed they would save the Ottoman Empire.

[348] There is extensive literature on the CUP: Zürcher, *Unionist Factor;* Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution;* Ahmad, *The Young Turks;* Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler;* Kansu, *1908 Devrimi.*
[349] Hanioğlu, "The Second Constitutional Period, 1908-1918," 64.

The CUP was an active organization within the Ottoman army, and many army officers were members of the organization. Army officers in Macedonia were affiliated with these revolutionary ideas because they saw first-hand the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans.[350] In this way, CUP members initiated an open rebellion in Macedonia which had a multiethnic dimension, demanding the restoration of the Constitution on July 3, 1908. When the battalions that were sent to Macedonia in order to suppress the rebellion joined the rebels, the CUP gained more power and self-confidence, enabling a march on Istanbul. Abdulhamid II now had no option but to restore the Constitution, and issued an imperial decree to convene the Ottoman parliament.[351] With the establishment of the second Constitutional regime on July 23, 1908, the power of Sultan Abdulhamid II was wiped out, and within a year, the sultan was dethroned by the Young Turks after the March 31 incident.[352] The power of the CUP thus increased after the declaration of the Second Constitution as it became the new powerhouse in the Ottoman state.

During the Hamidian era, the state had more flexible policies in its relationship with Kurdish tribes. In this regard, the Hamidian regiments were founded in order to use the Kurdish tribes against an envisaged Armenian rebellion or a possible Russian invasion in the Ottoman East. As a result, the state chose to turn a blind eye to the misdeeds and notorious activities of the Hamidian regiments during the Hamidian period. The Hamidian regime was content to share its authority in the Ottoman East by delegating its power to the Hamidian regiments until 1907. In this sense, because of the actions and attitudes of the Hamidian chiefs, the line between state violence and individual violence was blurred, and the use of coercion

[350] Gingeras, *Fall of the Sultanate,* 32-33.
[351] Hanioğlu, "The Second Constitutional Period," 65.
[352] For more detailed information about the 31 March Incident, see Zürcher, "31 Mart: A Fundamentalist uprising," 196-211.

was shared by both the Hamidian regime and its apparatus, the Hamidian chiefs.[353] A parallel bureaucracy was even created by M. Zeki Pasha, incorporating the Hamidian chiefs into the local administration on the ground. For this reason, many civilian and military bureaucrats were frustrated about the position of M. Zeki Pasha as the protector of the "uncivilized" Kurdish tribes.

After the Young Turks came to power, they gradually began to change their predecessor's flexible policies towards the Kurdish tribes. They were able to come to power with slogans of brotherhood and equality under a liberal program because of the deepening socio-economic crisis of the empire. However, the CUP wanted to assert state authority at the expense of Kurdish tribal chiefs in the eastern regions. Further, I claim that the secular policies of the CUP regime were an issue for the Hamidian chiefs, who were still impacted by the functional and pragmatic Hamidian discourse of Islam. For this reason, the Hamidian Kurdish aghas were not happy after the declaration of Second Constitution because they knew that they would lose all privileges they had gained during the Hamidian period. The Hamidian chiefs knew that they were symbols of the old regime, relicts that new regime did not want to see in its initial years.

5.4 The land issue after the restoration of the Constitutional Regime

After the proclamation of Second Constitution, Armenians who fled from their villages because of the theft and violence of the Hamidian Kurdish chiefs began to return to their homes in the Ottoman East. This was a monumental period for both Armenian peasants and Kurdish aghas because Armenians now believed that they would have the chance to retrieve their lands and hold those Kurdish perpetrators

[353] Hartmann, "The Central State in the Borderlands," 181.

responsible for what they had done during the Hamidian era. This was, initially, a new era of freedom for Armenian peasants, and their political organizations, such as the Dashnaktsutyun Party, advocated for the restoration of Armenian land to Ottoman authorities. The CUP had a good relationship with the Dashnaktsutyun Party,[354] and these two parties intended to adopt a new reform program in the eastern territories of the empire, where Armenians had a big population. As a result, Armenian peasants believed that they would get the land and property that they had lost during the Hamidian period back. For Armenians, the new regime symbolized change and dynamism. The local Armenian inhabitants of the region wanted to see Kurdish landlords punished and imprisoned due to their misdeeds and abuses towards them. For this reason, there was an enthusiastic atmosphere amongst the Armenian peasants after the proclamation of Second Constitution.

Yet, the methods adopted by the CUP, the Dashnaktsutyun Party, and the Armenian clergy regarding the land issue were very different from each other. While the Ottoman government encouraged Armenian peasants to go to court for resolution, Armenian organizations and people did not believe that local courts would be ideal places for them to be able to reclaim their lands.[355] There are several reasons behind why Armenian people did not want to present their cases to local courts. First, local courts were often composed of land usurpers and people who were under the authority of Kurdish aghas. Second, cases in local courts were often not rapidly and satisfyingly resolved on the behalf of Armenians due to the scarcity of title deeds in the Ottoman East. Lastly, as Polatel diligently examines, there were not even courts in several districts in the Ottoman East, thus Armenian people in these

[354] For detailed information regarding the relationship between Armenian political bodies and the CUP, see Türkyılmaz "Devrim İçinde Devrim," 324-353.
[355] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 205.

places did not have a place to present their cases.[356] In this regard, Armenian political bodies and the Armenian Patriarchate did not believe that local courts would be where the land issue could be resolved on behalf of Armenians because they knew that they were in a disadvantageous position in local courts. Therefore, the Armenians wanted to present their cases to commissions formed by the central government. The Armenian people would not accept monetary compensation for their lands and property because the most important point for Armenian political organizations and the Patriarchate was to make sure that the demographic structure of the region would not change at the expense of the Armenian population.[357] In other words, Armenians needed to not leave their villages if they wanted to maintain the idea of an Armenian fatherland in the Ottoman East.

Even though the CUP was in favor of forming commissions and administrative bodies in order to resolve land issues in the eastern regions in the initial phase of Constitutional regime, the CUP later changed their liberal stance toward settling agrarian disputes, retaining the feudal order in the Ottoman East. Kurdish and Turkish deputies from the eastern regions were opposed to the idea of the redistribution of lands because they were also major landholders. These influential landlords, thus, were the major obstacles to the implementation of new rules aimed at settling agrarian disputes in the region.[358]

With the introduction of the Land Code of 1858, a group of strong local notables who had strong connections with state authorities took possession of lands in the eastern regions. It was thus against their interests to distribute lands through

[356] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 205 and 206. For more detailed information regarding the land question and the relationship between the Armenian political organizations and the CUP, see Kaligian, "Agrarian Land Reform," 25-45.
[357] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 207.
[358] Kaligian, "Agrarian Land Reform," 32-33.

administrative bodies.[359] These strong Kurdish aghas were also now big landlords, and they had the power to make land transfers at the expense of the small peasantry, reducing Armenian and Kurdish peasants to the status of sharecroppers and tenants. Therefore, when these large landowners gained political power by becoming deputies in the Ottoman Parliament after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, they prioritized their self-interests by opposing land distribution to Armenian and Kurdish peasants.

Kurdish aghas began to develop new strategies in order to preserve the status quo. Some Kurdish chiefs, such as Blind Hüseyin Pasha and Mehmed Sıddık Agha of Abagha left Ottoman territory and crossed the border to Iran because they were unhappy with the idea of returning the land and property that they had taken during the Hamidian era.[360] The Hasenan chiefs were also opposed to administrative councils, pointing out that these administrative bodies were indifferent to the traditional rights of people in the region. In a joint petition sent from the Muş region to Mahmud Şevket Pasha on September 8, 1909, Halid Bey, commander of the 26th regiment, Fethullah Bey, commander of the 27th regiment, Mehmet Emin Bey, commander of 28th regiment, Major Mustafa Agha of the 29th regiment, Major Hüseyin Agha of the 28th regiment, and Major Süleyman Agha of the 27th regiment alleged that the attitudes of local officials were setting people against each other. They claimed that the power granted to local officials and administrative councils to settle land disputes instead of the courts was wrong and would end up harming the inhabitants of the region. Traditional rights, they claimed, were not respected by local authorities.[361] In other words, they believed that local courts composed of local

[359] Ibid., 33.
[360] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 219.
[361] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 218.

people would be more beneficial in resolving land problems because local courts knew the realities of the region. We cannot assume that all provincial Ottoman officials were against Kurdish tribal leaders. Yet, the joint telegram of the Hasenan chiefs illustrated that there was a tension between local Ottoman officials and the representatives of the ancient regime, the Kurdish aghas, in the initial years of the Constitutional regime.

By late 1910, the CUP made it clear that the restoration of Armenian lands would not be possible. In local courts, cases were not resolved rapidly, and the Ottoman state did not form commissions to resolve the land issue. In this vein, the Armenian peasants and political organization noticed that the CUP regime was in favor of preserving the status quo and the feudalist structure of the eastern regions by 1910. The CUP regime did not take any administrative action to resolve the land question, but instead gave Circassian immigrants title deeds of lands in Armenian and even Kurdish villages in the middle of 1911.[362] This was a clear indication that the CUP regime had decided to stick with the status quo in the eastern regions.

