

Margins of Allegiance and Revolt: Relations between Kurdish Tribes and the State from the Late Ottoman Period to the Early Modern Republic

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The political and social interaction between the Ottoman Empire and Kurdish tribes, which can be traced back to the first quarter of the 16th century, continued until the modern republic with various continuities and ruptures. This multi-dimensional and complex relationship was neither in the form of absolute loyalty to the sultan, and thus to the Islamic caliph on a religious basis, nor a constant revolt against the authority of the empire in order to preserve their autonomy. Until the beginning of the 20th century, tribes were not only structures used by the Ottoman, Safavid, and Russian empires for their own interests. They were also organizations capable of dominating a certain geographical area and had a vital potential to constantly generate violence and extend it to the empires and even between one another. Contrary to the state, which systematically and regularly perpetrated this violence and institutionalized and justified itself through the monopoly of violence, their inability to do so did not necessarily mean that they were not genuine political organizations and did not have their own agenda. This study, conducted largely in light of archival documents and Ottoman primary sources, aims to examine the boundaries of loyalty and rebellion in the oscillating relationship between Kurdish tribes and the Turkish state.

Keywords: Kurdish, tribes, allegiance, revolt, Ottoman

The tribal phenomenon, on the one hand, emerges as the powerful structures in terms of the establishment of the political systems from Ottoman to modern Turkey and finally to the present, while having the potential to turn into a form that threatens the political system itself on the other (Bozarslan 2014, 59). In the first quarter of the 16th century, as a result of the diplomatic skill of İdris-i Bidlîsî¹ and a relationship we can simply call patronage in today's terminology,² Sunni Kurdish tribal chiefs were involved in the Ottoman administration with a kind of *primus inter pares* status through emirates (*beyliks*) organized as a

structure beyond the boundaries of the current tribal concept (van Bruinessen 1992; Özoglu 2012; Şeref Han 1971). However, in the words of Georges Balandier, “the elements that establish the order are at the same time a threat to it” (2013). The justifiability of this determination, which can be simply applied to the tribal context, can be observed gradually in the Kurdish policy of the Ottoman Empire since the first half of the 19th century. For the empire, which, by reason of its logic, had to spread across the margins, the forces that had previously established the order were endangered and even faced elimination over time. The tribes, ancient and permanent and also fragmented and politically unpredictable, emerged as new actors on the margins of the empire replacing the *beyliks* (Klein 2011). The new partner of the empire, exclusively for the establishment of the order of the Abdulhamid II

¹ For İdris-i Bidlîsî see also Genç (2018, 31–41).

² Patronage policies would be a legacy from the Ottoman Empire to the Kemalist Republic. It can even be argued that patronage, with the beginning of the Democratic Party government, has become a kind of phenomenon between the state and the Kurds. Cf. Heper and Keyman (1998, 259–77).

regime within a kind of “tacit contract”³ (Bozarslan 2003a) was the tribes. Although the Hamidiye Cavalry, comprised of tribes created for the establishment of the order, served the purposes of Abdulhamid (such as protecting the margins of the empire against the Russian threat and acting as a force against Armenian revolutionary activities and, accordingly, accelerating the Islamization of the region and ultimately preventing Kurdish nationalist movements) (Bozarslan 2003b, 97), it quickly became a threat to the empire because of the wave of violence it generated. In short, the Hamidiye Cavalry, as a military project undertaken by Abdulhamid to control the margins of the empire, created an atmosphere of violence against non-Muslim communities, especially Armenians (Kieser 2010) besides expanding the dimensions of inter-tribal violence since it caused an asymmetrical power relationship amongst the Kurdish tribes as well.⁴ However, neither the Hamidiye project nor the School of Tribes project (Rogan 1996), which was implemented a year after it, were to meet the expectation. After Abdulhamid’s overthrow, the Cavalry continued as uncontrolled forces. Still, after the March 31 Incident, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) came to reorganize the Hamidiye Cavalry as the Tribal Light Cavalry in 1911 as part of the modernization of the army and attached it to the regular army. The cavalry of the Abdulhamid regime maintained its existence under a different name during the CUP period. As is seen in the cases of General İbrahim Pasha of Hamidiye and the Bergeri tribe, the presence of such cavalry was assessed as a potential rebellion attempt. Notwithstanding such an evaluation, cavalry regiments were widely used, mainly during the Armenian pogroms of 1894–1896 and the genocide of 1915 (Bozarslan, Duclert, and Kévorkian 2015).

The atmosphere of violence until the end of World War I enabled the Kurdish tribes to consolidate themselves continuously because violence was a vital factor

³ For a comprehensive review, see Bozarslan (2003a, 163–190).

⁴ The military power achieved by figures such as the leader of the Haydaran Tribe, Kör Hüseyin Pasha, and the leader of the Milli / Milan Tribe, İbrahim Pasha, had become uncontrollable. Ziya Gökalp, the official nationalist theorist of the modern republic, describes the vortex of violence created by İbrahim Pasha in the region in *Şaki İbrahim Paşa Destanı* (1976).

in tribal consolidation (van Bruinessen 2000a). Moreover, it created a dichotomous political climate, alternating between rebellion and loyalty to the empire. The alternation of loyalty and rebellion was to reproduce in parallel with contexts and circumstances. For instance, during the Republic period, some tribes belonging to the Hamidiye would rebel against the Kemalist administration and even form notable cadres of the Kurdish nationalist movement, whereas some would cooperate with Mustafa Kemal’s movement. The intricate relationship between the Kurdish tribes and the state was determined by the state’s security policies and its patronage relationship. In this sense, it seems possible to postulate a parallelism between the Abdulhamid regime, The Committee of Union and Progress and the Kemalist regime. Tribes were systematically subjected to demographic engineering in 1916, 1925, and 1934 (Üngör 2011). Moreover, it is possible to purport that this engineering, preserving certain aspects, continued after the 1950s.⁵ After the 1950s, political patronage based on consent was annexed to the relationship established by the state with the tribes in addition to the security perspective. From the second half of the 1970s on, when the Kurdish political movement was on the rise and radicalization increased in Turkey, the tribes became targets and allies of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party on the one hand, and they came to be targeted and allied with by the state on the other. With the creation of the Village Guard Battalions in 1987, the tribes were divided into two groups, i.e., those loyal to the state and those allied to the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê-Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebellion. Interestingly, some tribes such as the Jirki Tribe, which were included in the village guard system as the paramilitary force of the state, had been of the Hamidiye Cavalry, leading to a new wave of violence in the long term.

