

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Winter-Quartering Tribes: Nomad–Peasant Relations in the Northeastern Frontiers of the Ottoman Empire (1800s–1850s)

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Abstract

Focusing on the winter quartering of Kurdish nomadic tribes among peasant villages, this article discusses the patterns of Kurdish nomadism and nomad–peasant relations in the Ottoman sanjaks of Muş, Bayezid, and Van during the first half of the nineteenth century. It argues that the political structure of these regions and the requirements of animal husbandry among the nomads not only created a distinct pattern of nomadism among the Kurdish tribes, but also led to the polarization of relations between nomads and peasants. Moreover, the article observes how nomad–settled, tribe–peasant relations in these regions evolved as a result of the gradual sedentarization of the pastoral nomads and related changes in their subsistence economies starting from the mid-nineteenth century. Finally, this article provides a background for a better understanding of the intercommunal tensions and conflicts over land in the Ottoman Empire of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Introduction

Stretched over a large area from the Balkans to Yemen, the Ottoman world contained a large population of pastoral nomadic tribes. The geographical, environmental, and political particularities of each imperial domain had created a range of forms of pastoral nomadism, subsistence economies, and relations with the outside world among the empire’s nomadic communities. During the nineteenth century, as the Ottoman Empire underwent a significant transformation due to administrative, fiscal, and military reforms and the expansion of commercial agriculture, state relations with various nomadic tribal groups and nomad–peasant relations changed irreversibly. This article aims to present a picture of relations between Kurdish pastoral nomads and local peasantry (mostly Armenian, but also Kurdish and Turkish) of the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire¹ during the first half of the nineteenth century. It will also discuss how the nature of this relationship

¹“Northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire” is taken here to refer to the northern parts of the province of Van and the province of Erzurum bordering the Qajar and Russian empires.

gained new dimensions when, towards the mid-nineteenth century, nomadic tribes were forced to settle by a centralizing government.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the requirements of pastoralism among the nomads and the political structure of the northeastern frontiers of the empire led to the emergence of an unequal relationship between pastoral nomads and sedentary cultivators. In this relationship, the local peasantry of the Ottoman sanjaks of Muş, Bayezid, and Van was largely dominated by the nomadic tribes of the region. The practice of winter quartering nomads, which this article focuses on, was an important aspect of the polarization of nomad–peasant relations in this period. The relationship between nomads and local peasantry gained new dimensions – including disputes and conflicts over agricultural lands – when nomadic tribes were gradually sedentarized by the state in line with the centralizing reforms of the Tanzimat period.²

Through an examination of the relationship between nomadic tribes and the local peasantry of the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire from the early to the mid-nineteenth century, this article will argue that the mutual relationship between pastoral nomads and sedentary cultivators in a shared geography could turn into a conflictual one because of external political interventions and the limited availability of resources.

This article will also argue that, rather than being an outcome of sectarian differences, the tensions between Kurdish nomadic tribes and the Armenian peasantry during this period were mostly shaped by the requirements of a pastoral nomadic life among the tribes and crises arising from their sedentarization. Although it was the Armenian peasantry who suffered most from the practice of winter quartering, the local non-tribal Muslim peasantry were also affected.

By discussing the evolving relationship between nomadic tribes and the peasantry, the requirements of animal husbandry among the tribes, and the crises arising from their sedentarization, this article also provides a historical background to a better understanding of the sectarian tensions that erupted on the land and in relation to property during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Current historiography on relations between nomadic tribes and peasants no longer treats these two groups as always mutually exclusive and antagonistic. Since the 1960s, a growing number of works on the nomads of the Middle East and Africa have emphasized how nomads and peasants historically coexisted and were mutually dependent on and beneficial to each other.³ Nomads needed agricultural commodities for their daily diet and craft commodities for daily use. Sedentary populations, on the other hand, needed nomads' pastoral products, pack animals for transportation, and livestock manure for their fields. In the Middle East, where nomads and cultivators lived close to each other, these two social groups developed a symbiotic relationship. Likewise, there is a growing literature focusing on the

²Tanzimat was an age of reform, from 1839 to 1876, which aimed to modernize and centralize the Ottoman Empire.

³Frederik Barth, "Nomadism in the Mountain and Plateau Areas of South West Asia", in *The Problems of the Arid Zone* (Paris, 1960), pp. 341–356, 346–347. For different approaches on nomad–peasant relations, see Rada Dyson-Hudson and Neville Dyson-Hudson, "Nomadic Pastoralism", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 9 (1980), pp. 15–61.

reciprocal relations between the nomads and sedentary people of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ Pastoral nomadic tribes, for instance, played an important role in supplying meat for the expanding imperial cities of Istanbul, Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵ During the same period, great quantities of sheep wool from the nomads of Mosul were exported to France by Ottoman and foreign merchants.⁶ The use of nomads' camels for trade and transportation by sedentary communities of Anatolia is a well-known phenomenon in Ottoman history.⁷ During military campaigns, Ottoman state officials leased large numbers of pack animals from nomadic tribes to transport the grain and other supplies required by the army.⁸ Likewise, various nomadic groups provided labour for mining and timber cutting and engaged in extensive trade.⁹ In different periods of Ottoman history, many others protected roads and mountain passes in return for exemption from certain taxes.¹⁰

Despite the growing number of studies emphasizing the symbiosis between sedentary cultivators and nomads, the tensions that arose between these two social groups under the stresses of the political and environmental crisis were also evident in Ottoman history. For instance, during the seventeenth century, the droughts brought by the Little Ice Age, political crises, and the population pressures of the late sixteenth century led many of Anatolia's pastoral nomads to expand their pasturing spaces at the expense of the peasantry.¹¹ A similar tension was witnessed in Syria from the late seventeenth century onwards. The weakness of Ottoman rule in the region, environmental calamities, and Saudi-Wahhabi pressure in the early eighteenth century pushed many southern tribes, the Anazzah and Shammar among them, to the north, into Syria. From the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the northward movement of these tribes into Syria led to several conflicts with the peasantry and the abandonment of several peasant villages.¹²

This article does not dispute the existence of the above-mentioned symbiotic relations between nomads and peasants; it claims, instead, that the degree of mutual

⁴For a review of this literature, see Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees* (Seattle, WA, and London, 2009), pp. 31–35.

⁵Sarah D. Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany, NY, 2000), pp. 161–182; Yonca Köksal and Mehmet Polatel, "A Tribe as an Economic Actor: The Cihanbeyli Tribe and the Meat Provisioning of İstanbul in the Early Tanzimat Era", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 61 (2019), pp. 97–123.

⁶Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*, pp. 169–176.

⁷Onur İnal, "One-Humped History: The Camel as Historical Actor in the Late Ottoman Empire", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 53:1 (2021), pp. 57–72, 53.

⁸İlhan Şahin, "1638 Bağdad Seferinde Zahir Nakline Memûr Edilen Yeni-il ve Haleb Türkmenleri", *Tarih Dergisi*, 33 (1982), pp. 227–236.

⁹Başak Akgül, "Being a Forestry Labourer in the Late Ottoman Empire: Debt Bondage, Migration, and Sedentarization", *International Review of Social History*, 67:3 (2022), pp. 467–486.

¹⁰Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Derbend Teşkilâtı* (İstanbul, 1990), pp. 109–114.