The CUP regime ordered Bekir Sami Bey, the governor of Van, to convince the Kurdish chiefs who went to Iran to return to Ottoman soil, indicating that the state had changed its negative perspective towards Kurdish chiefs. This was a big blow to the attempt of Armenian political organizations to resolve the land question in favor of Armenian peasants. Bekir Sami Bey warned the Kurdish chiefs that if they did not return to the country, their property and land would be seized by the state and they would lose their rank.[363] The important point here is that the CUP regime did not want to lose the Kurdish chiefs to Russian influence, thus it was necessary for the CUP regime to maintain the status quo, but at the same time,

[362] Kaligian, "Agrarian Land Reform," 39.
[363] Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 229.

Armenian peasants needed to be protected from the harassment of Kurdish chiefs. The CUP thus had to walk a thin line. In this regard, on February 13, 1911, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs informed the local governors of Bitlis, Van, Mamuretülaziz, and Erzurum that they had to maintain Kurdish chiefs as Ottoman allies as a bulwark against Russia, which aimed to create problems in the Ottoman East by building relationships with Kurdish aghas.[364]

In sum, even though Kurdish tribal leaders had lost some of their strength, the CUP government did not meet the demands of the Armenian population regarding the land issue. For example, those Armenians who left their lands uncultivated for three years due to their migration from Ottoman territories did not get what they had hoped for in Ottoman courts.[365] The position of the CUP government regarding the land question began to change on the behalf of Kurdish chiefs after 1910 because of security concerns and the importance of the manpower of Kurdish tribes. Therefore, the CUP regime did not fulfill the expectations and demands of the Armenians and other lower strata groups in the Ottoman East.

5.5 The changing structure of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments

One of first and more significant steps taken by the CUP regime in the Ottoman East was to remove M. Zeki Pasha from office in August 1908.[366] This was highly anticipated, as Zeki Pasha was the most significant figure who symbolized the old

[364] Ibid., 229. Abdürrezzak Bedirhan had a strong relationship with the Russian Empire and wanted to bring the Kurdish population under the sphere of influence of Russia. There were also some Kurdish chiefs with whom the Russians built contact. Therefore, the Ottomans were afraid of the increasing Russian impact on the eastern regions, causing the CUP to maintain its relations with the Kurdish chiefs in a certain manner. For detailed information between the Russian Empire and the Kurdish chiefs, see Reynolds, "Abdürrezzak Bedirhan," 411-450.
[365] For detailed information on Armenian land issue and the implementation of the Ottoman legal codes during the Constitutional period see, Polatel, "Armenians and the Land Question," 203-263; Kaligian, "Agrarian Land Reform," 25-45.
[366] Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 97.

regime. The removal of Zeki Pasha from office was a good sign for the Armenian leadership who saw him as the evil mastermind behind the creation of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments. In other words, Zeki Pasha was loyal to the Sultan until the end, making him a symbol of oppression and harassment for the Armenian people in the region. However, the dismissal of Zeki Pasha had a different meaning for Hamidian tribal leaders. Hamidian chiefs identified him as a protective figure, as he intervened in events numerous times on the behalf of Kurdish chieftains. Therefore, there was a tension between the new regime and the Kurdish chiefs who were affiliated with the old regime. They knew that the CUP regime did not have a positive outlook toward them, as they were also considered allies and friends of the old regime. In this regard, the status and prestige of the Hamidian chiefs was gradually wiped out. The new regime would try to find new partners to rule over the Ottoman East until 1910-1911.

There was no significant change regarding the organization of the Hamidian regiments until late 1909. After Sultan Abdulhamid II was dethroned in 1909, the first major change regarding the Hamidian organization took place: the name "Hamidiye" was replaced with the Aşiret Hafif Süvari Alayları (Tribal Light Cavalry Regiments), indicating more neutrality.[367] The name Hamidiye was not compatible with the reality of the time anymore, thus the new regime sent a message to the Kurdish tribes that their patron and protector was gone. They would have to change their attitudes towards state representatives now. In this regard, Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud Bey was sent to the Ottoman East in order to assess the situation of the Hamidian regiments. When he returned from the region in February 1910, he informed the Ottoman center that the Hamidian regiments only existed on paper.[368]

[367] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 107.
[368] Ibid., 107.

The new regime now saw that the Hamidian tribesmen did not have enough military equipment and that they lacked discipline and military training. In this sense, changes to the organization of these paramilitary forces would be necessary. The state planned to decrease the number of regiments, and tribal paramilitary forces would no longer be exempt from the sheep tax and tithe. The collection of taxes by the central government was a major reason for unrest amongst Kurdish tribes. In this atmosphere of unrest, the number of regiments were gradually reduced from 66 to 24.[369] More seriously, Kurdish tribesmen who did not participate in training or did not show up for battle would incur severe penalties.[370] After a while, the name of the regiments was changed again, and the last version was Aşiret Süvari Alayları (Tribal Cavalry Regiments).[371]

In this respect, the central government tried to reduce the number of regiments in an attempt to curtail the privileges they had gained during the Hamidian era. However, most Kurdish chiefs were not stuck in the shadow of the old Hamidian regime, but rather, they would attempt to negotiate with the new CUP regime because they knew that the basis of their social and economic power was dependent on how good their relationship was with the state. In this regard, the relationship between the state and Kurdish groups was neither simple nor one dimensional. Instead, different Kurdish groups had different ideas about their relationship with the state after the promulgation of Second Constitution.[372] Kurdish tribes still had

[369] Sunar, "Tribes and State," 62.
[370] Klein, *The Margins of Empire,* 110.
[371] Ibid., 110.
[372] While Kurdish tribal chiefs were not happy with the Second Constitution, there were many other Kurdish groups that supported the CUP regime in the beginning. There were even some important names, such as Abdulkadir Nehri or Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, who were members of the CUP. Further, there were some Kurdish political and cultural organizations that supported the actions of the CUP regime because they simply believed that the CUP was a power that could shatter the feudalism of the Ottoman East. Like the Armenian leadership, these Kurdish political organizations were opposed to the system that supported Kurdish aghas during the Hamidian era. For detailed information see Bajalan, "Between Accommodationism and Separatism, 181-213.

common ground and mutual interests with the state. For the new regime, even though tribal regiments were generally ineffective as a military organization, there were other motivations to keep the regiments alive in the Ottoman East. For example, the CUP believed that they could use tribal units to keep records of the Kurdish tribes for tax collection purposes and to serve as a reserve for the military. In this sense, the manpower of Kurdish tribes was still an important aspect which made them critical factors in the region.

In addition to that, the CUP had a similar ideology to its predecessor in that they believed that the Kurdish tribesmen had to be civilized through channels created by the Ottoman state. In this respect, tribal regiments were still regarded as a channel through which the state could impart its civilization mission to Kurdish tribesmen. In other words, like its predecessor, the CUP regime also did not believe that Kurdish tribesmen had a real Ottoman identity, but rather that Kurdish tribesmen were wild people who needed to be educated and then transformed into real Ottomans. In this sense, the CUP regime attempted to bring about security and centralized Ottoman authority in the region. Indeed, Ottoman authorities embraced a civilizing mission aiming to transform Kurdish tribesmen into docile Ottoman subjects from the Tanzimat era until the Constitutional period. In this way, there was continuity in policy from the Tanzimat period to the beginning of the twentieth century regarding how Ottoman authorities viewed and portrayed Kurdish tribes as people who needed education and guidance. Yet, unlike the Tanzimat and Hamidian era, the CUP era was the culmination of how state centralization and modernization became the main policy of the Ottoman state. Whereas these things had been valued in the Tanzimat and Hamidian eras, the CUP more decisively pursued centralization and modernization, as they were more urgently required in the early twentieth century.

Therefore, there were some fundamental changes in the CUP's attitude toward Kurdish aghas. Janet Klein argues that, in contrast to the Hamidian era, the relationship between the Kurdish aghas and state officials was not personal during the CUP period. Nevertheless, the Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes continued to need one another for support.[373] In other words, even if the patronage system of Sultan Abdulhamid II and M. Zeki Pasha collapsed after the Second Constitution, the dynamic relationship between Kurdish groups and the Ottoman state continued during the CUP era. With the beginning of the Tripolitan and later the Balkan Wars respectively in 1911 and 1912, the CUP regime decided to build a warmer relationship with Kurdish tribes, and solving the agrarian problems of the Armenian and Kurdish peasants was postponed, showing the pragmatic and functional nature of the CUP regime.