In this article, the relationship between the Kurdish tribes, which were a kind of intra-state organization with a very strong *asabiyya* (Khaldûn 2015) from the Abdulhamid period to the Committee of Union and Progress and to the Kemalist period as the latter’s legacy, and the state will be examined from a macro

⁵ Some reports and studies apparently show that the issue of reorganizing the tribal factor has been realized not only theoretically but also *de facto*. See Anonymous (2014); Arslan (2014); Sevgen (2003); Akar and Dündar (2008).

perspective, taking into account the binary of loyalty and rebellion.

1 The Annexation of Ottoman Kurdistan and the Beginning of the State-Kurdish Tribes Relationship

The first traces of the relations in which many Kurdish tribes declared their obedience to the Ottoman state, according to İdris-i Bidlîsî's own statements, correspond to the beginning of the 16th century (İdris-i Bidlîsî 2016, 283–95).⁶ Despite this relationship, which was initiated through Bidlîsî's own diplomatic efforts (Genç 2019, 306), contrary to his claims, neither all Kurdish leaders in Kurdistan were Sunni nor did they all declare their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. Although they were of the Sunni sect, some Kurdish tribes sided with the Safavids against the Ottomans (Genç 2019, 329). This indicates that the concept of "Kizilbash" has a meaning that changes periodically for the Ottoman Empire, and that the groups (such as the public, administrators, soldiers) that comprise it have acquired different meanings over time. Accordingly, it is seen that the concept of Kizilbash, which evoked the support of the Safavids under any circumstances, was exclusively used to describe all the people of Anatolia who were attached to them at the beginning, but later to describe the caliphs, administrators and soldiers who were more loyal to the Safavids. It is explicit that there were Kurdish leaders among these groups, who were Sunni but called Kizilbash just because they were loyal to the Safavids.

This relationship, which was established between the Ottomans and the Kurds by Bidlîsî, was not a permanent one, though; in fact, it was the case that the Kurdish chieftains were still in serious contact with the Safavids (Genç 2019, 312–25). In this regard, albeit, Bidlîsî painted an "optimistic picture" for Sultan Selim II (1512–20), according to which the Kurdish begs were loyal to the Ottoman Empire; yet, he also had doubts as to the loyalty of the Kurdish chiefs,

⁶ It can be seen that İdris-i Bidlîsî, who applied a strong Sunni emphasis in his works, originally came from a Shiite family belonging to the Nurbahşî sect and began historiography in favor of the official ideology with his inclusion in the Ottoman Palace. Also, it has been revealed by recent studies that he developed a relationship with Shah Ismail in a period of his life and conducted activities against the Ottoman Empire. See also Genç (2019).

who always sided with the Safavids due to their own political interests. There are numerous examples of Kurdish beg diplomacy between the two states. For example, Rüstem Bey, who was the head of the Çemişgezek Principality, was killed by Sultan Selim (the Grim) because he supported Shah Ismail I, but his son Pir Hüseyin Bey took the side of the Ottomans and fought against the Safavids (Şeref Han 1971, 191–94). The case of the Emir Şeref, the bey of the Bidlis and the grandfather of Şeref Han Bidlîsî and of the Sunni Islamic sect, who switched sides during the reign of Suleiman (the Magnificent) and sided with Shah Ismail's son Tahmasb,⁷ is another example (Genç 2019, 306; Şeref Han 1971, 180). Furthermore, one other striking example of the attitude of Kurdish begs depending on the course of Ottoman-Safavid relations is Şeref Han, the author of *Şerefname*. For unlike his great-grandfather, he changed sides while he was the Safavid Bey of Nakhchivan and switched to the Ottoman side (Şeref Han 1971, 403). It was above all a sign that the relationship of the Kurdish begs with the Ottomans and the Safavids was not based on belief, in contrast to what Bidlîsî claimed, but rather on a conjuncture derived entirely from power relations. This indicates that from the 16th century onwards, the trajectory of Ottoman-Kurdish relations was shaped accordingly, and Kurdish begs alternated between the periodic alliance relations they would establish with the Ottomans and the Safavids.

After 1514, the Ottoman Empire established various administrative structures for the governance of Kurdistan (such as the *hukümet* and *yurtluk-ocaklık* in addition to the classical sanjak administration). This administrative structure continued in various parts of Kurdistan until the 19th century and especially until the period of the Tanzimat (Edict of Gulhane). Follow-

⁷ Some Kurdish begs, including Bidlis Bey Emir Sharif, initially declared their loyalty to Shah Ismail. But later on, they were arrested in Khoy as a result of the provocations of the Diyarbekir sovereign, Khan Muhammed Ustaclu. Due to the violent policy he followed, his relations with many Kurdish beg deteriorated and as a result, many Kurdish chiefs sided with the Ottomans in the Battle of Çaldıran. On the other hand, after the administration of Bidlis was taken from Emir Şeref by Suleiman (the Magnificent), Emir Şeref sought assistance from Shah Ismail's son, Tahmasb (Genç 2019, 327–28). The example mentioned is noteworthy in that it shows the relationship between the Kurdish beys, the Ottomans and the Safavids.

ing the Tanzimat, the state administration in Kurdistan was completely reshaped and brought under the control of the central authority (Saito 2018; Alanoğlu 2017).

2 The Tanzimat Period and the “Reconquest” of Kurdistan

From the early 19th century, the broad authority of the Kurdish emirates was considered as a threat by the Ottoman state. Although the central government abolished the sovereignty of some Kurdish emirates from the 18th century, others maintained their own *de facto* authority at the end of the century and the beginning of the 19th century. As a matter of fact, it can be contended that some Kurdish emirates acted as autonomous states in the regions they governed, and the Kurdish *mirs* regarded themselves as sultans of Kurdistan (Özoglu 2012; van Bruinessen 1992; Klein 2011). Simultaneously with the loss of authority of the emirates, a form of tribal confederation that held power, Kurdish tribes came into the scene as multiple and fragmented agents. And this led to a wave of violence that would continue throughout the 19th century. The rebellious attitude of the Kurdish tribes against the imperial authority led to the implementation of policies of “banishment”, “discipline” and “deportation” towards the tribes.^{8,9} In fact, some tribes-

men were beheaded and sent to İstanbul (HAT. 733-34782, 2 August 1827; HAT. 293-17452, 28 May 1828; HAT. 390-20711, 15 December 1830). One of the determining factors in the state’s use of such extreme methods of punishment was that it wanted to hamper the consolidation of inter-tribal solidarity. For example, due to the close relations among the aghas of the Milli Tribe, the Governor of Diyarbekir said that it should be dispersed and settled in different places (TS. MA. e. 1131-61, 8 September 1837). On the other hand, methods such as taking some tribal leaders hostage and guaranteeing the loyalty of other tribal leaders to the state were also applied (HAT. 448-22316, 7 April 1839).