¹¹Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 242; Tufan Gündüz, *Anadolu'da Türkmen Aşiretleri* (İstanbul, [1997] 2016), pp. 108–109, 116–122.

¹²Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800–1980* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 8–9; Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, "Settlement Desertion in the Gezira between the 16th and 19th Century", in Thomas Philipp (ed.), *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century* (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 285–291; M. Talha Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 68–72.

land use between nomads and peasants is shaped by a variety of environmental, political, and demographic factors. In other words, under certain historical conditions, the mutually beneficial relations between sedentary cultivators and nomadic pastoralists could acquire a conflictual character, and one could develop at the expense of the other.¹³ In northern Benin (West Africa), for instance, where nomads and peasants had historically developed an interactive exchange and mutual dependence on shared geography, the technological developments and market integration of the peasants' economy in the 1980s brought pastoralists and peasants into competition and conflict over the same land.¹⁴ In the case of the Ottoman Empire, Daniel Bates argues that, in nomad–peasant shared geographies, the degree of land-use mutuality and equal relations depended largely on the local balance of power. A variety of external factors, including state policies, shaped the local balance of power, and thus the very nature of nomad–peasant relations.¹⁵

The relationship between Kurdish nomads and sedentary cultivators of the Ottoman East in the early and mid-nineteenth century has been a less studied topic. It has been generally accepted that, during the pre-Tanzimat period, Kurdish tribes, whether nomadic or settled, were below the Kurdish dynasties/emirates within the Ottoman administrative hierarchy.¹⁶ Yet, the administrative, military, and fiscal centralization that started in the 1830s in Ottoman Kurdistan, and peaked during the early Tanzimat period broke the power of the Kurdish hereditary dynasties.¹⁷ In the absence of these Kurdish hereditary dynasties, tribes benefited from the new political setting, managed to acquire administrative posts, became tax farmers, and increased their local power to a large extent.¹⁸ While several scholars have drawn attention to the increase in tribal violence against local peasantry during this period, these studies rarely paid attention to the role of the patterns and peculiarities of Kurdish nomadism, the requirements of the pastoral nomads, and the crises arising from their sedentarization in these tensions.

Studies focusing on the relations between Kurdish tribes and the peasantry illustrate how they also gained an ethno-religious dimension, especially between Kurdish tribes and the Armenian peasantry during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These studies also indicate how the relations between Kurdish nomads and the Armenian peasantry were influenced by the commercialization of agriculture, changes in the land tenure system, environmental calamities, and fiscal crises. Janet Klein explains the tensions and conflicts that erupted between Kurdish tribes and the Armenian peasantry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the

¹³This does not mean, however, that all members of the nomadic or settled groups are hostile to one another.

¹⁴Leo de Haan, Anne van Driel, and Annetee Kruithof, "From Symbiosis to Polarization? Peasants and Pastoralists in Northern Benin", *Indian Geographical Journal*, 65:1 (1990), pp. 51–65.

¹⁵Daniel Bates, "The Role of the State in Peasant–Nomad Mutualism", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 44: Special Issue 3 (1971), pp. 109–131.

¹⁶Hakan Özoglu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany, NY, 2004), pp. 53–55.

¹⁷Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility in the Ottoman Empire: Loyalty, Autonomy and Privilege* (Edinburgh, 2022), pp. 111–126.

¹⁸Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London, 1992), p. 193.

context of the changing nature of the land tenure system. As land became an important commodity, Kurdish tribes who were also part of the Hamidian regiments engaged in large-scale land usurpation from the Armenian peasantry.¹⁹ Klein argues that, although the Kurdish peasantry were also targeted, it was the Armenian peasantry who were mostly affected by this process.²⁰

Scholars have also drawn attention to the impacts of environmental changes on nomad–peasant relations. Matthew Ghazarian has shown that, while cross-confessional coalitions were visible in the Ottoman East in the 1840s, the simultaneous role of the drought, financial crises, and an influx of new weaponry contributed to the rise of sectarian and ethnic tensions and conflicts in the Ottoman East following the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War.²¹ He points out how the high rates of animal mortality among the Kurdish pastoral nomadic tribes, due to weather changes and famines, brought several Kurdish nomadic tribes and Armenian peasantry into conflict.²² Zozan Pehlivan argues that Kurdish pastoral nomads were more vulnerable to environmental calamities than sedentary cultivators during the late nineteenth century. She illustrates how, in the late nineteenth century, local droughts related to global climatic changes resulted in a shortage of water and pasture grounds, which caused great animal losses among the Kurdish nomadic tribes, again causing tensions between nomadic pastoralists and peasants.²³

This article is divided into three parts. The first part will provide information about the geographical and climatic peculiarities of the northeastern parts of the Ottoman Empire and illustrate how nature/environment, as an important agent of history, shaped the patterns of Kurdish nomadism, the requirements of animal husbandry, and, finally, nomads' relations with the outside world.

In the second part, relations between Kurdish nomadic tribes and local peasantry during the first half of the nineteenth century will be discussed. I will demonstrate how the pastoral requirements (winter quarters) of the tribal nomads and the political structure of the region (indirect rule through competitive and contending Kurdish dynasties/sanjak governors) led nomads to quarter themselves in Armenian and Kurdish peasant villages during the winter months. This part will demonstrate that the quartering of nomads among peasant villages became a burden on the peasantry and contributed to the abandonment of several peasant villages.

The third part will deal with the sedentarization of the nomadic tribes following the end of the local power of the Kurdish dynasties towards the mid-nineteenth century. When nomads were brought into the sedentarization programme by the central and provincial administration, tensions erupted between tribes and peasantry over the

¹⁹Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, CA, 2011), p. 14.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Matthew Ghazarian, "A Climate of Confessionalization: Famine and Difference in the Late Ottoman Empire", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 54:3 (2022), pp. 484–504.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 490–494.

²³Zozan Pehlivan, "El Niño and the Nomads: Global Climate, Local Environment, and the Crisis of Pastoralism in Late Ottoman Kurdistan", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 63 (2020), pp. 316–356, 317.

region's lands, fields, and meadows. It was during this period that newly sedentarized tribes started to engage in conflicts with the local peasantry to acquire shelter for themselves, and stables, fields, and meadows for their animals.

Geography and Pastoral Nomadic Tribes

With their favourable and abundant grazing spaces, the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire had always been a site for different forms of pastoral nomadism. Micro-regional variations in geography and climate fostered the emergence of pure pastoral nomadism, transhumance, mountain pastoralism, and several other forms of pastoralism among the region's tribes.²⁴ The major Kurdish tribes in the region during the first half of the nineteenth century were the Hasenan, Sepki, Haydaran, Zilan, and Celali. Each of these had approximately 1,500 to 2,000 families and comprised several clans of different sizes and structures.²⁵ An important portion of these tribes, which are included in this study, were purely pastoral nomadic. They dealt exclusively with animal husbandry, especially sheep breeding, and were mobile between the lowlands and highlands of the region. These tribes had large flocks of sheep and played a critical role in the supply of meat to the urban centres, including Istanbul, Damascus, Aleppo, and Egypt, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁶

During the first half of the nineteenth century, a distinct mode of pastoralism prevailed among some sections of the Hasenan, Haydaran, Sepki, Celali, Zilan, and among many others within the Ottoman sanjaks of Muş, Bayezid, and Van in the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. These nomadic tribes, locally known as wintering tribes (*kışlakçı aşâir/ekrad*), were pure nomads, who neither engaged in agricultural cultivation nor maintained stable winter quarters.²⁷ They spent their entire summers in the pasturing grounds of northeastern Anatolia or the Lesser Caucasus and sheltered in Armenian and Kurdish plain villages of the region during the cold and snowy winters. While the practice of wintering among peasant villages was beneficial for the nomads, as it avoided long-distance migrations to milder geographies, it became a burden on the local peasantry. Despite comprising an important proportion of the local tribes, their patterns of nomadism have attracted very little attention from scholars.²⁸

²⁴For a discussion of different forms of pastoral nomadism, see Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Madison, WI, [1984]1994), pp. 18–25.