5.6 The Hasenan brothers during the CUP period

During the CUP period, old provincial governors who had been the close allies of the Hamidian regime were dismissed from their positions. The CUP appointed new governors who shared the new regime's ideology, and there was no strong figure like M. Zeki Pasha who could cause dysfunction at the expense of the new regime's policies in the Ottoman East. For example, in August 1910, İsmail Hakkı Bey, who was a member of the CUP, was appointed as the deputy governor of the Bitlis province. He was opposed to the idea of having irregular troops such as the Hamidian units. The main issue for İsmail Hakkı Bey was the lack of education in the region, indicating that the CUP leadership also had a mission of civilization in

[373] Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 127.

their approach to Kurdish tribesmen on the ground.[374] The new provincial governors did not have a close relationship with Kurdish tribes in the beginning. I argue that anger had accumulated amongst Ottoman bureaucrats towards Hamidian chiefs over the years. Similarly, new provincial Ottoman officials came to the Ottoman East with frustration and bias towards the Kurdish aghas. For example, Erdal Çiftçi underlines that the governor of Erzurum, Muhammed Celaleddin Bey, and various governors of Van did not have good relationships with the Hayderan chief, Blind Hüseyin Pasha. They tried to imprison him and took control of the villages which Hüseyin Pasha had forcibly seized during the Hamidian era.[375] According to Çiftçi, the language of the documents regarding Hüseyin Pasha's activities even began to change after the proclamation of the Second Constitution. He was now called Kör (Blind) Hüseyin Pasha whereas before his nickname had often been ignored, illustrating his fall from favor.[376]

Between 1908 and 1910 Rıza Agha still actively raided and stole property, but now he was put into prison on several occasions. This process resulted in the reduction of Rıza Agha's power and authority. It is possible that both Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha were frustrated about their loss of land, power, and status after the establishment of the Second Constitution in 1908. The situation for other Hasenan chiefs was no different. A report exchanged between the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Finance on 18 November 1908 was one of the first signs of the will of the new regime to curb the economic power of Kurdish aghas in the region. As mentioned in the fourth chapter, Hamidian chieftains used auctions to get tax farming rights for the villages that they controlled during the Hamidian period. Yet, the new

[374] Yıldız, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Başlarında Bitlis Vilayetinin Modern Eğitim Durumunu Gösteren Bir Rapor," 867-868.
[375] Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 348.
[376] Ibid., 348.

CUP regime was displeased with this practice because the new cadres wanted direct economic and administrative control over the eastern provinces.

The Ministry of Finance reported that there were some villages in the Hınıs and Beyazıd districts where no one yet held tax farming rights, but Taceddin Bey, the old commander of 29th Hamidian regiment[377] was the only person who wanted to be the tax farmer there. Other people were afraid of what would happen if they challenged Taceddin Bey's tax farming rights in the Tahur and Halbaz villages in the Hınıs region.[378] Further, this report pinpointed that the new regime realized that the tax revenues of the state did not increase, but rather decreased due to Kurdish tribal chiefs' control over tax farms in the Beyazıd and Hınıs regions. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance recommended that tax farming rights for these two regions should be under the control of Ottoman military authorities.[379] In other words, when Kurdish aghas had tax farming rights, the tax revenues of the state declined, thus the new CUP regime was often opposed to Kurdish chiefs having tax farming rights, which was a big blow to the economic power of Kurdish chiefs. This report about the tax farming rights of the villages in the Beyazid and Hınıs regions showed that the new regime intended to undermine the economic power of Kurdish chiefs in the first two or three years of the regime so that the state could curb the status and political power of these tribal leaders in the Ottoman East. In this regard, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs sent a telegraph to the governor of the Bitlis province, stating that it

[377] Following the establishment of the Constitutional regime, the name and numbers of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments changed. Unfortunately, I could find documentation of the new duties of Hasenan chiefs in the Hamidian regiments.
[378] "Taceddin Beg hasılatı kaldırıp telef etmek de olacağı Hınıs Mutasarrıflığından ve Tahur ve Halbaz Kariyeleri aşarınada ağaların nüfuzundan çekinerek taleb zuhur etmemek…" BOA, BEO. 3438/257787, 26 Şevval 1326 (November 21, 1908).
[379] "… ve bu hali Beyazıd ve Hınıs Sancaklarının merkez ve mülhakatınca tekerrür etmesiyle her sene hasar-ı hazine vuku' bulmakta idüğü beyanıyla muzaharatı askeriye ile bu sene aşaire aid kuranın emaneten idaresi Erzurum vilayeti defterdarlığından bi't telgrafname iş'ar olunduğundan bahisle…" BOA, BEO. 3438/257787, 26 Şevval 1326 (November 21, 1908).

was not appropriate to allow Hamidian Kurdish chiefs to purchase the tax farming rights of the Malazgird and Bulanık sub-districts.[380]

Even though the CUP cadres sought the loyalty of Kurdish chiefs, the CUP government did not want to encourage Kurdish chiefs to have the same degree of economic power that they had had during the Hamidian era. In this regard, a report sent from the Sublime Porte to the Van and Bitlis provinces illustrated that even if the central government knew that they would not be able to find any other local notables except the chiefs of the tribal regiments as tax farmers in the Van and Bitlis Provinces, the Hakkari district, Erciş, Adilcevaz, Mahmudi, Bulanık, and Malazgird sub-districts, and Bargiri nahiye (town), the government was opposed to the idea of allowing the Kurdish chiefs to gain tax farming rights. This was a policy which had the potential to harm the central treasury in the short-term. If the government insisted on preventing Kurdish chiefs from being tax farmers, but could not find anyone else to collect taxes in these areas, these tax farms would stand empty, resulting in a loss of tax revenue for the treasury.[381] But the CUP regime was firm that the Kurdish chiefs should not be such a crucial part of this economic system. This illustrates that the methods and strategies of the CUP to secure the loyalty of Kurdish tribes were entirely different from those of the Hamidian regime. In essence, there were still some tribal cavalry units, including the Hasenan tribe, and they were acting as

[380] "Bil'umum me'murine aşar ihalesi ahkam-ı nizamiyeye muhalif olduğundan Van ve Bulanık ve Malazgird kazaları aşarının Hafif Süvari Alaylaı'na mensub ümera ve zabitana ihalesi kat'iyyen caiz olamayacağı Meclis-i Vükela kararıyla tebliğ olunur." BOA, DH. ŞFR. 664/38, 14 Cemazeyilahir 1326 (July 14, 1908).

[381] "Hakkari Sancağıyla Bargiri Nahiyesi ve Erciş ve Adilcevaz ve Mahmudi Kazaları dahilindeki kuranın heman umumi Hafif Süvari Alaylarına mensub ümera ve zabitana aid olmasında dolayı kurayı mezkure aşarına haricden taleb zuhur etmediğinden bahis ile ümera ve zabitan mumaileyh aşar ihalesine meclis idarece karar verildiğine da'ir Van ve Bulanık ve Malazgird Kazaları aşarına haricden taleb zuhur etmediğine ve Aşair Alayları ümera ve zabitanının aşar-ı iltizam ve kefaletlerinin kabulune müsaade idilmediği takdirde her iki kaza aşarı emanet kalarak bu yüzden hazinenin mutazarrır olacağına da'ir __ bi'l umum me'murine aşar ihalesi ahkam-ı nizamiye muhalif olmasına nazaran mevzu' bahis olan ümera ve zabitan kuray-ı mezkure aşarının ihalesi kat'iyyen ca'iz olamayacağından…" BOA, DH. MUİ. 125/7, 22 Şaban 1328 (August 29, 1910).

government agents, but the CUP government did not want to strengthen these tribal chiefs by giving them such direct access to economic assets.

The Hasenan chiefs, including Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha, were displeased with the new CUP regime because they knew that they were bringing in new provincial authorities who were undermining their social and economic capital in the region. A petition written by Fethullah Bey to the Porte in December 1908, five months after Second Constitution, however, revealed that the Hasenan chiefs were pragmatic when it came to dealing with the CUP regime. Fethullah Bey simply asked for the release of other Hasenan chiefs from prison. He wrote that they were obeying the rule of law after the declaration of Second Constitution, admitting that they had been troublemakers in their respective regions during the Hamidian era.[382] He, however, pointed out that the tribesmen were illiterate, thus their lack of education and ignorance caused them to create trouble in their regions.[383] Fethullah Bey also tried to present himself as a loyal servant of the Ottoman state in order to become an ally of the new regime. Further, Fethullah Bey made a comparison between the Hasenan chiefs and Armenian fedais, saying that many Armenian fedais who harmed the order of the state and security were being released from prison, but the Hasenan tribesmen were still in prison even though they had not committed any crimes after the establishment of the Constitutional regime.[384] Between January and June 1909,