During the Tanzimat period, relations between the Ottoman and Kurdish tribes continued with certain articulations, as well as new and more radical practices, with the aim of the “new order” that permeated the provinces. The following measures depict the state’s policy toward the tribes; i) using military force for “remediation” and “repudiation”, ii) demanding allegiance documents from tribal chiefs and exile to distant lands, iii) brutal execution of tribal chiefs engaged in rebellion or banditry activities, iv) census of tribes and physical count of inventory to collect the tax they were liable to pay.¹⁰ Definitely, these policies were not only applied to Kurdish tribes, but to Arab and Turkoman tribes as well (Y.EE. 103-74, 8 April 1881). However, although the state may have had a different agenda, especially with regard to nomadic Kurdish tribes, it defined Turkoman and Arab tribes as “savage” and “uncivilized” as well, just like Kurdish tribes, and placed importance on settlement.¹¹ On the other hand, one of the important points to be empha-

1840; A.MKT. MHM. 30 January 1851.

⁸ The archive documents employed in this article have been accessed through Ottoman Archival Sources, and its standard coding system has been used. The calendar types, the hijri (hicri) and the julian (rumi), have been presented along with the dates according to the gregorian calendar. The explanation of the abbreviations of archival codes is on page 13-14.

⁹ For numerous examples of the anti-authoritarian actions of Kurdish tribes until the mid-19th century and the counter-politics of the empire, see. HAT. 37-1896, 20 March 1806; C.ZB. 75-3713, 4 August 1806; C.DH. 25-1213, 14 October 1807; TS. MA. e. 498-43, 27 February 1808; TS. MA. e. 697-71, 29 July 1808; C.DH. 105-5239, 16 March 1809; TS. MA. e. 170-51, 25 January 1811; HAT. 446-22282, 2 March 1814; HAT. 499-24474, 14 June 1814; HAT. 497-24394, 12 December 1814; HAT. 765-36091, 12 June 1817; HAT. 1227-47923, 30 October 1818; C.DH. 48-2389, 21 April 1819; C. DH. 233-11648, 23 June 1820; HAT. 1338-52254, 7 October 1820; HAT. 445-22278, 11 June 1820; HAT. 445-22278, 9 November 1821; HAT. 445-22278, 19 November 1821; HAT. 447-22309, 10 June 1834; HAT. 453-22435, 28 April 1835; HAT. 447-22311, 1 November 1835; HAT. 448-22327, 1 November 1835; HAT. 447-23311, 16 April 1836; HAT. 447-22314, 16 April 1836; HAT. 637-31417, 6 October 1836; C.ML. 528-21640, 15 January 1839; HAT. 1618-34, 15 March 1839; C.DH. 115-5734, 4 March

¹⁰ For extensive archival material and examples, see. C.DH. 125-6220, 4 March 1840; C.DH. 76-3766, 4 March 1840; C.DH. 239-11901, 4 March 1840; C.ZB. 12-576, 4 March 1840; C.DH. 256-12788, 4 March 1840; C.DH. 224-1198, 4 March 1840; İ. MVL. 26-2115, 10 August 1841; İ. MVL. 26-407, 10 August 1841; C. ZB. 59-2946, 22 January 1845; A.MKT. 22-70, 7 March 1845; C.DH. 248-12375, 2 April 1245; MVL. 3-35, 23 October 1845; A.MKT. MHM. 2-102, 25 June 1846; A.MKT. MHM. 52-15, 14 October 1846; İ.MVL. 84-1709, 13 November 1846; A.MKT. MHM. 2-53, 2 February 1847; A.MKT. UM. 115-49, 30 November 1852; ŞD. 1454-24, 12 December 1872; A.MKT. MHM. 452-53, 17 April 1873; A.MKT. MHM. 456-93, 13 May 1873; HR. SYS. 82-14, 2 April 1878; Y.EE. 43-93, 15 December 1880; Y.PRK. ASK. 5-41, 17 December 1880; DH. ŞFR. 195-38, 26 September 1896.

sized here is the following: a kind of “correction of faith”, in other words, “Sunnification” (*tashih-i akâid*) policy was applied to the Alevi-Kurdish tribes that were considered to belong to a heretical belief (Y.MTV. 49-17, 14 March 1891).¹²

The effort to penetrate the provinces, which began during the reign of Mahmut II and accelerated with the Tanzimat period (1839–76), led to the multiplication of various military and administrative measures, particularly in the Kurdish region. Sultan Mahmut II launched a series of measures against the Kurdish leaders, who were almost independent up until his reign. In this context, by appointing Reşid Mehmet Pasha, one of the former grand viziers, to the governorship of Sivas in 1833, he initiated a comprehensive policy of taking control of and reforming Kurdistan. The main objective of these policies was to break the power of the *mirs* and Kurdish tribes that resisted the rule of the Tanzimat (C.DH.239-11907, 4 March 1840). In this regard, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Egyptian army in Nizip (or Nezib), a few months before the proclamation of the Tanzimat, dealt a severe blow to the prestige of the state in Kurdistan and increased the potential of the Kurdish *mirs* of the region to rebel against the Ottoman administration. In fact, the Kurdish *mirs*, who were quite strong in the region, began a wide-ranging period of rebellion against the Ottomans. In addition to the revolts of Kurdish emirs such as Babanzade Abdurrahman Pasha, Mir Muhammed Pasha, the emir of Revanduz, Bedirhan Bey, the emir of Cizre-Botan, and Yezdanşer (Izzeddin Shir), the insurgencies of fragmented Kurdish tribes also increased.¹³ Among these revolts, that of Bedirhan Bey was noteworthy in that the state had to mobilize for a long time to suppress this rebellion. There were intense efforts to suppress the Bedirhan Bey rebellion, referred to as the “trouble of Kurdistan” (*Kürdistan gâilesi*) in Ottoman records (C.DRB. 7-346, 8 March 1848; A.AMD. 2-18, 26 September 1847), and

to integrate the region in the administration (*Bedirhân Bey gâilesi betaraf olunduğundan Mart esnasında eyâlet-i mezkûrenin dâire-yi Tanzîmâta idhâline buyurulacağına*) of the Tanzimat (İ. MSM. 51-1310, 6 October 1847).