²⁵Due to tribal mobility, population surveys could not be carried out among several nomadic tribes of the region. The numbers given in this text are mostly estimations by government officials, travellers, and British and Russian consuls. See BOA (The Ottoman Archives, Istanbul), HAT 811/37227 (11 April 1822); Mehmed Hurşid Paşa, *Seyâhatnâme-i Hudud*, transl. Alaattin Eser (Istanbul, 1997), pp. 232–234, 262–267; M.A. Jaba, *Recueil de notices et récits Kourdes* (St Petersburg, 1860), pp. 1–4.

²⁶Yener Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes at the Intersection of the Ottoman–Persian and Russian Empires (1820s–1890s)" (Ph.D., Boğaziçi University, 2020), pp. 237–253.

²⁷Although winter quartering was a widespread practice among these Kurdish tribes, there were also settled and transhumant branches of these tribes in the region.

²⁸The migration patterns of these nomadic tribes are briefly mentioned in John Frödin, "Les formes de la vie pastorale en Turquie", *Geografiska Annaler*, 26 (1944), pp. 267–269. For nomadic pastoral communities of the empire's northeastern frontiers, see also Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes".

Despite being familiar with the pasturing grounds of Muş, Bayezid, and Van, most of these tribes were not exactly indigenous to these regions. Until the late sixteenth century, some of these tribes or their subtribes belonged to the larger Süleymani Confederation and had their winter settlements in Amid, Savur, and Kulp in Upper Mesopotamia.²⁹ According to Şerefhan, a sixteenth-century scholar, several branches of the Süleymani tribes migrated to the pasturing grounds of Bidlis, Serafeddin (south of the Muş Plain), and the Aladağ Mountains (north of Lake Van) in autumn and stayed in those regions until the advent of spring.³⁰ For instance, until the late sixteenth century, the Zilan tribe had winter quarters in Amid and Savur but engaged in long-distance migrations to the highlands of Anatolia during the summers.³¹ Others, like the Cemaldini (a subsection of the Zilan during the early nineteenth century), Hasenan, and Sepki, appear as part of the Milli Confederation and were mobile between winter quarters in the south and summer pastures in Erzurum and Hınıs until the early eighteenth century.³²

From the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, many of these tribes gradually abandoned this pattern. Instead of migrating back to their traditional winter pastures in Upper Mesopotamia, they started to spend the entire year in the pastures and winter quarters of the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. Why several tribes quit the long-distance migration between Upper Mesopotamia and the Anatolian highlands is not entirely clear. Their abandonment of winter quarters in Upper Mesopotamia also dovetails with the migration and dispersion of the large Turcoman Bozulus Confederation in western and central Anatolia.³³ Tufan Gündüz argues that political crises in the late sixteenth century, Ottoman–Safavid tensions in the east, and over-taxation by local rulers might have contributed to the migration of these nomads from their ancient winter quarters to inner and western Anatolia.³⁴ Arguing from an environmental perspective, Sam White notes that the climatic fluctuations of the Little Ice Age increased drought and famine in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, possibly forcing nomads of the southern regions to seek out new pasturing grounds.³⁵ It was not only the human population that increased over that period. Faruk Tabak argues that, during the sixteenth century, because of the impact of the Little Ice Age, there was a diminution in the

²⁹Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Anadolu'da Aşiretler, Cemaatler, Oymaklar* (1453–1650), vol. 5 (Ankara, 2009), pp. 2486–2489; Şeref Han, *Şerefnâme Kürt Tarihi*, transl. Mehmed Emin Bozarıslan (Istanbul, 1971), p. 295. For a study of the Süleymani Confederation and their migration to the north, see Erdal Çiftçi, “Migration, Memory and Mythification: Relocation of Suleymani Tribes on the Northern Ottoman–Iranian Frontier”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54:2 (2018), pp. 270–288.

³⁰Han, *Şerefnâme Kürt Tarihi*, p. 295.

³¹M. Mehdi İlhan, *Amid (Diyarbakır) 1518 Detailed Register* (Ankara, 2000), pp. 172–181. Several Mühimme records mention the tensions between the Zilan tribe and Erzurum’s peasants when nomads migrated to the summer pasturing grounds. See Gülay Kahveci, “29 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (984/1576), Tahlil-Özet-Transkripsiyon” (MA, Istanbul University, 1998), pp. 187, 199, 212, 219.

³²BOA, AE SAMD III 92/9167, 15 Receb 1138 (19 March 1726); BOA, AE SAMD III 11/1031, 8 Muharrem 1137 (27 September 1724).

³³Faruk Demirtaş, “Bozulus Hakkında”, *Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 7:1 (1949), pp. 42–46.

³⁴Gündüz, *Anadolu'da Türkmen Aşiretleri*, pp. 108–109.

³⁵White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, p. 242.

amount of cultivated land, which contributed to the expansion of animal husbandry as an alternative economic activity.³⁶ In the case of Zilan, the oppression of local rulers, over-taxation, conscription in Upper Mesopotamia, and a shortage of pasturing space all seem to have been factors contributing to the tribe's permanent migration to the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire.³⁷ The migration of these tribes to those frontiers was also supported by the Ottoman authorities, as these Kurdish tribes were seen as a barrier against Safavid expansionism.³⁸

Divided by the Taurus Mountains, Upper Mesopotamia and northeastern Anatolia had different climates, altitudes, and vegetation. Since ancient times, these differences have resulted in the emergence of different patterns of nomadic pastoralism in and between these two zones.³⁹ The climate in Upper Mesopotamia is characterized by hot and dry summers, but relatively mild and rainy winters. In northeastern Anatolia, however, the summers are shorter and milder, while the winters are long and snowy. Moreover, compared to Upper Mesopotamia, northeastern Anatolia is higher in altitude. The geographic, climatic, and vegetational differences between northeastern Anatolia and Upper Mesopotamia created an ecosystem in which nomadic pastoralists had to maintain regular seasonal migrations between the two different zones. While spending their winters in the milder grazing lands of Upper Mesopotamia, during the dry summers nomads had to draw their livestock up into the northeastern Anatolian highlands, where rains created very favourable vegetation for the animals.

This migration pattern has been maintained by several different nomadic Turcoman and Kurdish tribes from the sixteenth century to the present day. The Bozulus and Karaulus confederations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the Milli and Alikan, Bekiran, Reşkotan, and Pencinar of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, all adopted this migration pattern.⁴⁰ Some of these tribes migrated longer distances. For instance, the Bozulus Confederation of the sixteenth century sometimes migrated as far as the Georgian frontier in search of pastures.⁴¹ The tribes of Alikan, Bekiran, and Reşkotan migrated relatively shorter distances. The reason might have been related to the size of their flocks. The greater the number of animals, the further they had to migrate, as livestock needed more grazing space. The Bozulus Confederation in the sixteenth century had approximately two million sheep, with 250 sheep per individual within the confederation.⁴² The Alikan tribe of the twentieth century, however, had an average of 18.9 sheep per individual.⁴³

³⁶Faruk Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870: A Geohistorical Approach* (Baltimore, MD, 2008), p. 169.