[382] BOA, DH. MKT. 2613/106, 28 Cemazeyilahir 1326 (July 28, 1908).
[383] "Devr-i sabıkda her vakı'dan mekteb ve terbiye görmüş adamlarıyla ba'zı hatalardan __ kalmıyordu mektebi terbiye gidermeyenler ile bi't tab' noksandan hatadan salim kalamazdı…" BOA, DH. MKT. 2613/106, 28 Cemazeyilahir 1326 (July 28, 1908). It is not clear whether or not Fethullah Bey was including himself in this category of "illiterate" tribesmen, so we cannot say whether or not Fethullah Bey was, himself, illiterate. Regardless, it is likely that someone else drafted his petitions for him.
[384] "… i'lanı Meşrutiyet'den evvelki zamanda a'id ahval ve ihtilafat mütecasirleri ve bu meyanda ef'al muhakkak ashabından bulunan birçok Ermeni fedayileri bile mazhar-ı afv olundular i'lanı Meşrutiyet'den sonra aşiretimizden hiçbiri hiçbir muğayir halde bulunmamışdır ba'd madde şer'i şerifin kanunun adab-ı insaniyenin tecvizi buyurmadığı __ bir halde bulunmamak va'd ve şartıyla o afv u atıfet…" BOA, DH. MKT. 2613/106, 28 Cemazeyilahir 1326 (July 28, 1908).

some reports were exchanged between the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and the governorates of Bitlis and Erzurum. These reports show that because the government still did not want to lose the Hasenan and Cibran tribal forces in the Muş region, the prominent members of these tribes were to be released from prison. However, the CUP also wanted to prove that the regime was the absolute authority in the region, and tribal chiefs needed to know their place, so the regime delayed releasing the prisoners.[385]

The important issue here is that Fethullah Bey believed that the Armenians were now favored by the government, hence the Hasenan were very frustrated by the new CUP regime indeed. This petition shows that the power of the Hasenan chiefs was no longer at its peak since many Hasenan tribesmen were not released from prison in a timely manner. It is obvious that the arrest of the Hasenan tribesmen had a negative impact on Fethullah Bey because it illustrated that the government had more centralizing tendencies in the Ottoman East, indicating that local powerholders were soon to be eliminated.

There was another petition sent by Fethullah Bey to the Porte in March 1909, pointing to the large degree of deterioration in the relationship between Armenian people and the Hasenan chiefs. In this petition, Fethullah Bey claimed that there were local Armenians who were working for the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun Party (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), and these people were harming the local Muslim people. Fethullah Bey argued that they were dangerous for the Muslim population and that these Armenians had agendas and motives against the interests of the Ottoman state. In this respect, Fethullah Bey asked the government for help and

[385] BOA, DH. MKT. 2724/10, 8 Muharrem 1327 (January 30, 1909), BOA, DH. MKT. 2749/3, 3 Safer 1327 (February 24, 1909), BOA, DH. MKT. 2790/30, 17 Rabiulevvel 1327 (April 8, 1909), BOA, DH. MKT. 2840/42, 23 Cemazeyilevvel 1327 (June 12, 1909).

protection against the Armenian revolutionaries.[386] This petition is very important in several ways. First, this petition was submitted to the Porte several months later, after the proclamation of Second Constitution, and it accused the Dashnaktsutyun organization of being against the interests of the state. The Dashnaktsutyun, at that time, however, was very close to the CUP in the initial years of the regime. Therefore, I argue that Fethullah Bey's goal was likely to show the new regime that Kurdish tribesmen were the allies of the Ottoman state and not the Armenians, which is why he accused the Armenians of taking up arms against the Muslim population in order to trigger an old paranoid reflex from the Hamidian regime against the Armenians. Further, he might have thought that the CUP had adopted the same policy as its predecessor against the Armenian people, which is why he wanted to show that the Kurdish chiefs were ready to be the close allies of the new regime against Armenian political organizations. In both ways, the petition revealed that Fethullah Bey was carefully following the political course of events, and he intended to stay an active sociopolitical agent in the Muş region. On the other hand, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Hasenan tribesmen sometimes helped Armenian revolutionaries cross the border and enter Ottoman territory in exchange for money. Fethullah Bey nonetheless now clearly accused them of being traitors to the state. In this regard, I underline that the relationship between Kurdish tribal groups and Armenians deteriorated during the CUP period as well.

In the meantime, Rıza Agha's notorious activities did not stop after the establishment of Second Constitution in July 1908. Even though Rıza Agha no longer had strong support from the new government, he actively raided Armenian and Kurdish villages because raiding was a crucial economic activity for the Hasenan

[386] BOA, BEO. 3520/263969, 3 Rabiulevvel 1327 (March 25, 1909).

tribe. For example, a man named Müveşşeh submitted a petition to the Meclis-i Mebusan (Ottoman Parliament) in December 1908, a short time after the declaration of Second Constitution, complaining that Rıza Agha stole goods and money from his village clearly without any fear of punishment. The Sublime Porte's response was to stress that the state would do whatever was necessary in order to solve the problem.[387] In this regard, Rıza Agha was sent to the center of Muş and he was detained there for three months because the number of petitions against him for his crimes both past and present had increased.[388] Putting Rıza Agha in prison in the Muş center showed that the state was willing to take action against atrocities committed against the peasantry. However, Rıza Agha would, yet again, not stay in prison for long. It was not easy to prove that Rıza Agha had participated in these raiding campaigns beyond a shadow of a doubt. It is extremely possible that Rıza Agha and other Hasenan chiefs found men from their close circle to take the blame. There was concrete evidence that these attacks took place, but proving the participation of the Hasenan chiefs was vital for state authorities to be able to punish them. Yet, when other tribesmen took the blame, it was easy for Hasenan leaders to roam freely in the countryside of the Muş district.

In another case, Allahverdi, son of Bogos, from the Aynelhoca village, submitted a petition to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs in May 1909, saying that Rıza Agha and his men raided their village and stole their wheat, which was stored in a warehouse and in pit in the ground, as well as horses worth 100 lira.[389] The state

[387] BOA, DH. MKT. 2722/20, 6 Muharrem 1327 (January 28, 1909), BOA, DH. MKT. 2767/86, 22 Safer 1327 (March 15, 1909).
[388] BOA, DH. MKT. 2739/25, 24 Muharrem 1327 (February 15, 1909).
[389] "Hamidiye Alayı Binbaşılarından Rıza Beg maiyetiyle beraber kariyelerine gelerek anbar ve kuyularında ve ahurunda bulunan zahireyi ve yüz lira kıymetindeki esblerini ahz ve gasb eylemiş olduğundan ve bu babdaki müracaati müsmir olamayarak düçar-ı sefalet edildiğinden bahis ile mağsubatının istirdadı ile tarafına teslim istid'asına ve ifadat-ı saireye dair Malazgird kazasına merbut Ayne'l Hoca kariyesi ahalisinden Allahverdi veled-i Begos imzasıyla…" BOA, DH. MKT. 2820/69, 2 Cemazeyilevvel 1327 (May 22, 1909).

had the same reaction, saying that they would find the perpetrators and punish them.[390] Apart from these Armenian villages, Rıza Agha and his brother, Fethullah Bey, also did not stop attacking Muslim villages during this period. For example, the headman of a village in Malazgird, Halil, submitted a petition in April 1909 that Fethullah Bey and his brother attacked their village and looted their property and livestock.[391] In this manner, the Hasenan chiefs did not stop raiding and looting after the proclamation of the Second Constitution in 1908. However, the important point here is that Kurdish aghas began to lose the "legitimate" right to use violence toward the peasantry and other tribesmen.

During the Hamidian era, Hasenan chiefs became tax farmers so long as they had good relationships with Yıldız Palace or with important local authorities. However, now the new CUP regime did not want them to keep their tax farming rights and other legitimate ways of wealth accumulation because these activities clashed with state interests. The new government also forced Kurdish chiefs to pay taxes, which they had not had to pay during the Hamidian era.[392] Therefore, I argue that looting and raiding campaigns remained the only strategies for Kurdish chiefs to economically support their close circles and families. In this sense, I think it is no surprise that plundering and raiding campaigns did not stop after the establishment of the Constitutional regime. The volume and intensity of the raids, however, decreased. In other words, the repeated raiding campaigns, such as the case of the Derik village or the plundering of the Ahlat center were no longer possible for the Hasenan chiefs. Now raiding campaigns transformed into more small-scale looting and raids on

[390] BOA, DH. MKT. 2820/69, 2 Cemazeyilevvel 1327 (May 22, 1909).
[391] BOA, BEO. 3533/264909, 20 Rabiulevvel 1327 (April 11, 1909).
[392] In fact, a report dated to February 1907 revealed that the Hamidian regime intended to receive personal taxes from the chiefs of the Hamidiye shortly before the Constitutional regime, indicating that the Hamidian regime began to change its perspective regarding the role and position of the Hamidian chiefs. BOA, MV. 115/3, 4 Muharrem 1325 (February 17, 1907).

unprotected villages. I argue that when the CUP regime attempted to prevent Kurdish chiefs from being tax-farmers, these Kurdish aghas became more aggressive in attacking villages that were not under the protection of any authority. However, these attacks were not like the large-scale raiding campaigns of the Hamidian era. The goal here was to keep armed tribesmen and the close circle of these Kurdish aghas supported.