Finally, a new administrative division, the “province of Kurdistan”, was created at the end of 1847 (A.MKT.103-64, 21 November 1847). In this regard, the use of the phrase “the capture and conquest of the province of Kurdistan” (*feth ve teshîr olunan Kürdistan eyâleti*) in the reports presented to the sultan after the creation of the province proves that this Ottoman region was in fact ruled *de facto* by Kurdish emirs and tribes (A.AMD. 2-99, 16 December 1847). Although some scholars argue that with the suppression of Bedirhan Bey’s rebellion, the semi-autonomous Kurdish regimes in Kurdistan came to an end, and Ottoman rule in the region was secured, it is quite difficult to claim that the empire established its sovereignty in Kurdistan after 1847. One of the main reasons for this is that with the abolition of the last Kurdish emirates, a significant vacuum of authority appeared in the region and many Kurdish tribes tried to take advantage of it. After the “conquest of Kurdistan”, the basic policy of the Ottomans towards Kurdistan was always to “clean Kurdistan of bandits” and “rehabilitating of the tribes” (A.MKT.MHM. 10-69, 7 February 1849). During this period, Kurdish tribal chiefs and begs were subjected to compulsory resettlement with their tribes (İ.MMS. 38-1574, 2 February 1866; İ.MMS. 62-2938, 12 July 1874; DH.MKT. 2416-12, 18 October 1900), while military barracks were built in some parts of Kurdistan (İ.MMS. 64-2996, 27 September 1879).

The province of Kurdistan, consisting of such regions as Mardin, Van, Muş, Hakkari, Cizre and Botan (A.MKT.103-64, 21 November 1847; A.MKT.UM. 66-46, 11 July 1851), as well as the town of Diyarbekir, officially maintained its existence until 1867, with the inclusion and removal of other places over time, and then was abolished. Another remarkable point of this period is that since the second half of the nineteenth century, the geography of Kurdistan was included in the scope of “Fırka-i Islâhiye”¹⁴ for the control of the tribes (Halaçoğlu 1996, 35). However, this new policy

¹¹ For selected samples, see. DH. MKT. 1368-102, 28 September 1886; Y.PRK. MYD. 5-62, 28 September 1886; DH. MKT. 1395-3, 25 January 1887; DH. MKT. 1813-62, 28 February 1891; A.MKT. MHM. 723-1, 10 February 1894.

¹² For a detailed discussion, see Çakmak (2019, 417-24).

¹³ For more details of the revolts of the Kurdish emirs and tribes against the rule of the Tanzimat, see Kandemir (2017, 235-303).

¹⁴ *Fırka-i Islâhiye* included the regions from İskenderun to Maraş and Elbistan, from Kilis to Niğde and Kayseri, from

had to be put off due to the subsequent unrest in Moldavia and Wallachia (Cevdet Paşa 1986, 201).

After the dissolution of the Kurdish emirates, sheiks and tribes became more important political figures than ever. It is worth noting that the authority vacuum in Kurdistan and the chaotic and fragmented tribal structure played a role in this. Sheiks and sects, which were overshadowed by the emirates, began to become prominent authorities after the second half of the 19th century. Some of them reached such power as to control many tribes. One of the most important of these sects was the Khalidi Naqshbandi sect and one of its most important leaders was Sheikh Ubeydullah (van Bruinessen 2000b, 213–30). By the 1880s, Sheikh Ubeydullah controlled the lands of emirates such as Hakkâri and Erdelan, Botan, Bahdînan. Besides being a very strong religious leader and having significant economic power, Ubeydullah became a political figure after the Ottoman-Russian War (1877–1878). Having joined the war on the side of the Ottoman army with the support of many Kurdish tribes, he was not satisfied with the political atmosphere that emerged after the war, especially as regards the Treaty of Berlin and the reform plans for the Armenians. Loyal to Abdulhamid and especially to the Caliphate, Ubeydullah partially supported some tribal revolts (Heriki) against the Ottoman Empire that took place in Hakkâri in 1879. Ubeydullah attempted to invade Iran in 1880; however, he could not succeed despite the support of many tribes and his army of tens of thousands. He was captured by Ottoman forces in 1881 and brought to Istanbul and then exiled to the Hijaz (Celil 1998; Jwaideh 2006; Olson 2013). According to some scholars, Ubeydullah received support from the British (Kodaman 2010), while according to others, he had the idea of establishing an independent or autonomous Kurdistan (Celil 1998; Jwaideh 2006). However, we do not have reliable information on these two issues. In our opinion, Ubeydullah's rebellion was not a nationalist revolt, but rather a struggle for the survival of the Kurds, who were caught between Turkey, Iran, Russia and the Western powers. There is no doubt that some of Ubeydullah's correspondence, especially with Western consuls, has a nationalistic tone, but this *per se* is not enough to say

Adana province to the border of Sivas province.

that the rebellion was a nationalist rebellion. After Ubeydullah's rebellion, a new tribal policy was to be staged in Kurdistan.

3 Paramilitarization of Kurdish Tribes: Hamidiye Cavalries

In the last quarter of the 19th century, that is, from the reign of Abdulhamid II, the state's policy towards the control and discipline of Kurdish tribes led to a rapprochement due to the advantages of relations between some tribes and the state. Especially with the Berlin and San Stefano Treaties (1878), the proposed reforms must be carried out in the places where Armenians are settled. The disadvantages thought to be created at the expense of the Kurds living together with the Armenians, and the loyalty relations that Abdulhamid's policy of "Islamic unity" engendered in the Sunni Kurds played a great role. Nonetheless, it is evident that not all Kurds were completely in unconditional loyalty to the Ottoman Empire and that pseudo-fidelity must at least be considered in the context of a relationship of mutual interest. In this respect, the participation of Sunni Kurds in the Hamidiye cavalry regiments is, apart from what the state intended, closely related to the advantages of taking part in the cavalry regiments (Y.EE. 139-1, 20 January 1891; Y.PRK.ASK. 91-97, 22 June 1893; DH.MKT. 300-73, 30 November 1894; BEO. 991-74290, 11 October 1897), (such as exemption from taxes and military service, immunity from all kinds of looting and land usurpation, impunity for criminals in the cavalries, and gaining more power over their neighboring Kurdish tribes). The following expression describes the principle for admission to the cavalry regiments: "It is not appropriate to enroll in the mentioned regiments tribes other than those who have not been recruited so far." (*şimdiye değin taht-ı intizâm-ı askeriye alınamamış aşâirden gayrının mezkur alâylara kayd ve idhâli gayr-ı câiz bulunmuş olduğu*). As this shows, the purpose of the establishment of the cavalry regiments was both to control the tribes and to benefit from the power of these tribes (DH.MKT. 1933-99, 17 March 1892; DH.MKT. 2046-106, 1 February 1893). In addition to these advantages, participating in the cavalries brought a great deal of freedom of movement to these tribes, and therefore it was ob-

served that the members of these cavalries themselves partook in the extortions (DH.ŞFR. 160-98, 13 August 1893).