³⁷Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes", p. 52.

³⁸Xavier de Planhol, "Geography, Politics and Nomadism in Anatolia", *International Social Science Journal*, 11:4 (1959), pp. 525–531, 528; Çiftçi, "Migration, Memory and Mythification", p. 5.

³⁹For a discussion of nomadic pastoralism in ancient times, see Roger Cribb, *Nomads in Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1991).

⁴⁰Demirtaş, "Bozulus Hakkında", pp. 39–42; Mehmet Rezan Ekinçi, "19. ve 20. Yüzyıllarda Milli Milan Aşireti", in Tuncay Şur and Yağın Çakmak (eds), *Aktör, Müttelik, Şaki Kürt Aşiretleri* (İstanbul, 2022), p. 221; Frödin, "Les formes de la vie pastorale", pp. 219–272; İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu'da Değişim ve Yapısal sorunlar (Göçebe Alikan Aşireti)* (Ankara, 1969). See also Pehlivan, "El Niño and the Nomads".

⁴¹Demirtaş, "Bozulus Hakkında", p. 39.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴³Beşikçi, *Doğu'da Değişim*, p. 165.

In northeastern Anatolia the winters are not only long, lasting almost six months from October to April, but also cold and snowy.⁴⁴ While summer rains and high altitude provided excellent pasturing grounds for the livestock, the grazing of animals in winter was almost impossible since most of the pastures were covered with thick snow. Since ancient times, nomads, transhumant communities, and the settled peasantry of the Anatolian highlands had to keep their animals in stables and feed them with hay during the winter if they did not wish to engage in long-distance migration to milder lands. Regarding the ancient history of the region, Wilkinson argues that “[o]bservations by Xenophon in the fifth century B.C. and by the nineteenth-century travelers suggest that the village animals were wintered underground or in houses, where they could have been fed on forage supplied by cultivated lands”.⁴⁵

Political Structure and Nomad–Peasant Relations

During the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the major Kurdish tribes of northeastern Anatolia and northwestern Iran, including the Haydaran, Zilan, Celali, Hasenan, and Sepki, had no clearly defined and permanent wintering and summering spaces. Until the mid-nineteenth century, several groups within these tribes had to change their wintering and summering spaces between the lands of the Ottoman, Qajar, and, later, Russian empires because of unending wars among these three empires, shifting imperial boundaries, frequent droughts and famines, over-taxation, and conscription by the frontier rulers.⁴⁶ During the summers, these tribes, including the Şerafeddin, Süphan, Aladağ, Abagay, Sinekî, and Alagöz, ranged over the pastures of northeastern Anatolia and the Lesser Caucasus,⁴⁷ but they had to find proper shelter for themselves and their livestock during the long, cold winters. Having no definite wintering spaces, and preferring not to engage in long-distance seasonal migrations to Upper Mesopotamia (as some of them had done centuries before), some groups within these tribes, and several other smaller tribes, adopted the practice of wintering in peasant villages located in the plains of Muş, Bulanık, Malazgirt, Erciş, Adilcevaz, and Bayezid in Ottoman lands (Figure 1).

As nomadic pastoralists, unfamiliar with agricultural cultivation, these tribes were largely dependent on the outside world during the long and snowy winters. In the early nineteenth century, many of these nomad families did not own houses, stables, or lands for cultivation.⁴⁸ The need for stables for animals and especially hay for winter feeding increased dependence on the local Armenian and Kurdish

⁴⁴Sırrı Erinç, *Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası* (Istanbul, 1953), pp. 23–29.

⁴⁵T.J. Wilkinson, *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East* (Tucson, AZ, 2003), p. 197.

⁴⁶Koç, “Nomadic Pastoral Tribes”, pp. 54–61.

⁴⁷Paşa, *Seyâhatnâme-ı Hudud*, pp. 232–234, 262–267; Otto Blau, “Die Stämme des nordöstlichen Kurdistan”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 12:4 (1858), pp. 584–598, 714, 745; W. Spottiswoode, “Sketch of the Tribes of Northern Kurdistan”, *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, 2 (1863), pp. 244–248.

⁴⁸BOA, MB 7/46, 11 L 1264 (10 September 1848), BOA, MVL 678/45, 23 Zilhicce 280 (30 May 1864), BOA, HAT 718/34245 D, 29 Z 1247 (30 May 1832).

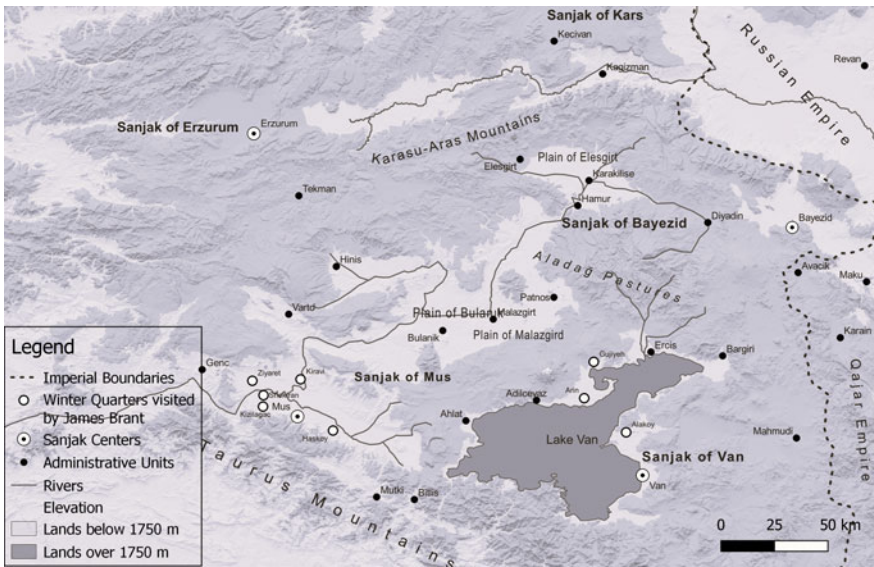


Figure 1. Physical geography and major administrative units in the Ottoman East.

peasantry. Such dependence, however, did not always create a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship between pastoral nomads and the settled peasantry. Nomadic tribes mostly wintered in peasant villages by coercion, taking the peasants' stables and hay without any real compensation in return.⁴⁹

The British Consul of Erzurum, James Brant, who spent many years in the region and made important observations on its tribes, argues in one of his reports from the late 1830s that:

On account of its rigor in this elevated ground, it is impossible for people in winter to live in tents, nor could animals exist without the shelter of stables. It was of course a great relief to the cattle, as well as to the Koords, to find a means of avoiding a long durable migration; but that the advantage should have been conferred on them at the expense of the poor peasantry, was most unjust. A great part of the summer they must toil to collect the fodder required in the winter for the maintenance of the Koordish cattle and having so many animals to supply with food, the peasants cannot increase their own stock as they otherwise might.⁵⁰

Relying mostly on the observations of Consul Brant, Frödin argues that the relations between the Kurdish nomads and Armenian peasantry in northeastern Anatolia resembled the relations between the herders and peasants of northern Switzerland.