There were still some cases which illustrate that Rıza Agha's brutality derived from the slow and ineffective action of the Sublime Porte. The case of the Kılıncı village was one example revealing that Rıza Agha still took advantage of the slow actions of the government towards the Kurdish chiefs. In December 1909, Rıza Agha raided the Kılıncı village, which was Muslim, and stole property and livestock worth 300 lira. Ahmed from the Kılıncı village submitted a petition to the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, writing that the state had to punish Rıza Agha if the new rulers wanted to protect the honor and virtue of the Constitutional regime.[393] The importance of this petition is that an ordinary peasant knew that the regime had changed, prompting him to anticipate that the grim prospects of the peasantry should also change. In other words, these peasants were not ignorant to what was going on in the capital, but rather, they were indeed following the course of social and political change which affected them quite closely.

Even though the Hasenan chiefs, particularly Rıza Agha, still engaged in looting and raids on villages, it is obvious that their power and their share in the monopoly of the use of violence had gradually waned. By the autumn of 1909, because of conflict over land issues, the tension between the Hasenan chiefs,

[393] "… mağsubatımın istirdadı hukuk-i şahsiyyemi istihsali hususunun mededresi feryadım olmayan hükümet-i mahalliyeye iş'arı lazıme-i icraat ve tebligatın tatbikini namus-i Meşrutiyet namına şiddetle intizar eylerim ferman Malazgird'in Kılıncı Karyeli Ahmed…" BOA, DH. MUİ. 45/44, 5 Zilhicce 1327 (December 18, 1909).

including Fethullah and Rıza, and the peasantry increased more than ever. In particular, Armenian peasants pressured the new regime to force the tribal chiefs to return their lands and property to them. Along with several sub-chiefs, such as Rıza Agha and Taceddin Bey, Fethullah Bey was also brought to court due to the complaints and petitions of the Armenian peasantry. Now the Armenian peasants likely felt more free than ever because they believed that the CUP and the Dashnaktsutyun Party were cooperating in order to solve the land issues. Yet, the local courts did not sentence Fethullah Bey and other Hasenan chiefs to prison, saying that the Armenian claimants did not have enough evidence regarding the ownership of the lands.[394] It seems that the local courts made decisions which were not in line with the goals of the central government regarding the punishment of the Hamidian chiefs. This shows that the Kurdish aghas and other local notables had still an impact on local administration even though the CUP regime was in favor of strong centralism in its initial years. There was no monolithic stance within the Ottoman bureaucracy regarding the actions and decisions about Kurdish chiefs. Still, a figure like Fethullah Bey would be called to court now, and the number of old Hamidian Kurdish chiefs who took part in the raids on villages decreased during the Constitutional era.

5.7 The discrediting of Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha

Sources disagree about where Rıza Agha was in 1909. According to Sedat Ulugana, Rıza Agha was put in prison in May 1909 and stayed in prison for a year until he died in 1910. His death seemed suspicious, and rumors circulated that he had been

[394] BOA, DH. MUİ. 35/13, 16 Safer 1328 (February 27, 1910).

poisoned by the Armenian Patriarchate.[395] In conflict with this information, an Ottoman document from December 1909 stated that he was terrorizing the Kılıncı Muslim village at that time and the villagers complained that despite the new constitution, Rıza Agha was still behaving as if he were unafraid of consequences from the state.[396] After this, there is no mention of Rıza Agha in the documentary record. Though the sequence of events may be unclear, it is likely that Rıza Agha did die in prison around this time. If we entertain the rumors circulating about the circumstances of his death, we might speculate that Rıza Agha, as a representative of the old regime, fell out of favor with the coming to power of the CUP, enabling well-placed Armenians, as potentially closer allies of the new power structure, to poison him in prison.

Abdurrahman Bedirhan, who was an ally of the CUP regime and supporter of the eradication of the relicts of the Hamidian period, called Rıza Agha a "creature" in his writings because of his horrendous behavior towards the peasantry. Further, Abdurrahman Bedirhan nicknamed Rıza Agha "Rızo" as a sign of patronizing disrespect.[397] Abdurrahman Bedirhan's criticism of Rıza Agha illustrates the negative image Rıza Agha held in the eyes of the CUP cadres. This also shows that Rıza Agha was indeed not a strong policy-maker but a brutal force who was generally led by his brother, Fethullah Bey. Dengbej Maruf, a Dengbej singer that Sedat Ulugana interviewed in 2016 also referred to Rıza as "Gavur Rıza," an intriguing nickname.[398] The word "gavur" in some circumstances could imply that he was non-Muslim or allied with non-Muslims, a curious nickname for a man known for terrorizing Armenians. The word "gavur" also, however, in Kurdish society

[395] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı'' İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 332.
[396] BOA, DH. MUİ. 45/44, 5 Zilhicce 1327 (December 18, 1909).
[397] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı'' İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 332.
[398] Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı'' İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret," 331.

carries the connotation of a violent and terrible person, implying that through their actions, they have strayed from Islam. These nicknames paint a vivid illustration of the reputation of a man who was known for his ruthlessness and brutality.

After the death of Rıza Agha, all prominent Hamidian chieftains in the region knew that a new era had truly begun, and Kurdish tribesmen would not have as much leverage as they had had during the Hamidian era. A prominent Kurdish chieftain was put in prison, and he died there, indicating that the power of the Kurdish chiefs had significantly diminished. One of the most important figures of the Hamidian regiments, Rıza Agha, was no longer a player, and the Hasenan tribesmen had to conform to the new policies of the CUP.[399] In July 1910, Fethullah Bey and his close men were sentenced to prison because of the allegation that they had killed an Armenian. In the end, he and his men were released from prison after the allegations were refuted, but this was certainly a blow to Fethullah Bey's reputation.[400] This case was so important that Fethullah Bey was put in prison even though the case had not been proved.

Fethullah Bey's prospects were not bright after the death of Rıza Agha. Neither Ottoman documents nor local sources from the region offer any of the names of Fettullah Bey's brothers other than Rıza Agha and Abdullah. Therefore, it is possible that Rıza Agha and Abdullah might have been Fethullah Bey's only two brothers, and Rıza was also his right-hand man. Abdullah was not a prominent figure in the Ottoman documents, and Fethullah Bey was now toothless with the death of Rıza Agha. In this manner, while Fethullah Bey was a more political name, representing the Hasenan tribe at the imperial level, Rıza Agha was a more local name, organizing attacks and raids on Muslim and Armenian villages. After losing

[399] Dengbej Sisa Mecid, "Bave Koroxli," Dengbej Meyrem Xan, "Muşa Şewti."
[400] BOA, DH. MUİ. 39/16, 26 Cemazeyilahir 1328 (July 5, 1910).

both his brother and his right-hand man, Fethullah Bey's organizational power in the field diminished. In addition to that, there were some other intra-tribal clashes between Hasenan chiefs, illustrating that the death of Rıza Agha was a major blow to Fethullah Bey's authority. However, Fethullah Bey would partially maintain his authority and control over the Hasenan tribe until World War I. There were two cases which show that Fethullah Bey had problems with the Armenian peasantry after the death of his brother. However, as the first case illustrates, Fethullah's power had waned when it came to dictating demands to local authorities.

In April 1911, Dağınan, son of Tutiyan Efendi, complained that Fethullah Bey had seized his home, which he had inherited from his father. Fethullah Bey claimed that he did not seize the home by force, but rather that he had deeds which showed that he had bought the home from Hüseyin Efendi, a colonel in the tribal regiments. The document from the Porte to the Bitlis government stated that the home should be given to the claimant, Dağınan, since he was the rightful inheritor of this property. Fethullah Bey did not, however, want to lose this house in Malazgird, claiming that he had paid money for this house and bought it.[401] The significant point here is that this was a court case, and both sides applied to the court. The Hasenan leader, Fethullah Bey, did not use violence as a strategy or a way to intimidate the Armenian man in order to keep the home in his name. This document illustrates that Kurdish chiefs did not have as much power as they had had during the Hamidian era because the court could now decide that the house belonged to Dağınan. Further, Fethullah Bey did not use violence in this case because he probably knew that after an attack on Dağınan, the consequences would be severe for him. Therefore, Fethullah Bey had to go to a higher court if he wanted to keep the house. Although

[401] BOA, DH. İD. 124/5, 3 Cemazeyilevvel 1329 (May 2, 1911), BOA, ŞD. 1897/9, 27 Rabiulahir 1329 (April 27, 1911).

the CUP had largely neglected Armenian peasants regarding resolving land conflicts by late 1910, Kurdish tribal leaders were no longer free to act however they wanted. Additionally, Fethullah Bey could no longer go to a military court in order to resolve this conflict with Dağınan, revealing that Kurdish aghas were clearly deprived of some privileges they had had during the Hamidian era. The Hasenan chiefs could not maintain their capricious behavior in their relationship with the state during the CUP era.