The Hamidiye cavalry regiments, established in 1891 (Y.PRK.AZN. 5-23, 4 April 1891; Y.PRK.ASK. 71-79, 16 May 1891) with the participation of Kurdish tribes, along with a few Turkoman and Arab tribes, had various functions such as border security of the state, the Armenian threat, and at the same time ensuring the control of the Kurds by making use of the Kurds themselves as an instrument (Kodaman 1979, 427-80). However, once more, there was a reasonable “Islamic standard”, and only the applications of Sunni and especially Shafî Kurds were accepted, as as expected (Y.MTV. 61-18, 31 March 1892). The purpose the schools and mosques that were ordered to be built in Sunni Kurdish villages where cavalries were formed was to ensure the loyalty of the Kurds to the state on the one hand and to consolidate their Islamic ties on the other.

The advantages of being included in the Hamidiye Cavalries and the armed power gained opened the way for the Kizilbash Kurds as well as Sunni Kurds to apply to join these tribes. However, it will be seen that the state did not accept the Kizilbash Kurds in the Hamidiye cavalry, which was composed of Sunni Kurds. Despite repeated requests, the Kizilbash Kurds in the Dersim and Muş regions were not accepted into these cavalries because of their beliefs. Though these regiments were composed of Sunnis, an inter-tribal Sunni bond could not be established. On the contrary, there were numerous incidents in which the tribes in question, regardless of their sects, came into conflict with each other.¹⁵

¹⁵ For detailed examples of the mutual violence of the tribes of the Hamidiye regiments, see. BEO. 969-72659, 9 August 1893; Y.MTV. 82-70, 5 September 1893; Y.MTV. 95-59, 10 May 1894; BEO. 453-33904, 14 August 1894; BEO. 489-36643, 6 October 1894; BEO. 637-47762, 22 May 1895; Y.PRK. ASK. 105-90, 30 July 1895; Y.MTV. 160-94, 14 June 1897; Y.PRK. A. 11-61, 7 August 1897; Y.MTV. 168-2, 28 September 1897; DH. ŞFR. 212-54, 29 September 1897; DH. TMIK. M. 40-64, 3 October 1897; Y.PRK. AZN. 19-24, 14 September 1898; DH. MKT. 2143-58, 3 December 1898; Y.MTV. 191-7, 12 June 1899; A.MKT. MHM. 614-26, 24 June 1899; Y.MTV. 191-154, 5 July 1899; Y.PRK. UM. 47-29, 11 July 1899; BEO. 1349-101133, 2 August 1899; BEO. 1053-78958, 1 October 1899; DH. TMIK. M. 79-11, 12 December 1899; DH. ŞFR. 249-108, 9 August 1900; DH. TMIK. M. 99-12, 10 January 1901; DH. ŞFR. 255-17, 14 January 1901; DH. TMIK.M. 105-50, 23 June 1901; DH.

4 School of Tribes and “Voluntary Contract” with Tribes or Privileged Tribal Children

Another policy of the state towards the tribes was the tribal school, built in Istanbul to receive “voluntary consent”. In fact there was a large Kurdish population among the children admitted to the tribal schools from different parts of the Ottoman lands (BEO. 66-4880, 5 September 1892). In this regard, special attention was paid to the requirement that the children admitted to the schools had to come from the families of the Arab and Kurdish chiefs and sheikhs, foregrounding nobility, fame, and prestige (BEO. 943-70652, 20 April 1897)¹⁶.

In particular, the children of the Kizilbash tribes of Dersim, whose applications to the Hamidiye regiments were rejected, were this time accepted into the aforementioned school because, unlike the Hamidiye regiments project, this school did not carry the risk of arming suspected Kurdish Kizilbash. Therefore, by educating children recruited from the Kurdish Kizilbash tribes and sending them back to their own areas, the state would implement the policy of “*tashih-i akaid*” formulated as the correction of the Kizilbash’s faith (or *Sunnification*), and facilitate the production of consent by asserting authority over the Kizilbash communities through these children (Çakmak 2019, 430-31). Although these schools were in high demand by the mentioned Kizilbash Kurds, it can be purported that the state could not fulfill its objective. On the contrary, there was a solidarity based on Kurdish nationalism among the Kizilbash youth, as they were socialized with the Sunni Kurdish youth educated in these schools. For example, Gibran’s Major Halid Bey and Hasan Hayri Bey, the Ottoman deputy of Dersim in the First Assembly and executed for being accused of making Kurdishness propaganda in 1925, studied together at the school of tribes and graduated together.

TMIK. M. 110-43, 26 October 1901; DH. ŞFR. 272-71, 26 December 1901; BEO. 2227-166997, 29 September 1903; BEO. 2784-208751, 28 February 1905; A.MKT. MHM. 673-39, 1 September 1907; Y.A.HUS. 516-135, 19 November 1907.

¹⁶ Later, Albanian, Circassian and Turkmen children were also accepted at the tribal school (MF. MKT. 642-37, 5 July 1902; MF. MKT. 809-43, 29 September 1904; BEO. 2225-166841, 24 November 1903).

Figure 1: A group photo of the Hamidiye Cavalry regiments



Image: Istanbul University Library and Documentation Department: [http://katalog.istanbul.edu.tr/client/tr_TR/default_tr/search/detailnonmodal/ent:\\$002f\\$002fSD_ILS\\$002f0\\$002fSD_ILS:2504464/one?qu=http%3A%2F%2Fnek.istanbul.edu.tr%3A4444%2Fekos%2FFOTOGRAF%2F779-64---0001.jpg&ps=300](http://katalog.istanbul.edu.tr/client/tr_TR/default_tr/search/detailnonmodal/ent:$002f$002fSD_ILS$002f0$002fSD_ILS:2504464/one?qu=http%3A%2F%2Fnek.istanbul.edu.tr%3A4444%2Fekos%2FFOTOGRAF%2F779-64---0001.jpg&ps=300) (access: 12.05.2021). Copyright: Istanbul University. Reproduction with permission of the Rectorate of Istanbul University.

Figure 2: Students who graduated from the School of Tribe



Image: *Servet-i Fünûn*, 11 June 1314/23 June 1898, 380, p. 244. Image: Yalçın Çakmak.

5 From Settlement Politics to Social Engineering: CUP and Kurdish Tribes

Even though the relationship of the CUP with the Kurds, and more specifically with the tribes, pursues in some aspects the notion of modernization/centralization that started with the Tanzimat, this period at the same time corresponds to a moment when radical ruptures were encountered in the empire's relationship with the Kurds. If the relationship between the state and the Kurds and Kurdish tribes is assessed in terms of articulation and radical ruptures in this new period, the politics constituting the articulation dimension can be summarized as follows: During the CUP period, the Ottoman politics of centralizing Kurdish tribes continued with all its dimensions. In this context, the resettlement policy toward the Kurdish tribes persisted, and the government tried to prevent the existence of the tribal chiefs as autonomous powers independent of the central government. In addition, the patronage relationship already present between the state and the tribal chiefs was used for this purpose.