⁴⁹BOA, HAT 804/37129 F, 1229 Şaban 12 (30 June 1814).

⁵⁰British Foreign Office (FO), National Archives, London, 78/366, James Brant and A.G. Glascott, "Report of a Tour through a part of Koordistan", Erzerum, 15 July 1839, p. 62.

While herders traversed the Alpine pastures during the summers, they took shelter among peasant villages during the cold and snowy winters in northern Switzerland. In exchange for food and shelter, nomads provided milk, cheese, butter, meat, and manure to the sedentary cultivators. Frödin argues that the main difference between these two regions is that while the relations between herders and peasantry were based on an agreement in Switzerland, the Kurdish nomads took what they needed from the Armenian peasantry through coercion.⁵¹

While the cold and snowy climate forced nomads to shelter in peasant villages during the winters, it was the political structure of the northeastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire that contributed to the polarization of relations between pastoral nomads and sedentary cultivators. Until the administrative and military reforms of the Ottoman Empire in the 1840s, the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire were, for the most part, indirectly administered. In other words, major administrative units (*sanjak*) had been granted to local Kurdish dynasties as hereditary land grants (*yurdluk-ocaklık*) in return for their loyalty and service to the Ottoman Empire, especially against Persia.⁵² Through this system, local notables retained great administrative, fiscal, and military autonomy in the regions under their control. These administrative units included Muş, Hınıs, Tekman, Malazgirt, Eleşgirt, and Bayezid, many of which contained the richest plains and most favourable pasturing grounds of the region.⁵³

During the early nineteenth century, by which time the central authority of the empire had already been weakened, hereditary local rulers of the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire engaged in an endless struggle to control local resources. These local rulers relied on the military might of nomadic tribal groups, using them in their conflicts with other local power holders (and sometimes against imperial authority). In 1813, Ahmed Pasha, the newly appointed governor of the province of Erzurum, informed the imperial capital that the rulers of the *sanjaks* of Van, Muş, Bayezid, Malazgirt, Eleşgirt, and Magazberd secured themselves in their castles and acted independently of his orders. Drawing attention to the power of the local notables, Ahmed Pasha claimed that “each [local ruler] protects and allies with a tribe and settles those tribes in the districts under their administration. In so doing, they have routinized giving those tribes winter quarters as if they were soldiers and burdening the poor commoners with providing food and all of the requirements of these tribes and their livestock”.⁵⁴

There was a symbiotic relationship between local rulers and nomadic tribes. In return for the winter quarters allocated to them, nomadic tribes provided military force for the local rulers. Moreover, nomads paid high wintering taxes (*kışlakiye*) to the local rulers, which constituted an important part of their fiscal power. For instance, in 1834, the hereditary ruler of Muş, Emin Pasha, collected 600 purse *akçe* in wintering tax from the Haydaran nomads and, in return, provided them winter

⁵¹Frödin, “Les formes de la vie pastorale”, p. 67.

⁵²For information on the *yurdluk-ocaklık* system, see Gábor Ágoston, “A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 9:1–2 (2003), pp. 15–31; and Özok-Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility in the Ottoman Empire*.

⁵³For a list of districts ruled as *yurdluk-ocaklık* districts, see BOA, HAT 490/24028, 29.12.1250 (1835).

⁵⁴BOA, HAT 804 / 37129 F, 1229 Receb 19 (7 June 1813).

quarters, hay, and fodder.⁵⁵ Before the 1840s, the Haydaran and Şikaki tribes who roamed the Ottoman–Qajar borders paid an annual 75,000 piasters in wintering tax to the governors of Van and were settled in peasant villages during the winters.⁵⁶ The crucial point in this relation was that taxes collected from the nomads by the local rulers and governors were seldom shared with the peasantry, who suffered most from the wintering of nomads.⁵⁷ In sum, this system, while beneficial for the nomads and local rulers, became a great burden on the local peasantry.

There were also periods when this tax was paid directly to the governor-general (*serasker*) of Erzurum. During the late 1830s, the tendency towards more central taxation brought about several conflicts between the centrally appointed governors of Erzurum and local hereditary rulers of the region. Wintering tax, like many other taxes, was an important revenue stream over which local and centrally appointed actors competed during the 1830s and 1840s.⁵⁸ The collection of wintering tax by the governor of Erzurum in the late 1830s should be regarded as part of this centralizing tendency in the fiscal organization of the provinces.⁵⁹

A well-documented case of winter quartering by Kurdish nomads among peasant villages took place in the early 1820s. Because of conflicts with the Qajar authorities, about 1,500 families of Haydaran nomads left their wintering spaces in northwestern Iran and migrated to Ottoman lands.⁶⁰ They were welcomed by the hereditary ruler of Muş, Selim Pasha, as he needed the military might of the nomadic tribes against his local rivals. Soon, 1,500 families of Haydaran were allocated to villages of the sanjak of Muş. Selim Pasha demanded that some of these nomads be allocated to villages in the districts of Erciş and Adilcevaz during the winters, since the needs of nomads were becoming burdensome on the peasants of his domain and the local nomads were having difficulties finding enough winter quarters.⁶¹ This proposal was refused by the guardian of Van, Mahmud Pasha, since the districts of Erciş and Adilcevaz were under his administrative jurisdiction. He opposed Selim Pasha's proposition, claiming that the villages of Erciş and Adilcevaz had traditionally been the winter quarters of the Şikaki tribe for over 300 years and could host no additional nomads. Furthermore, he claimed that the villages of these two districts

⁵⁵Gülseren Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak in the Ottoman Empire: Notables, Tribes, and Peasants of Muş (1820s–1870s)" (Ph.D., Boğaziçi University, 2018), pp. 67–69.

⁵⁶BOA, İMVL 116/2793, 15.03.1264 (20 April 1848).

⁵⁷It should be noted that, although rare, direct payment to the peasantry was also evident in the sources. For instance, in the late 1830s, the chief of the Haydaran tribe, Sultan Agha, admitted in conversation with the British Consul, James Brant, that his tribe received winter quarters, but emphasized that they paid for the hay they received from the peasantry. See James Brant and A.G. Glascott, "Notes of a Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan, in the Summer of 1838", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 10 (1840), pp. 341–434, 413.

⁵⁸Gülseren Duman Koç, "A Negotiation of Power during the Age of Reforms in the Ottoman Empire: Notables, Tribes and State in Muş (1820–1840)", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 57:2 (2021), pp. 209–226, 216.

⁵⁹For the collection of the wintering tax by the governor-general of Erzurum, see Brant and Glascott, "Notes of a Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan", p. 413.

⁶⁰Erdal Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East: The Heyderan Tribe and the Empire, 1820–1929" (Ph.D., İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2018), pp. 104–115; Eralp Yaşar Azap, "1820–1823 Osmanlı–İran Savaşı" (Ph.D. Istanbul University, 2021), pp. 36–42.

⁶¹Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes", pp. 95–98.

had become increasingly depopulated due to famines, with the inhabitants of the villages reduced to only 3–5 houses, and wintering such a large number of nomads in these districts would be a burden on the peasantry and inevitably lead to the emigration of those remaining from the region.⁶² Even setting aside the dispute between Selim and Mahmud Pashas, the traffic of correspondence between the Ottoman central and provincial administration regarding the wintering of Haydaran nomads reveals how winter quartering was an established practice in the region, and how it was a great burden on the peasantry during the early nineteenth century.