In the second case, in February 1912, an Armenian cleric, Ohannes, and his people sent a telegraph to the Bitlis governorate, complaining that Fethullah Bey had prepared fake deeds claiming that he owned the fields of forty houses in the Nureddin village in Malazgird.[402] The villagers collectively complained about Fethullah Bey's misdeeds, and they believed that Fethullah Bey was still powerful enough to prepare fake deeds in order to claim their lands and houses. They emphasized that Fethullah Bey held some deeds which were thirty years old, and not a single man sold lands to him in recent times. Thanks to his impact on the officers working in the administration office, he had been able to draw up and acquire these deeds.[403] Even though this document does not explain Fethullah Bey's side of the story, the claims did not depict him as weak. The Hasenan chiefs were certainly not passive characters, and it seems that Fethullah Bey had still some channels he could use to appropriate lands and houses. However, as the latest documents show, the Hasenan chiefs now had to avoid using brute force. Instead, soft power was the new

[402] BOA, DH. H. 15/25, 22 Safer 1330 (February 11, 1912).
[403] "Hasenanlı Aşireti reisi Fethullah Beg ahalimizden kırk hanenin arazileri güya bey' bi'l vefa ile tedhiş etmiş gibi müzayedeye bırakıyor ibraz ettiği bey' bi'l vefa koçanı 308 tarihinde tanzim edilmiştir medyun i'tibar edilenler meyanında 30 sene evvel vefat edenler olduğu vesaik şeri'ye ve arazileri __ sandukunu merhun bulunanlar kuyud-ı resmiye ile mütehakkıktır ahalimizden bir ferdi ferağ komisyonunda takrir virmemişdir bu husus için hiç kimseye tevkil itmemiş yapılan muamelenin evrakı müsbetesi yokdur idare-i sabıkadaki nüfuzu sayesinde sahte koçan tanzim ettiği…" [403] BOA, DH. H. 15/25, 22 Safer 1330 (February 11, 1912).

way of doing things. Aggression would no longer work. The Hasenan chiefs were no longer protected and supported by the regime, even though the regime still needed them.

5.8 The Hasenan during the First World War

When the Ottoman state joined the First World War, the CUP regime needed the manpower of the Kurdish tribes on the Caucasian front. In other words, Kurdish tribal forces were very important and useful for the CUP government. When the Russian army began to invade the eastern provinces, Kurdish tribal forces constituted the military power of the Ottoman Empire in the east and for this reason the CUP regime reorganized the Kurdish tribal forces in order to stop the Russian invasion. In fact, before the First World War began, the CUP government encouraged Halit Bey, Yusuf Bey's son, to form a new Kurdish tribal force, though Fethullah Bey did not have enough support from the government to reorganize a new type of tribal force under his command. Therefore, Halit Bey formed a new Hasenan tribal force which was composed of 3000 military men, and he was given the rank of Miralay (colonel) in 1912.[404] The order of the CUP regime regarding the formation of a new Hasenan force under Halit Bey and his brother, Tahir Bey, meant that Fethullah Bey had faded from power after the death of Rıza Agha.[405] The intra-tribal relations began to change once again, and the leadership of Fethullah Bey was now questioned.[406]

[404] I do not have specific Ottoman documents regarding the formation of the Hasenan forces under Halit Beg at the time. I refer instead to the contemporary Facebook page for the Hasenan tribe, which offers shared information passed down through generations of the Hasenan. ELA Hasenan Haseni Aşireti, "Hasenanlıların Kısa Tarihçesi," Facebook, Jan 27, 2019.

[405] In the third chapter, there is a family tree which shows the family ties between Fethullah's clan and Yusuf's son Halit and Tahir.

[406] At the beginning of the First World War, the CUP regime reorganized the tribal regiments under the name of Aşiret İhtiyat Süvari Alayları (Tribal Provident Cavalry Regiments), and these tribal cavalry regiments were subordinated to the 4th Army. All these tribal regiments were commanded by Ottoman regular army officers. Thus, Kurdish chiefs were not the main commanders even though they were technically the heads of these regiments. These Kurdish tribal regiments engaged in major

Fethullah Bey was, however, still part of the tribal regiments until the occupation of Muş by the Russian army. He was the commander of the 15th İhtiyat Süvari Alayı (Tribal Cavalry Regiment), when the Hasenan forces entered the war. However, when the Russian army occupied the Muş region, he left the Ottoman army with his fellow tribesmen in 1916 because he did not have strong bonds with the CUP regime. After leaving the Ottoman army, he was identified as a fugitive by the government.[407] I might speculate that when Halit Bey of the Hasenan was promoted within the tribe by the CUP government before the war, Fethullah Bey lost his confidence in the regime. He knew that he had fallen out of favor with the CUP. Now Fethullah Bey was a fugitive, and he was sent into exile to the Urfa region. The government knew that Fethullah Bey had a strong influence over the Hasenan, so the government divided the Hasenan tribesmen into different groups and sent them to villages in the Maraş region in the winter of 1916.[408] The goal of the CUP regime was to send the Hasenan tribesmen to regions far from the Muş region, where Fethullah Bey was most powerful. As a result, Fethullah Bey was banished from returning to his native region, Muş. He, his close family members, and many Hasenan tribesmen were now in Urfa, and they were not familiar with their new surroundings. While Fethullah was in Urfa, he was powerless, and he had a hard time making a living. Fethullah let his niece marry a man who did not come from an elite tribal background, indicating that he was desperate to build relationships there.[409] It is said that Fethullah Bey died in Urfa in 1918.[410] As a result, the death of Rıza Agha

battles with the Russian army, and they slowed the advance of Russians in the eastern provinces until 1916. For detailed information, see Ulugana, "I. Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Kürt Aşiret Alayları."
[407] BOA, İ. DUİT. 170/98, 30 Cemazeyilevvel 1334 (April 4, 1916); Ulugana, "Şiddet Yüzyılı'' İçinde Dört Sınırdaş Aşiret,"
[408] BOA, DH. ŞFR. 71/72, 29 Safer 1335 (December 25, 1916).
[409] Dengbej Reso, "Gula Serhede," Ulugana, "I. Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Kürt Aşiret Alayları," 42-43.
[410] I take this information from the Hasenan tribe's modern-day Facebook page, but this cannot be confirmed. ELA Hasenan Haseni Aşireti, Facebook page.

and the exile of Fethullah Bey to the Urfa region marked the end of an era. The power of the Kurdish chiefs collapsed and the relationship between the state and the Kurdish tribes would be more intense and turbulent than ever in the coming years.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyze the role and impact of the Hasenan leaders, Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha in the Muş region after the establishment of Second Constitution in 1908. Indeed, the relationship between Yıldız Palace and the Kurdish chiefs was not as warm in the last two years of Sultan Abdulhamid II's rule as it had been in the 1890s. With the proclamation of the Constitutional regime, the old Hamidian chiefs' power began to wane between 1908 and 1910, and the relationship between the state and the Kurdish chiefs gradually deteriorated. In the first three years of the constitutional regime, the CUP cadres embraced policies which aimed to reduce the power of the Kurdish chiefs and bring peace and prosperity in the eastern regions. In this vein, the CUP regime was allied with the Dashnaktsutyun Party, making Armenian people feel hopeful that land disputes might be settled in their favor. Armenian peasants had political representatives and the Patriarchate to advocate for them in the initial years of the Constitutional regime. These Armenian bodies wanted to preserve the Armenian population in the eastern regions. However, the agenda of the Armenian people in terms of resolving the land question was not compatible with that of the CUP regime. While the Armenians' political bodies and the Patriarchate supported the idea of forming commissions and administrative councils to resolve land problems, the CUP regime encouraged local courts to settle the issue. However, the Armenian peasants stressed that these local courts were composed of usurpers

who had forcibly taken Armenian lands, and the process of rectifying their land disputes would be long and arduous with local courts.

The alliance between the CUP and the Dashnaktsutyun Party would not be a permanent one. With the shifting policies of the CUP regime after 1910, the demands of the Armenian peasantry regarding the resolution of land problems were not met by the new regime because securing the loyalty of the Kurdish chiefs was now the new priority. In this regard, the CUP regime did not abolish the Hamidian regiments, but the name was replaced with the Tribal Light Cavalry Regiments, indicating that the new regime also had similar intentions to its predecessor regarding the function of the Kurdish tribal regiments. The main goal was for the state to utilize the manpower of Kurdish tribes and receive taxes from tribesmen by using the tribal regiments as a way to reach the broader Kurdish population.

Kurdish chiefs were nowhere near as powerful during the CUP era as they had been during the Hamidian era because they lost their two prominent patrons, Sultan Abdulhamid II and M. Zeki Pasha. In particular, following the appointment of new governors who were proponents of CUP ideology, the relationship between the local bureaucracy and Kurdish chiefs deteriorated. In this manner, the old Hamidian Kurdish chiefs were not the strong figures they once had been, but still, they were not the passive agents one might imagine. The Ottoman state still needed these Kurdish chiefs, and they would assist the shifting policies of the state after 1910. In the case of the Hasenan tribe, even though Armenian peasants found the opportunity to get back some of their property and land during the first years of the CUP regime, Rıza Agha's misdeeds and notorious activities did not stop because the plundering economy was not easy to give up. There were many military men in the close circle of the agha who made a living thanks to Rıza Agha's raids on these villages.