From 1908, one of the principal objectives of the CUP was to bring under control and even eliminate some 32,000 militants led by 865 tribal officers of 63 cavalries in the early 1900s (Bozarslan 1997, 249). After the 1908 revolution, the violence generated by the tribes belonging to the Hamidiye Cavalries reached such a dimension that it came to affect Muslims, Christians, Kurds and all residents of the region directly. The fact that İbrahim Pasha (brigadier general),¹⁷ who was the "puissant" Hamidiye pasha and leader of the Milli Tribe and loyal to Abdulhamid until the end of his life (Rondot 1936, 37), came to take on such a position as to surround Diyarbakir with thousands of armed men in 1907 (Kansu 2002, 91–92) is remarkable in terms of indicating the tribal power. On the one hand, the CUP tried to reduce the dominance

¹⁷ When İbrahim Pasha, the colonel of the Hamidiye Regiments, died in 1909, Mahmud, who replaced him as the chief of the tribe, led the tribe into a brief rebellion against the Kemalists in 1920. Nevertheless, as a result of the agreement between the Kemalist movement and the French in 1921, the rebellion was suppressed in a short time. Even though the tribe attempted to continue to exist by taking part in the Kurdish nationalist movement that would develop in Syria from the beginning of the 20th century, it soon lost its effectiveness (Bozarslan 1988, 125; Tejel 2008, 144).

of the tribes of the Hamidiye Cavalries, many of whom were worried about losing the power they had and the *de facto* authority they had established (by force) with the fall of Abdulhamid. On the other hand, it quickly formed new tribal cavalries in almost the same form, with only a change in name, in order to take advantage of the same power, i.e., the tribes.¹⁸ In fact, they simply removed the name "Hamidiye" from the name. Reorganized under the name "The Tribal Light Cavalry" in 1911, the cavalries were renamed "Reserve Cavalries" (*İhtiyat Süvari Alayları*) in 1913 and were incorporated into the regular army as Reserve Cavalries Corps in 1914. However, as they were not effective enough, a significant part of these cavalries was disbanded in the same year, and only a few remained in the army. The Reserve Cavalries, numbering in the tens of thousands, scattered across the region in an uncontrolled manner.¹⁹ But according to some archival documents dated 1915 and 1916, the Reserve Cavalry Corps continued their activities under names such as "militias" or "volunteer corps", especially on the Caucasian Front (Evsile 1996, 912).

As could be seen, the CUP's effort to control or modernize the cavalries of the *ancien régime* could not go further than the practices of their archenemy, Abdulhamid; on the contrary, it almost became an equivalent of these practices. Despite this, the uprisings that started at the beginning of the 20th century and were led by Kurdish tribal leaders and sometimes Kurdish sheikhs²⁰ continued almost without interruption,

¹⁸ We did not find any official documentation regarding the official abolition of the Hamidiye Cavalries in the Ottoman archives. With the "İzale-i Şekavet Law" enacted in 1923, former members of the Cavalry were defined as "village guards".

¹⁹ It is highly probable that the dispersed units took part in the Armenian genocide and plunder (see Edward J. Erickson 2006).

²⁰ In particular, after the dissolution of the autonomous and semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates, one of the institutions that became a power in the geography of Kurdistan was the tribes is the sheikhdom (van Bruinessen 1992; Jwaideh 2012; Strohmeier and Yalçın-Heckman 2014). It is known that Abdulhamid had a close relationship with the Kurdish sheikhs as well as the Kurdish tribes (Deringil 2014). However, it does not seem possible to argue that the vacuum of authority that emerged in Kurdistan after the emirate period of the Kurdish sheikhs was as effective as the Kurdish tribes (Örs 2019, 249). Nevertheless, this argument does not mean that the Kurdish sheikhs did not undertake a political mission together with the tribes, especially since the end of

especially during the period of 1909 to 1914. When the movement of the Milli tribal leader İbrahim Pasha came to an end in 1909, the Hemawendi tribe and then Sheikh Abdulselam in the Barzan region rebelled against the Ottoman rule, but among these rebellions, the longest-running one that ended in 1914 was the Bitlis rebellion led by the Sheikh Selim (Jwaideh 2006, 220–246). In response to this period of revolt that the Kurdish tribes entered, the CUP executed some tribal leaders and sheikhs and arrested prominent figures. Nevertheless, on the eve of World War I, it tried to develop good relations with the tribal chiefs in order to keep the Kurdish tribes under control, and even adopted a policy of releasing the imprisoned tribal chiefs and members (HD. ŞRF, 49, 235, 7 February 7 1915). Moreover, it did not hesitate to take advantage of Sheikhs Naqshbandi and Khalidi, who had a substantial influence on Kurdish society, to get the rebellious Kurdish tribes to take a stand on the side of the CUP in the coming war. As mentioned above, the tribes that were previously members of the Hamidiye Cavalries actually participated for the CUP in World War I with various name changes and arrangements. Yet it should be stressed that participation in this war did not mean that there were no negotiations between the tribes and the CUP. For example, some tribes that supplied the army with soldiers were excluded from the scope of the settlement of the Kurds in the western provinces, which began in this period (Dündar 2002, 143). In brief, since the end of Abdulhamid's rule in 1909, some Kurdish tribes in Kurdistan, and especially the Kurdish elite, supported the CUP, but the ethnic engineering and homogenous nation-building policies of the CUP were not yet clear at that time.²¹ Nevertheless, as the pressure of the central government increased with the CUP and they did not want to lose the advantages such as autonomy

the 19th century, on the contrary, the Kurdish sheikh institution had an influence on the development of the Kurdish nationalist movement, as well as the influence of the tribes.

²¹ Many Kurdish elites took an active part in the CUP. For example, Abdullah Cevdet and İshak Sükuti, who took part in the establishment of the CUP, were Kurds. In addition, names such as Babanzade İsmail Hakkı, Babanzade Ahmet Naim, Bedirhan Bey, son of the Botan Emirs, who rebelled against Ottoman modernization in 1947, and Seyid Abdulkadir, son of Sheikh Ubeydullah, who rebelled in 1880, were Kurds (Kutlay 1992, 26).

and disobedience that they had gained through the Hamidiye Cavalries, especially during Abdulhamid's reign, some of them launched numerous rebellions against the CUP administration. The CUP's policy towards Kurdish tribes up to this point was a continuation of the policies of "reconciliation, reward" along with the "discipline, banishment and deportation" that became commonplace mainly after the 1840s. But still, the idiosyncratic particularity of the CUP that distinguished it from the previous period was that the policy towards the Kurds and the Kurdish tribes in particular was a part of ethnic engineering.