Among all these sanjaks, the practice of winter quartering was most widespread in Muş. The Muş Plain was among the lowest in altitude and contained hundreds of villages, which provided favourable winter quarters to the families of several different nomadic tribes. A large number of the Kurds and parts of the tribes of the district were nomadic pastoralists, spending their summers in mountainous pastures surrounding the plain, but wintering in villages in the Muş Plain.⁶³ Nomads wintering in the Muş Plain were so numerous that the wintering tax collected from them comprised an important part of the revenue of the hereditary local rulers of Muş, the Alaaddin Pashazades.⁶⁴

During his travel from the sanjak of Muş to Van in the late 1830s James Brant witnessed the winter quartering of nomadic Kurds in several villages. In the Muş Plain, the village of Kirawi (1,270 metres altitude) contained twenty Armenian families and provided winter shelter for ten Kurdish nomadic families; the village of Ziyaret (1,280 metres) contained forty Armenian families and gave shelter to twenty Kurdish families; the village of Shekiran contained sixty Armenian families and provided shelter to 20–40 Kurdish nomads; the village of Hasköy (1,280 metres) contained 150 Armenian families and gave shelter to forty families of Kurdish nomads; and the village of Kızıl Ağaç (1,330 metres) contained thirty Armenian families and provided shelter to thirty families of Elmanlı nomads during the winter.⁶⁵ The chief of the Elmanlı tribe, Serif Agha, paid 480 lira annually as wintering tax. When he was asked why his tribe was not building houses and cultivating the land, instead of quartering in Armenian villages, he responded that all the land in the plain had already been occupied.⁶⁶ The village of Arin in Adilcevaz contained fifteen Armenian families and provided winter quarters to ten nomadic families. The village of Gujiyeh was inhabited by ten Armenian families and provided winter quarters to twelve families of Kurdish nomads. The village of Alaköy in Van contained 100 Armenian families and provided thirty nomadic families shelter during the winters.⁶⁷

While British sources of the period present this practice as a conflict between Kurdish nomads and Armenian peasantry, Mela Mehmûdê Bayezîdî, a Kurdish religious scholar of the nineteenth century, argues that wintering of Kurdish nomads was also practised among the settled Kurdish peasantry. He notes how the

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak", p. 271.

⁶⁴BOA, C.ML 115/5126.

⁶⁵Brant and Glascott, "Notes of a Journey Through a Part of Kurdistân", pp. 348, 353, 375, 376.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 398, 405, 412.

peasants (particularly Armenian, but also Kurdish) were exposed to several misdeeds by the wintering Kurds (*ekrad*) during the long winters. According to him, the peasantry had to supply almost all the nomads' needs during the winter. They were not only obliged to share their houses, but also had to provide food and grain to the tribesmen.⁶⁸ Bayezîdî also notes that if any of the nomad families' animals died during their stay, the nomads would take animals from the peasants in return at the end of the winter.⁶⁹

The burden on the peasantry was not limited to winters. Local peasants also had to work more during the summers to collect hay, since they were obliged to provide it for the livestock of the incoming nomads. British consuls' reports and Ottoman archival sources indicate that the settled peasants would have been able to increase their wealth had they not been obliged to carry out additional work for the sake of the incoming nomads.⁷⁰ In the 1860s, the British Consul Taylor wrote:

The Kochers and Koords are under very imperfect subjection, and it is only by satisfying all demands, however outrageous, that the Christian agriculturists can maintain their position. One unbearable custom, that of Kishlak, has done more than anything else to contribute to their present paucity and decay. That custom, originating some years ago in the weakness of the Government and growing power of the Koords, enabled the latter to exercise the extraordinary right of quartering themselves and flocks during winter in and about the Christian villages, entailing upon the inhabitants large expenses, not only for fodder for their animals, but also food and fuel for themselves, during at least four months.⁷¹

Sometimes, tribal nomads expelled the peasantry from their homes and settled themselves in these villages. For instance, the governor of Kars reported that, in 1848, members of the Zilan tribe not only forcibly settled their families as guests in several villages in the district of Kagizman, taking their straw, forage, and livestock, but also expelled the inhabitants of several villages and used their homes as winter quarters.⁷²

The practice of winter quartering was not limited to the sanjaks, governed as hereditary land grants. For instance, Ottoman sources indicate the existence of this practice in the villages of Bayburd, a district located in the west of the province of Erzurum. The *temettuat* (income) surveys of the district of Bayburd indicate the existence of sixty-eight settler (*meşta-nişin*) Kurdish households in various villages in this district. The survey indicates that almost none of these families owned any landed property – houses, fields, meadows, for instance. Each family owned only stock animals, including sheep, cows, and oxen, and paid only wintering and

⁶⁸Mela Mehmûdê Bayezîdî, *Adat û Rusûmatnameê Ekradiye*, transl. Jan Dost (Istanbul, 2012), p. 115.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁷⁰BOA, I.MSM 51/1334 (1848).

⁷¹Turkey No. 16 (1877) *Reports by her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Agents in Turkey, Respecting the Condition of the Christian Subjects of the Porte: 1868–75* (London, 1877), Consul Taylor to the Earl of Clarendon, Inclosure in No. 13, p. 18.

⁷²BOA, MVL 232/53, 17 Ca 1266 (31 March 1850).

pasturing taxes.⁷³ Unlike in the hereditarily ruled lands, however, the relations among governors, peasantry, and nomads in Bayburd are not clear. Since the political structure here did not favour nomadic tribes, relations between nomads and peasantry might have been different.

The dependence of pastoral nomads on the sedentary cultivators in the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire revealed itself especially during periods of drought and famine. Nomadic tribes avoided wintering in regions hit by droughts during the cultivation season, as they knew the peasantry would not be able to provide the required hay and grain for their animals during the winter. For instance, in 1840, all wheat and barley in the Muş Plain were destroyed by locusts, bringing severe hardship to the local peasantry. The British Consul, James Brant, pointed out that the circumstances in Muş had kept away many Kurdish families, who depended on the Armenian peasants for shelter as well as for hay and straw for their cattle.⁷⁴

In 1841, Kamili Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, officially abolished this practice in the province of Erzurum, as it ran counter to the equality among subjects promised in the Tanzimat edict.⁷⁵ Tribes were subsequently responsible for paying directly to peasants if they spent winters in their villages. Three years later, in 1844, Brant noted that, despite the Porte's orders to end this practice, it remained to some extent.⁷⁶ Ferik İzzet Pasha, a military officer, had observed that the payments by tribes for using peasants' houses as winter quarters were rarely substantial and that this burden contributed to the out-migration of peasants from the region, leaving hundreds of villages in the districts of Bayezid, Abaga, Malazgirt, Ahlat, Tekman, and Hınıs deserted in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ British Consul Taylor, who had visited the Ahlat, Bulanık, and Malazgirt districts in 1868, noted that, "[t]he deserted villages, ruined churches, crumbling mosques, abandoned fields meet the eye everywhere".⁷⁸ He added that, to escape this "intolerable burden, 750 families have, within the last six years, emigrated to Russia, while 500 more have this year sent representatives to Erivan to negotiate a similar step".⁷⁹

A disruptive outcome of this practice was that it contributed to the mass migration of local peasantry from the region. By the mid-nineteenth century, the population of the region had already diminished because of the Ottoman–Persian and Ottoman–Russian wars, over-taxation by local rulers, and frequent famines, plagues, and droughts.⁸⁰ The peasants of Muş, Bayezid, and Van mostly migrated to surrounding towns or to Russia and Iran. The Ottoman archival sources reveal extraordinary

⁷³BOA, ML.VRD.TMT 6799 (1844).