Yet, Rıza Agha did not have enough power and leverage to carry out major plundering and raids on the villages, thus the intensity and regularity of the raids decreased during the CUP era. Further, Hasenan figures like Rıza Agha, Taceddin Bey and even Fethullah Bey began to spend more time in prison when there were allegations and complaints regarding their notorious activities. After Rıza Agha died in prison in Bitlis in 1910, and Fethullah Bey realized that neither the state nor the Hasenan chiefs would ever have the close and intimate relationship they once had. In addition to that, the loss of Rıza Agha was a big organizational blow to Fethullah Beg, as Rıza Agha was the man who dealt with things in the field. As a result, the loss of Rıza Agha showed Fethullah Bey the changing conditions of the time and the fact that the CUP's policies were not in his favor. Nevertheless, he remained chief of the tribal regiments. In other words, the Ottoman state had the upper hand in its relationship with the Hasenan leadership, thus Fethullah Bey remained an apparatus of the state until 1916. After leaving the Caucasian front in the First World War, Fethullah Bey was identified as a fugitive by the state, and he was never allowed to come back to the Muş region again.

The power of the Hasenan leaders reached its peak during the Hamidian era, and they were unstoppable perpetrators who continuously committed crimes at the expense of the peasantry. By being part of the state mechanism, the Hasenan leaders gained strong economic prospects, enabling them to maintain their power from the 1890s until the constitutional period. However, as Rıza Agha's death in prison and Fethullah Bey's exile in the winter of 1916 showed, the power of the Hasenan leaders and other Kurdish leaders was directly correlated to state policies. In this vein, the CUP regime intended to minimize the power of Kurdish chiefs as the CUP cadres wanted to establish a more central rule in the eastern regions. The CUP

regime no longer wanted to delegate the state's power to use force to the Kurdish chiefs. Kurdish tribal regiments would, however, still remain prominent actors until the end of the First World War.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis discussed how Hasenan leaders became important sociopolitical actors from the Tanzimat era (1839-1876) to the outbreak of the First World War in the Muş region. This study examines the complex relationships between the Hasenan chiefs, the Ottoman state, other tribal leaders, local officials, and ordinary peasants. The main goal here is to understand the agency of the Hasenan leaders and how they dealt with provincial state officials and the Ottoman center. In this sense, this study investigated the expansionist policies of the Ottoman state in the tribal space and the reactions of the Hasenan leaders to these policies from the Tanzimat period to the outbreak of the First World War. In particular, this study has attempted to turn the story of two Hasenan brothers, Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha into a strong historical narrative. Unlike some more famous Kurdish tribal leaders such as Blind Hüseyin Pasha, Mustafa Pasha of the Miran tribe, and Milli İbrahim Pasha, the two Hasenan brothers have not been well studied, but their impact in the Muş and neighboring regions was immense.

In this way, this study acts as a microhistory. But microhistory is, indeed, never truly micro. Smaller-scale events can often change, influence, or shift the big picture. Through examining the Hasenan tribe, we see that we cannot look at a tribe as a small entity with no influence over broader events. Indeed, the actions of Hasenan leaders and their effects lead us to conclude that local powerholders often wielded more power than is often assumed. Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha were very important local actors who engaged in local politics, leading them to change the economic, demographic, and social structure of the Muş region.

Looking at different generations of the Hasenan leadership is important for understanding how the Ottoman state developed its tribal polices throughout nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is also crucial for understanding how the Hasenan tribe itself changed and adapted over time. In this way, we see that the Hasenan tribe under Rıdvan Agha was hierarchically and structurally quite different from the Hasenan tribe under Fethullah Agha. I have structured this thesis as a generational study in order to showcase the changing relationship between the state and the Hasenan tribe over time, as well as to show the internal changes within the Hasenan tribe. Telling the story of the Hasenan tribe by looking at the generations of *torin* leadership also anthropologically reflects how the Hasenan tribe, and Kurdish society more broadly, understands and remembers its own history. In this way, I have used Dengbej songs as oral history sources, reflecting a Kurdish cultural understanding of history.

The Hasenan tribe under Rıdvan Agha's leadership became a powerhouse in the Muş region after the elimination of the Alaaddinpaşazade family. As chapter two illustrated, Ottoman power was very limited in the region before the introduction of the Tanzimat reforms. In the Tanzimat era, however, the state established itself as a new political power and a dominant force after the dismantling of the Kurdish emirates. In this atmosphere, Kurdish tribal leaders emerged as new intermediaries between the center and the people inhabiting the Ottoman East. The second chapter, further, shows us that the settlement of the Hasenan tribesmen in the Muş region was not a smooth process, but rather, it was a dynamic process wherein the state gave concessions, such as making tribal leaders new local administrators in particular regions. In this regard, the state employed a policy aimed at integrating Kurdish aghas into the local administration. Rıdvan Agha and Kulihan Agha became müdürs

(sub-district governors) in the newly created sub-districts. Kurdish tribesmen did not, however, become "loyal" Ottoman subjects, and the settlement of Kurdish tribes was not fully achieved during the Tanzimat period. There was, however, a coexistence between the Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes in the region, even if both sides had their own self-interests and agendas. In this way, collaboration and conflict were two dimensions which defined the relationship between the state and Kurdish tribes.

Unlike the Tanzimat era, the Hamidian regime did not fail in making the state a permanent and powerful actor in the Ottoman East, and the visibility of the Ottoman state became obvious in the region in the 1890s. As chapter three shows, during the Hamidian era, the Ottoman state engaged actively in tribal affairs in the region, indicating that Yıldız Palace was determined to utilize Kurdish tribal power more than ever. Unlike the Tanzimat statesmen, the Hamidian regime managed to employ a strong operative Islamic discourse to make Kurdish tribesmen inhabiting Northeastern Anatolia believe that the Ottoman state was not their enemy. In this sense, the establishment of the Hamidian regiments in 1891 was vital for the state, and changed the tribal hierarchy. The upending of the tribal hierarchy helped the state develop its expansionist policies at the expense of tribal leadership. On the other side of the story, Kurdish tribal chiefs gained political and military power through their participation in the Hamidian regiments, making them wealthier, thus the gap between the tribal elites and commoners widened.

This study has attempted to illustrate that Kurdish aristocrats and tribal leaders were treated very differently from Kurdish peasants and ordinary tribesmen. Often these tribal elites were not harshly punished, while the peasantry and regular tribesmen were often left to bear the brunt of the violence created by the powerholders in the region.

As chapter three shows, the Hasenan *torin* family struggled with other prominent Hasenan families in order to achieve higher positions both within the Hamidian regiments and within the tribal hierarchy. These struggles and conflicts between tribal elites meant that lawlessness, insecurity, and violence were the norms in the region during the Hamidian era. Both intra and inter-tribal conflict increased after Kurdish tribes joined the Hamidian regiments. In the case of the Hasenan leadership, while the authority of Rıdvan Agha was not disputed by other important Hasenan families during the Tanzimat era, his grandson, Fethullah Bey encountered several ambitious Hasenan sub-chiefs who attempted to build a direct relationship with state officials after the establishment of the Hamidian regiments. In this vein, the state was now a new player in the socio-political dynamics of the tribe and had the power to influence the positions of tribal elites in the 1890s. Besides intra-tribal problems between Fethullah Bey and other Hasenan aghas, Fethullah Bey's relationship with Blind Hüseyin Pasha and other Sepki tribal leaders were also generally negative due to blood feuds and competition over material resources in the region. Even though all three tribes were members of the Hamidian regiments, they were not under the strict authority of the state, meaning that these tribes did not behave as disciplined Ottoman military units. Instead, the competition between the Hasenan and Hayderan tribes accelerated in a negative way, resulting in new conflicts and fights in the region.

This thesis also argues that villagers, irrespective of their religious affiliations, were tortured and victimized by Hasenan forces during the Hamidian period. Before the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, there were many cases where peasants were exploited by Kurdish tribal leaders in the Tanzimat era. There were many examples of villages raided by Kurdish tribesmen in the region before the

Hamidian era. However, as chapter four argues, in the case of the Hasenan tribe, with the establishment of the Hamidian regiments, Hasenan leaders began to carry out raids in a very systematic way. If these villages were close to water sources and had large tracts of fertile lands, then they were more vulnerable to Hasenan attacks. Hasenan leaders chose vulnerable villages under the control of neighboring tribes or villages that were not under the control of any Kurdish tribes. In this vein, the volume and number of attacks on villages increased, and these attacks would eventually turn into mass raiding campaigns in order to plunder as much booty as possible for the group of Hasenan tribesmen who were dependent on these raiding campaigns in order to make a living. In this way, this thesis has also attempted to explore who the militia forces were who followed Kurdish leaders, how and why they attacked certain villages, as well as the economic and power divide between Kurdish tribal chiefs and the militiamen who served them.