The radical breaking point in the policies towards Kurdish tribes during the CUP period was that policies such as settlement, discipline and banishment, which had been consistently applied to Kurdish tribes without any ethnic purpose until that moment, took on an ethnic dimension. Undoubtedly, the main motive behind this transformation was the CUP's inclination towards a Turkist policy rather than a pro-Ottoman policy from its secret congress held in Thessaloniki in 1911 (Tunaya 1984; Levend, 1947). One of the most essential elements of this new policy was the shaping of Kurdish policy, and more precisely tribal politics, accompanied by scientific studies such as mapping, cartography, censuses and ethnographic studies, which were an indispensable element of nation-state-building in the 20th century. Through social engineering (Scott 1998), demographic engineering or ethnic engineering (Dündar 2008), the CUP, in the aforementioned process of the building of nation-state, first cleared Anatolia of the Christian population in 1915–16 (Üngör 2011, 55–86; Dündar 2008, 175–398), and then, from 1916, it forced the Kurdish population to settle (Dündar 2002, 137–55).

The figure who determined the course of the Kurdish and tribal politics of the CUP was Ziya Gökalp,²² who would later become nationalist theorist of the modern republic. Gökalp, who became one of the prominent ideologists of the CUP, most notably after 1909, proposed a comprehensive formula for the solution of the Kurdish question, which he defined as the

²² According to Ziya Gökalp, the Kurdish issue was fundamentally a tribal issue. The Kurdish tribes were a community of banditry, uncivilization and ignorance. Therefore, the solution of the Kurdish issue actually meant the solution of the tribal issue. For details, see Gökalp (2011).

tribal problem. This formula was applied both by the CUP administration and by the Kemalist regime, its successor. Fuat Dündar, a prominent Turkish scholar, scrutinizes the CUP's approach to the Kurdish issue, at the center of which Ziya Gökalp stands out, under four main headings. These are: i) the definition of the problem; ii) the sociological research phase; iii) the implementation of policies; iv) the construction of official ideology (Dündar 2008, 401). In 1909, Gökalp portrays the Kurdish issue as a tribal issue before the CUP started ethnic engineering activities against Christians and Kurds, particularly against Armenians. From his point of view, the tribe was a "disease" and should be expelled from the body of society. In the second phase, sociological research was carried out in the geography of Kurdistan for the ethnic engineering actualized by the CUP with a positivist method. With the CUP's coming to power by a coup d'état in 1913, first, Anatolia would be cleared of the Christian population, and then the Kurds, who were Muslim but not Turkish and constituted the densest population, would be assimilated into the Turkish population. In the third stage, the Kurdish population was subjected to deportation and settlement in such a way that they did not represent more than 5 percent of the population in places where they were sent to. One of the main motivations for setting a 5-percent quota was the distrust towards the Kurdish tribes and the desire to prevent a possible rebellion or resistance. Furthermore, this quota was required for the assimilation (*temsil*) of the surviving Kurdish population to Turkishness. The last phase, as Dündar defines quite accurately, was the stage of the construction of an official ideology towards the Kurds. At this point, for primary purposes such as doing ethnographic research in Kurdish geography and rehabilitating Kurdish tribes, the "Scientific Committee" (*Encümen-i İlmiye Heyeti*) was established under the leadership of Ziya Gökalp in 1917, and "scientific" publications were made about Kurdish tribes and Kurds.²³

Within the scope of this study, it is necessary to focus partially on the third stage, which was mentioned by Dündar. By 1916, the Armenian population was almost completely deported, and during the war, the

new target of deportation would be the Kurds. In 1916, the Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants (*İskân-ı Aşair ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyeti-IAMM*) was renamed as the General Directorate for Tribes and Immigrants (*Aşair ve Muhacirin Müdüriyeti-i Umumiyesi-AMMU*) and one of the aims of its regulations was the "civilization of the tribes". As a sub-unit of AMMU, as mentioned above, the "Scientific Committee" was established. Thus, the deportation and settlement of the Kurds began, under the control of AMMU and directly led by Talat Pasha, one of the major names of the Unionist triumvirate, with encrypted telegrams (Dündar 2002, 139–44). Deportation and settlement had distinctive purposes; The CUP's policy of Turkification of the Anatolian population was central. After the Armenian genocide and deportation of the Christian population, the most significant obstacle to the Turkification project was the Kurdish population, which was Muslim but non-Turkish. In addition, attempts were made to prevent the tribal revolts that continued almost incessantly during the First World War; accordingly, specific measures were taken to deport the tribal chiefs to a separate place from their tribes during the Kurdish settlements. On the one side, the fact that the deported tribal chiefs and members were settled in separate places and not allowed to return had the aim of breaking the strong tribal *assabiyya*, while, on the other side, it was aimed to assimilate the population into Turkishness. The data on the number of people deported is not clear; even if this number is estimated to be around one million. In Ottoman archival sources Turkish immigrants are also included in that number. While some sources claim that the number of deported Kurds was 700,000 and at least half of them lost their lives during the deportation (Üngör 2011, 117), some sources report the number of Kurds who died during the deportation as 700,000 (Kutlay 1992, 272). Though these numbers might be exaggerated, it is also possible to make an average estimation based on some numbers recorded in 1916 and 1917 as regards the Kurdish population remaining in the deportation centers and the Kurdish population deported. For example, on 15 July 1917, forty thousand Kurds in Diyarbakir were ordered to be deported to Konya and Menteşe towns (DH. ŞRF 78-128, 17 July 1917); as can

²³ For details of the four stages mentioned above, see Dündar (2008, 401–22).

be seen from another encrypted telegram, as of 2 June 1917, there were two hundred thousand Kurds in Mamuretülaziz, Diyarbakir and Urfa provinces who had not yet been deported (DH. ŞRF 77-8, 2 June 1917).

The relationship between the CUP and the Kurdish tribes continued in the triangle of loyalty, rebellion and settlement throughout the First World War. It was possible to find a lot of Kurdish tribes fighting on the side of the Ottoman army, especially on the Caucasian front; nevertheless, the Kurdish tribes, who received military support and some political promises from the Russian army, had the potential to revolt unpredictably against the CUP administration at any moment (Zardykhan 2006). For instance, in March 1916, Kurdish Alevi tribes from Dersim moved towards Mamuretülaziz; but the revolt was crushed (Kieser 2007, 48). After Russia's withdrawal from the region following the Bolshevik Revolution, Kurdish tribes in particular were not allowed to return. Towards the end of the war, the settlement and assimilation policy of the CUP, particularly towards Kurdish tribes, was still crucial (Dündar 2002, 154–55). October 1918 meant both the definitive defeat of the CUP and the end of the empire. Even though the CUP dissolved itself on November 1, 1918, it continued to exist under different titles, and more importantly, it determined the policy of the Kurdish tribes of the republic that was to be established after the Turkish War of Independence.