⁷⁴British Foreign Office (FO), 78/443, James Brant, "Report on the Trade of Erzeroom for 1840 and on the State of Pashalik", Erzeroom, 21 January 1841, pp. 112–113.

⁷⁵British Foreign Office (FO), 78/491, James Brant, "Report on the Trade of Erzeroom for 1841, and on the State of Pashalik", Erzeroom, 20 January 1842, p. 204.

⁷⁶British Foreign Office (FO), 78/572, James Brant, "Memorandum Regarding the State of Moosh", Erzeroom, 9 December 1844, p. 33.

⁷⁷BOA, LMSM 51/1334 (1848).

⁷⁸Turkey No. 16 (1877) Reports by her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Agents in Turkey, p. 26.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁰Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes", p. 157.

numbers of abandoned villages in the Ottoman provinces of Erzurum and Van during the mid-nineteenth century. An Ottoman source available in the *İrade* catalogue indicates that out of 120 Muslim and Christian villages in the districts of Malazgirt, Tutak, Patnos, and Karayazi, only twenty were inhabited.⁸¹ The Abaga region, located northeast of Van, once occupied by hundreds of Yezidi villages and fortifications, contained only fourteen villages and became a large pasturing ground for nomadic tribes, including the Haydaran and Celali, during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸²

Sedentarization of the Nomads: From Winter Quartering to Conflicts over Land

The 1840s were, in many respects, a turning point for the political and economic history of the northeastern frontiers of the empire, and for a variety of local actors, including tribes, notables, and the peasantry. The centralizing programme of the Ottoman Empire, which took place between 1840 and 1850, broke the power of local hereditary Kurdish rulers and aimed at introducing a universal system of administrative, fiscal, and military organization in the following years. The same years also correspond to a period when the Ottoman and Qajar empires engaged in unprecedented attempts to draw the boundary between their lands and increase their infrastructural capacity in the frontier regions.⁸³ It was during this period that several nomads were brought under the programme of sedentarization by the state.

The existing literature indicates that, while the imperial centre and provincial administration played a primary role in the sedentarization of nomads in more inland geographies like Central Anatolia,⁸⁴ it was the increasing intervention of the state, together with the expansion of export-oriented agriculture, that pushed nomads into sedentarization in coastal regions such as Çukurova, Western Syria, and Lower Iraq.⁸⁵ The sedentarization of nomads in the provinces of Erzurum and Van was brought onto the agenda when the power of the hereditary Kurdish dynasties was finally broken in the late 1840s.⁸⁶ Starting from the late 1840s, the sedentarization campaigns of the imperial centre and new provincial administrations, together with the difficulties in maintaining seasonal migrations between the lands of the Ottoman and Qajar empires because of increased border

⁸¹BOA, I.MSM 52/1351 (13 ZA 1264).

⁸²Paşa, *Seyâhatnâme-i Hudud*, pp. 237–238; Koç, “Nomadic Pastoral Tribes”, p. 225.

⁸³Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman–Iranian Borderlands: Making A Boundary, 1843–1914* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁸⁴Yonca Köksal, “Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Sedentarization of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:3 (2006), pp. 469–491.

⁸⁵Meltem Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region, 1850–1908* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2010); Chris Gratien, *The Unsettled Plain: An Environmental History of the Late Ottoman Frontier* (Stanford, CA, 2022); Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800–1980* (Cambridge, 1987); Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900–1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology* (Albany, NY, 1997), pp. 9–27.

⁸⁶On nomad sedentarization and the disputes between nomads and peasants in the sancak of Muş, see Duman Koç, “Governing a Frontier Sancak”, pp. 269–280; Erdal Çiftçi, “19. Yüzyılın Temel Gelişmeleri Çerçevesinde Muş’ta Aşiretler”, in Murat Alanoğlu, Mustafa Alican, and Mehmet Özalper (eds), *Muş Tarihi* (Istanbul, 2021), pp. 292–298.

controls, forced many of the nomadic tribes to gradually settle in the villages of the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire.

Settling, however, did not mean the tribes entirely abandoning their nomadic lifestyle. Many of these tribes and their members adopted a transhumant lifestyle in which they were seasonally mobile between their new permanent villages and summer pastures. What was different from their pre-settlement lifestyle was that the tribes, while spending their winters in permanent villages granted to them by the imperial administration, were grazing their animals on surrounding pasturing grounds during the summers. Moreover, these nomads also gradually began to engage in agricultural cultivation in and around their new villages, mostly in order to provide winter fodder for their livestock.

The settlement pattern of pastoral nomads was shaped by the environmental circumstances and population density of the geography. Nomads were generally settled in lowland plains, where they could protect their animals from extreme cold and engage in agricultural cultivation. The second condition was that nomads were generally settled in villages whose populations had already been diminished or entirely depleted. Through such settlement, the central and provincial administrations aimed to rejuvenate the deserted lands, provide security, prevent nomads harassing the peasantry, turn nomads into agricultural cultivators, and facilitate the processes of taxation and conscription. Moreover, from the perspective of the Ottoman officials, the lifestyle of nomadic tribes was incompatible with civilization; their sedentarization would make them familiar with the “civilized” world.⁸⁷

Early sedentarization campaigns by the state in the province of Erzurum took place during the late 1840s, just after the power of the local ruling hereditary dynasties in Muş and Van had been broken. In 1847, during the governorship of Esad Pasha, 800 nomad families were distributed and settled in more than 200 Muslim and Christian villages in the sanjak of Muş. To prevent any re-nomadization, provincial authorities also confiscated the nomads’ tents.⁸⁸ From other sources, we learn that most of the settled nomads belonged to the Kurdish tribes of the Mameki, Badikan, Elmanlı, and Cibranlı.⁸⁹ To the west, in the districts of Malazgirt and Bulanık, large numbers of families from the powerful Hasenan tribe were settled between 1840 and 1860.⁹⁰ Despite there being no information about the number of families settled during this period, these two districts became home to the Hasenan tribe in the following years. In 1908, Mark Sykes noted that the Hasenan tribe (3,300 families) had 110 villages in the districts of Malazgirt Hınıs, and Varto.⁹¹ Starting from the late 1840s, to the west, closer to the Persian frontier, nomadic families from the Haydaran tribe were settled in the districts of Patnos, Adilcevaz, Erciş, and Bargiri.⁹² Likewise,

⁸⁷For the “civilizing mission” of the Ottoman Empire in tribal spaces, see Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45:2 (2003), pp. 311–342.

⁸⁸BOA, I.MSM 52/1351,13 ZA 64 (11 October 1848).

⁸⁹Paşa, *Seyâhatnâme-i Hudud*, p. 233.

⁹⁰Duman Koç, “Governing a Frontier Sancak”, pp. 273–277.

⁹¹Mark Sykes, “The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 38 (1908), pp. 451–486, 476.