The most vulnerable villagers were Armenians in the 1890s because it was easy for the tribesmen to label them as traitors to the state in the Hamidian era. For this reason, tribal pressure on Armenian villagers increased. This violent atmosphere caused poverty and dispossession for both Armenian and Kurdish peasants, increasing forced migration from villages to urban areas. Yet, the relationship between Armenian peasants and Kurdish tribesmen in the Muş region was not based on an intrinsic hatred, even if the negative tone of it increased. There were some cases where Hasenan leaders protected Armenian villagers from the atrocities of Hayderan tribesmen. Some Hasenan tribesmen also helped Armenian peasants cross the border in exchange for money, revealing that there was a dynamic and pragmatic relationship between these people.

In this study, I have tried, as much as possible, to reflect the experiences of ordinary Kurdish tribesmen and Armenian and Kurdish peasants, for they too played a role in the history of the Ottoman East. Peasants who were attacked by the Hasenan did not simply sit back and allow themselves to be taken advantage of. These people were taxpayers and producers and used all the channels available to them to communicate with the Ottoman government and advocate for themselves. In this way, they played an active part in the history of the region. Sometimes they resisted by sending petitions to Istanbul, other times they resisted by leaving the region to find work in major cities as porters or laborers, and many left to go to Russia or America. Particularly, with the introduction of the Second Constitution, Armenian peasants wanted to reclaim their lands which had been taken by regional powerholders, and in this way, began to challenge Kurdish and Turkish landlords between 1908 and 1911.

This study asserts that in the last two years of the Hamidian regime, Yıldız Palace's attitude toward the Hamidian regiments was not as positive as it had once been, at least in the case of the Hasenan leaders. International pressure on the regime had increased and Armenian villagers regularly sent petitions regarding the systematic violence against them in the region. For this reason, one-to-two years before the proclamation of the Second Constitution, many Hasenan leaders, including Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha, were imprisoned, indicating that they were no longer untouchable. Yet, they were still strong enough to dictate their demands within the Muş region.

As chapter five illustrates, with the establishment of the Constitutional regime in 1908, the CUP regime saw these Hamidian Kurdish chiefs as relicts of the old regime. The new CUP cadres appointed new governors who were opposed to the

Hamidian regiments in the Ottoman East. The CUP regime had more centralist tendencies, and for this reason, they sought new ways to collect taxes in a more direct way, without making Kurdish chiefs tax-farmers. Armenian villagers were also enthusiastic about regaining their lands, and many Armenians who fled the country returned to their villages in the first two years of the Constitutional regime. The Kurdish chieftains were not happy with the new regime because after they lost their two patrons, the Sultan and M. Zeki Pasha, they did not trust the fact that the new regime had built a more positive relationship with Armenian political organizations. In short, Kurdish tribal leaders did not want to lose their economic privileges and lands which they had forcibly registered in their names. As chapter five shows, Hasenan leaders did not shy away from building contact with the new regime, and they attempted to present themselves as valuable "assets" that the new regime would want to keep.

With the changing political circumstances, such as the increase of Russian interest in the region, the CUP regime left its liberal policies behind and embraced more nationalist policies, thus Armenian peasants' dream to regain their lost lands did not come true after 1910. The relationship between the CUP regime and Kurdish tribal leaders who were part of the tribal regiments remained stable after 1910. The Hamidian regiments were not abolished, instead, the name "Hamidiye" was removed. The important point here is that, like its predecessor, the CUP regime believed that Kurdish tribal regiments could be useful against Armenian separatism and a possible Russian invasion in the region. In this sense, the CUP regime did not underestimate the manpower of Kurdish tribes. They too wanted to use Kurdish tribes for the interests of the state. Like its predecessor, the CUP regime also embraced the state's modernizing mission regarding Kurdish tribes, and maintaining

the Kurdish tribal regiments was a project aimed at making tribesmen dependent and loyal Ottoman subjects.

Contrary to the imperial policies of the Hamidian regime, the CUP regime attempted to reduce the economic and political power of Kurdish tribes. Tax farming rights were no longer exclusively given to Kurdish tribal leaders. By the 1910s, the Hasenan tribesmen could not easily pillage villages in the Muş region anymore. The number and volume of raids on Armenian villages decreased. However, the Hasenan leaders were not in prison. They acted pragmatically and they attempted to become the new ally of the CUP regime in the Muş region. In this regard, the CUP regime saw them as useful, which is why Fethullah Bey was free, though Rıza Agha died in jail in 1910. The death of Rıza Agha illustrated that the Hasenan leaders were now discredited, showing they did not have the power they once held, even though the CUP regime still saw them as useful.

Until the beginning of the First World War, Fethullah Bey was an actor on the stage of local history, even if he felt that his days were numbered. However, when he deserted the army in 1916, he was labeled as a fugitive by the CUP government, and he was sent into exile to Southeastern Anatolia. Other Hasenan leaders who followed Fethullah Bey were also sent into exile to different parts of the country. In short, the power of Fethullah Bey and other Hasenan leaders was reduced as the CUP regime consolidated its power in the region. Even though this thesis does not focus on the early Republican era, it does provide a good foundation for a better understanding of the deterioration of state-tribal relations in the following decades. Further studies will have to be done to truly unpack how the turmoil of the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic would affect Kurdish tribes.

Though Fethullah Bey and Rıza Agha's names would never make it into official history books, their names would not be forgotten in the region they forever changed.

APPENDIX

HONORARY AND MILITARY TITLES

In this study, the use of titles such as "Bey" (Beg) or "Agha" (Axa, ağa) does not necessarily indicate strict positional differences between Kurdish leaders. Looking at Ottoman documents, it is clear that Ottoman officials who came to Ottoman Kurdistan in order to record events and write back to Istanbul were not particularly careful about the use of titles. For this reason, the difference between the titles of Bey and Agha are not entirely clear. Yet, in Kurdish society, the title of Bey is superior to that of Agha. Until the abolishment of the Kurdish emirates, however, the title of "Mir" was superior to all other titles in Ottoman Kurdistan. Mirs were the hereditary rulers of their lands due to the temliknames given to them by Ottoman Sultans. They were the absolute authorities over the Kurdish tribes or confederacies which resided within their territories. We do, however, see some examples of Mirs also being referred to as "Bey" in Ottoman documents, illustrating that Ottoman officials did not place much importance on differentiating titles in Ottoman Kurdistan, sometimes even using "Mir" "Bey," and "Han" (Xan) interchangeably. The local Kurdish population and Kurdish elite would, however, be very familiar with the difference between these titles.

Discursively, the Ottoman state may have promoted the use of the title of Agha and attempted to place it in a superior position in order to underline state sovereignty. At the same time, the state may have discouraged the use of titles such as Mir or Han because these titles underline that the state had established a relationship with another power without explicitly asserting discursive superiority. I speculate that the Ottoman center preferred to use "Agha" as a title for Kurdish

leaders in order to minimize the social capital of Kurdish aristocratic groups. For this reason, in the second chapter of this study, I use "Mir" as a political title for prominent Kurdish hereditary leaders, arguing through the use of this term that a Mir was a leader in a superior position to Kurdish tribal leaders.

In later chapters, and, indeed, in later Ottoman documents, the use of "Bey" and "Agha" are both extremely common and do not necessarily indicate how powerful or elite a Kurdish tribal leader was. We see, however, that those who held the title of "Bey" were generally in superior positions to those who carried the title of "Agha" in the Hamidian tribal regiments. Fethullah Bey and Yusuf Bey, for example, were commanders of tribal regiments, while their subordinates, like Rıza and Süleyman, carried the title of "Agha." What is crucial to remember is that the titles "Bey" and "Agha" were not inherent aristocratic titles but rather local titles that differentiated between the tribal ruling elite and ordinary tribesmen.

Another important title given to several Kurdish tribal leaders during the Hamidian era was that of "Pasha" (Paşa, Paşe). Kör Hüseyin of the Hayderan, İbrahim of the Milli and Mustafa of the Miran tribe were all well-known Kurdish Pashas. Within the Hasenan tribe, the only person who was given the title of Pasha was Sofi (not Fethullah), indicating that he was the top leader of the ruling family of the Hasenan tribe until he died in 1893. Pasha, in this context, was more an honorary title than an earned military title, as Ottoman military authorities used this title for the most experienced military commanders and Hamidian chiefs had only been newly incorporated into the Ottoman military. In the context of Ottoman Kurdistan, the title of "Pasha" seems quite inorganic, as it was clearly adapted from Ottoman governing structures elsewhere and then bestowed upon Kurdish leaders in an attempt to extend state authority in the region and endear Kurdish leaders to the state.

Kurdish society was accustomed to the use of Bey, Mir, Agha, or Xan as titles, but the title of Pasha would have seemed more foreign, indicating a more direct relationship with the state. Nevertheless, these prominent Hamidian leaders, including Sofi, were eager to have the title of Pasha as it legitimized their place within the Ottoman state bureaucracy. Kurdish leaders who carried the title of Pasha also knew that this title also granted them more power visa-vis other Kurdish leaders in the region. In this way, the title of Pasha allowed Kurdish leaders who held it to use their relationship with the state to assert dominance in the Ottoman East and also allowed the Ottoman state to extend its influence over Kurdish tribes.

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