6 Discussion: Legacy of the CUP and Kurdish Tribal Policy in the Early Republican Period

The CUP, while in absolute power, destroyed a significant part of the Christian population of Anatolia between 1913 and 1918 as part of its ethnic engineering. Although it implemented a policy of deportation and settlement towards Kurds and Kurdish tribes from 1916, the social engineering was not completed; and it was continued after 1923 by the CUP members themselves. In fact, during the period 1913–1950, defined as the “Young Turks Period” by Zürcher (1992), CUP members and its pioneer names would play a crucial role both in the struggle for the independence of the newly established republic and in the social engineering that continued after the republic was proclaimed (Zürcher 1984). At the head of these names, undoubt-

edly, was Ziya Gökalp, one of the fundamental ideologists of the CUP; but in company with him, names like Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda, Mahmut Celal Bayar, Kazım Özalp, İbrahim Tali Öngören, Ali Cenani, and Şükrü Kaya would be among the new elites of the republic, and the social engineering would continue (Üngör 2008, 33–34). After the CUP, during the armistice period led by the Freedom and Coalition Party (*Hürriyet ve İhtila Fırkası*), some Christians and Kurdish tribes were allowed to return from their settlement areas. The principal motivation for allowing some of the Kurds to return was to maximize the number of Muslims in the region against Armenian demands, which was one of the central agendas of the Treaty of Sèvres. However, this period also coincided with the period called the War of Independence (1919–23) and was the beginning of a new era between the tribes and the Kemalist movement. The main factor determining the policy of the Kemalist movement towards the Kurdish tribes was to mobilize the support of the Kurdish tribes in the war of independence and to consolidate the tribes as allies in the face of the Kurdish nationalist demands that emerged in a full-fledged manner at that time. In fact, this effort led to considerable success and some Kurdish tribes acted in concert with the Kemalist movement. Moreover, some tribal leaders came to the parliament as representatives; yet of course, this was not the case for all tribes. The most notable tribal rebellion against the Kemalists during the armistice period was the rebellion of the Koçgiri tribal confederation composed of Kurdish Alevi tribes. It was brutally suppressed, and many chiefs and members were executed. One of the distinctive features of this rebellion was that it was in contact with the Kurdish nationalist movement, and one of its leaders, Nuri Dersimi, even talks about their relations with the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*) (of which he was also a member) and mentions that they conveyed their demands to the Allied Powers through this society (Dersimi 1992, 230). Many Kurdish political and cultural organizations were established between 1908 and 1920, and a significant part of these organizations was led by notable Kurdish families of the Emirate period, such as the Şemdinan Family, the Bedirhani Family, the Cemilpaşazade Family. This re-

relationship between tribes and Kurdish nationalist organizations continued with the proclamation of the republic and tribes became an essential militant reserve for Kurdish nationalist organizations such as Xoybûn and Azadi (Bozarslan 2008).²⁴ The 1920–21 Koçgiri Rebellion and the method of its suppression contained the codes of the policies to be carried out especially against the Kurdish-Alevi tribes. As emphasized in the article, the empire had a negative attitude towards Alevi tribes, particularly in its relations with Kurdish-Alevi tribes. This negative attitude was also apparent in the minds of the remaining Ottoman soldiers and bureaucrats who were to be transferred to the Republican period, and the attitude towards the Dersim region (a Kizilbash-Kurdish region) and its tribes would result in massacres in 1937–38.

In the Armistice period, the relationship between the tribes and the Kemalist movement took the form of a partial agreement and contrary to the official Turkish history thesis, the Kurds did not take part in most of the rebellions in Anatolia until 1923, when the Kemalist movement succeeded. Nonetheless, after the proclamation of the Republic, the relationship between Kurdish tribes and the new republic quickly entered a period of long-term conflict. The period that Bozarslan defines as “tacit contract” (Bozarslan 2003a) gave way to rebellion. In 1924, the first rebellion against the new regime broke out in Beytüşşebab to be followed by the more organized rebellion of Sheikh Said in 1925. The Ağrı Rebellion (1927–30), a long-term guerrilla war, and the 1937–38 Dersim resistance and massacre determined the course of the relationship between the Kemalist regime and the Kurdish tribes. During this period, a number of administrative arrangements were made simultaneously. Following the Sheikh Said rebellion, the “rehabilitation” of Kurdish regions and Kurdish tribes became the principal agenda of the Kemalist regime. In the aftermath of

the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion, an extended deportation policy was put into effect for Kurdish notables and tribes. Even the tribal chiefs who sided with the Kemalist movement were not excluded from the deportation. In 1926, the “Eastern Reform Plan” (*Şark Islahat Planı*) came into effect, and the deportation and assimilation of Kurds and Kurdish tribes became systematic. Like the CUP, the Kemalist regime conducted these policies under the guidance of a professional committee, and many members of the “Eastern Reform Council” were former CUP members who were highly experienced in demographic engineering. The intentions of the deportation policy were the same as those of the CUP, but were implemented more systematically. The main aim was to absorb the Kurdish population into Turkishness and to “rehabilitate” the Kurdish tribes, which were considered as the source of both Kurdishness and “incivility and disorder”. In January 1928, with the establishment of the First General Inspectorate (*Birinci Umumi Müfettişlik*) in Diyarbakir, under the leadership of a former CUP member İbrahim Tali Öngören, a new colonial rule began in the Kurdish regions. The last comprehensive demographic engineering of the Kemalist period ended with the Settlement Law enacted on April 14, 1934. The main objective of this law was the assimilation of the Kurdish population into Turkishness, the disbandment and disarmament of Kurdish tribes, and the deportation of tribal leaders. In this sense, it is a radical continuation of the process that began with the CUP in 1916.

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²⁴ Azadi, Civata Azadiya Kurd (Kurdish Freedom Society) was founded in 1921. It took part in the Beytüşşebab rebellion in 1924 and the Sheikh Said rebellion a year later. The suppression of the Sheikh Said rebellion brought the organization to an end. Xoybûn (to be oneself) was a secular nationalist group founded in Lebanon in October 1927. Many Kurdish intellectuals of the time rapidly joined this group. Xoybûn carried out vigorous political activities, especially between 1927 and 1934. It took an active part in the Ağrı Rebellion and dissolved in 1946.

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