⁹²BOA, I.MVL 188/5680 (1849); and BOA, I.MVL 337/14534, 1271 (1855).

the number of Haydaran families sedentarized in these regions in the late 1840s and early 1850s is not clear. Otto Blau, who had visited the region in the 1850s, mentioned that there were nearly 5,000 tents (families) of the Haydaran tribe roaming north of Lake Van, and the entire region was reserved for the sedentarization of this tribe.⁹³ To the north, in the sanjak of Kars, the tribe of Zilan and its former subtribes, like the Kaskan and Cemaldini, were given villages for sedentarization.⁹⁴

The transformation from an entirely nomadic lifestyle to a transhumant way of living was a difficult process for the nomads and inevitably triggered disputes between tribal groups and the local settled peasantry. The lack of agricultural know-how and the urgent need for hay, straw, and stables for animals and houses for accommodation pushed many of the tribes into disputes with the local peasantry. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed several conflicts between the newly settled Kurdish tribes and Armenian and non-tribal Kurdish peasantry over the region's lands, fields, meadows, and houses. Not coincidentally, these disputes mostly concentrated in villages located in the plains of Muş, Bulanık, Malazgirt, Erciş, Adilcevaz, and Eleşgirt, where nomadic tribes had formerly spent their winters as "guests".

Upon settlement by several different nomadic tribes, the Armenian peasantry, either directly or through their community leaders, presented several petitions to the imperial administration, complaining about harassment by their new neighbours and demanding the expulsion of the tribes from their villages. In a similar vein, Kurdish peasants either presented petitions through their village heads or sought protection by joining powerful tribes. Most of the petitions written by the peasantry accused newly settled tribes of forcefully seizing their grain and hay, which were necessary for livestock feeding during the winters. Similarly, peasants also accused tribes of seizing their fields and houses, grazing their animals on village lands, or using village monasteries as stables.⁹⁵ Sometimes, Kurdish and Armenian peasantry wrote joint petitions. In 1851, a petition signed as "the Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants of Muş and Bitlis" emphasized how inhabitants of these regions were under constant pressure and threat from Kurdish tribes and how, annually, 2,000 families emigrated to foreign countries because of regional insecurity.⁹⁶

In May 1850, the Armenian peasantry of Kasor (Kartsor), a village located in the Muş Plain, complained about the above-mentioned Şerif Agha (Şero Ağa) of the Elmanlı tribe. In 1846, Şerif Agha, together with forty-two families from his tribe, was settled in Kasor, and the Armenian peasantry of this village were relocated to other villages by the local authorities, who claimed that these two groups would not get along with each other. In response to complaints from the villagers, and on orders from the imperial capital, families from the Elmanlı tribe were settled in other villages and the Armenian peasantry repatriated.⁹⁷ In June 1857, the Armenian peasantry of the village of Varteniz, located in the district of Muş,

⁹³Blau, "Die Stämme", p. 594.

⁹⁴BOA, I.MVL 121/3044 (1848); and BOA, 168/63 (1848).

⁹⁵BOA, HR.SYS 1781/20, 17 ZA 68 (2 September 1852); BOA, MVL 131/20, 11.05.1269 (20 February 1853).

⁹⁶Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak", pp. 208–209.

⁹⁷BOA, A.MKT.UM 15/44, 9 C 1266 (22 April 1850).

petitioned the state through their community leaders, accusing Kurdish tribes of changing the borders of village fields in their favour.⁹⁸

Similar complaints were also lodged by the peasantry of the Bulanık and Malazgirt districts, to the west. In 1852, Armenians from several Bulanık villages complained about the Kurdish tribes of the region. According to the petitioners, tribes were stealing their livestock and horses, burning their hay and stables, and forcing them to work to construct their new houses. The peasantry also attached a long list to their petition, which indicated animal thefts and other crimes perpetrated by the tribal groups in several villages of Bulanıklar.⁹⁹ In 1853, a petition written by the Armenian Patriarch and Armenian Council voiced grievances regarding tribes that settled in the villages of Şihyolu, Purkaş, Erincek, Fındıklı, Haçlı, Pirane, and Karagil in the district of Lower Bulanık. The patriarch and the council argued that Kurdish tribes, whose population comprised no more than a few houses in each of these villages, were seizing the churches and properties of the peasants and forcing them to leave their ancestral homes.¹⁰⁰ In 1850, the peasantry of the village of Kuştiyan in the Malazgirt district, who described themselves as the poor inhabitants of Kuştiyan village (*ahâli-i fukara-i Kuştiyan*), demanded the expulsion of three Kurdish families from their villages. The villagers argued that these tribal families (who seem to have been members of the Hasenan tribe) owned large numbers of animals and damaged their fields through grazing.¹⁰¹ In 1853, in Malazgirt, several Muslim and Christian villagers had to migrate to Bayezid because of oppression from the Hasenan tribe. The villagers argued that the chiefs and members of the Hasenan forcibly took grain, sheep, and money from them.¹⁰² Further to the west, in Patnos, the chiefs of the Haydaran tribe were accused of taking grain and sheep from the local peasantry and forcing them to work in construction.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The winter quartering of tribes among peasant villages during the first half of the nineteenth century has always been regarded as a part and outcome of the ethnic tension between Kurds and Armenians. While it is true that the Armenian peasantry suffered most from this practice, this was mostly due to the ethnic composition and geographical distribution of the peasantry and nomads in the region. The plains of Muş, Bulanık, Malazgirt, Erciş, and Adilcevaz, which were suitable for the winter quartering of nomads, were mostly inhabited by the Armenian peasantry. However, the region's settled Kurdish peasantry, who had no ties with tribal groups, were also not immune to the practice of winter quartering and its consequences.

Rather than being seen as a practice imposed by one, politically dominant, ethnic group on another, winter quartering should be understood as a tension that existed

⁹⁸BOA, HR.MKT 196/56, 27 Şevval 1263 (8 October 1847).

⁹⁹BOA, HR.SYS 2934/65, 15 RA 1268 (8 January 1852).

¹⁰⁰BOA, MVL 261/15, 19 ZA 69 (24 August 1853).

¹⁰¹BOA, MVL 92/98, 17 Şevval 1266 (26 August 1850). See also Duman Koç, "Governing a Frontier Sancak", pp. 276–277.

¹⁰²BOA, LMVL 269/10320, 19 C 69 (30 March 1853).

¹⁰³BOA, MVL 679/74, 13 Muharrem 1281 (18 June 1864).

between two different modes of life. The political environment of the northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century favoured the Kurdish nomads over the Armenian and Kurdish peasantry, since local hereditary rulers, constantly fighting among themselves, relied on the military might of the nomads. Despite efforts by local rulers, like Selim Pasha of Mus, to prevent excessive exploitation of the peasantry by the nomads, the practice generally pushed the peasants into poverty.

Rather than concentrating on the land disputes between Kurdish tribes and the Armenian peasantry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this study provides the historical background necessary to better understand the origins of such disputes. The transformation from a fully nomadic way of life into transhumance or settlement brought about numerous crises in the region. An important outcome of this process was the rise of land and property disputes, which persisted and gained new dimensions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conflicts that arose in the mid-nineteenth century, because of the clash of two different modes of life, would take on ethnic and religious dimensions as Kurdish and Armenian identities became much more politicized towards the end of the nineteenth century.