

THE YEZIDIS AND THE OTTOMAN STATE: MODERN POWER, MILITARY  
CONSCRIPTION, AND CONVERSION POLICIES, 1830-1909

By

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The community on which this thesis builds and fixes its narrative is the “heterodox” Yezidi tribes that lived in the eastern provinces of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, with Mosul holding the first place. Yet it is not an anthropological or ethnological study concentrated on the community itself. However, based on these tribes, it rather approaches the political order and new regime of power of nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire along with the Hamidian policy of “taming” formulated for the population segments that lived on the margins of the empire and were regarded as “heretic”, “uncivilized and nomadic” on the grounds of the discrepancy in their religious beliefs. Hence it preeminently claims to be a monograph on nineteenth-century Ottoman history. The Yezidis, who had survived beyond the state’s political authority and military penetration to a large extent in previous periods, were on the agenda of the state, more than they ever had been, in the time period discussed owing to the formation of a modern regime of power. From the 1830s onwards, there emerged several problems between the Yezidis, who were not recognized by the state as a separate religious group, and the Ottoman State, which attempted to exploit bodies and tax resources of its subjects more effectively, sought to ensure public security, and desired to gain the loyalty of communities under its hegemony. Among the leading problems between the two parties were military conscription, to which the Yezidis were opposed allegedly in accordance with their religious beliefs, and the conversion policies of the Hamidian period, firstly launched on the basis of “advice and persuasion” tactics as long as applicable, but, if not, implemented by pressure and violence. The focal points of this study are the afore-cited topics in addition to how the Yezidi identity was perceived by the state, and the question of status, which is closely interrelated with their position in the political structure. Based on Ottoman archival documents, and contemporary observers’ and researchers’ narratives, the state policies and discourse in combination with their effects on the Yezidis and subsequent reactions are analyzed in this thesis. This study presents military conscription, a modern phenomenon, as a story of “abstaining from both call to arms and threats to their beliefs” in the case of Yezidis. It is also argued in this study that endeavors to “tame” the Yezidis and “correct their beliefs” (*tashih-i akaid*) and to subjugate them by means of military operations in the Hamidian regime, all in one, resulted from general characteristics and “strategies for hegemony” of the regime. Finally, it is oriented to show that attempts of penetration, and discourse and politics of the state had seriously affected the realities of the Yezidi community yet eventually did not culminate in an accomplishment as the state desired.

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Başlık: Yezidiler ve Osmanlı Devleti: Modern İktidar, Zorunluk Askerlik, ve İhtida Siyaseti, 1830-1909

Bu tezin anlatısını inşaa ettiği ve sabitlediği topluluk başta Musul olmak üzere 19. yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun doğu vilayetlerinde yaşamış olan “heterodoks” Yezidi aşiretleridir. Ancak topluluğun kendisine yoğunlaşan antropolojik ya da etnolojik bir çalışma değildir. Daha ziyade bu aşiretler üzerinden 19. yy. Osmanlı siyasal düzeni, yeni iktidar rejimi ve II. Abdulhamid döneminin, imparatorluğun marjinde yaşayan ve dini inançlarının farklılığı nedeniyle “sapkın” (heretik) ve “vahşi ve bedevî” olarak telakki edilen kesimlere dönük “ıslah” etme siyaseti ele alınmaktadır. Bu nedenle öncelikle 19. yüzyıl Osmanlı tarihine dair bir monografi olma iddiasındadır. Daha önceki dönemlerde devletin siyasal ve askeri nüfuzunun büyük oranda dışında yaşayan Yezidiler ele alınan dönemde modern bir iktidar rejimin tesis edilme süreci nedeniyle hiç bir zaman olmadığı kadar devletin gündemine girmişlerdir. 1830'lu yıllardan itibaren, tebaasının bedenini ve vergi kaynaklarını daha verimli bir şekilde tasarruf etmeye girişen, kamu güvenliğini ve aşayişi tesis etmeye çalışan, ve hakimiyeti altındaki toplulukların sadakatini kazanmayı arzu eden Osmanlı Devleti ve devlet tarafından ayrı bir din olarak tanınmayan Yezidiler arasında bir dizi sorun meydana gelmiştir. Bunların başında Yezidiler'in, kendi söylemlerine göre, dinî inançları gereği karşı oldukları askerlik hizmeti ve II. Abdulhamid döneminde önce ‘nasihat ve ikna’ yoluyla, mümkün olmadığında ise baskı ve şiddet yoluyla İslamlaştırma girişimleri gelmektedir. Bu iki konu ve Yezidi kimliğinin devlet tarafından nasıl algılandığı ve onların siyasal yapıdaki yerleriyle bağlantılı olan ‘statü problemi’ tezin odak noktalarıdır. Osmanlı arşiv kaynakları ve çağdaş gözlemci ve araştırmacıların anlatılarına dayanarak hazırlanan bu çalışma, devlet siyaseti ve söylemi ile bunun Yezidiler üzerindeki etkisi ve buna verilen tepkileri incelemektedir. Bu tez modern bir fenomen olan zorunlu askerlik konusunu Yezidiler örneğinde “silah altına alınmaktan ve dinî inançlarına yönelik tehditlerden kaçınma” öyküsü olarak sunmaktadır. II. Abdulhamid döneminde Yezidiler'i “ıslah” etme, “inançlarını düzeltme” (tashih-i akaid), ve onları askeri harekâtlarla denetim altına alma girişimlerinin ise, II. Abdulhamid rejiminin genel karakteristikleri ve “egemenlik stratejileri”nden kaynaklandığı iddia ediliyor. Nihayet, tezde bu nüfuz etme girişimleri ile devlet söylemi ve siyasetinin Yezidi topluluğunun realitelerini ciddi derecede etkilediği ancak bunların devletin arzu ettiği şekilde neticelenmediği gösterilmeye çalışılıyor.

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*to igdem, my beloved,  
with my endless gratitude*

## PREFACE

My intention to write a thesis on the Yezidis grew out of an interest in groups of ‘heterodox’ character, or in a neutral definition, groups that are not one of the ‘religions of the book as we know’ and are commonly considered as “heretic” by members of these religions and political power, and of a further interest notably in their position in the eyes of the state. The Ottoman state’s approach towards these groups, starting from early times of the empire and extending to the nineteenth century, obviously whetted my curiosity. Equally, I showed concern for the nineteenth-century Ottoman state, modern state practices, power struggles in the provinces along with state, politics and identity in the eastern provinces during the reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909).

The literature of particular interest that I read on the Yezidi beliefs, customs and social organization revealed to me that this community experienced certain problems with the state in the nineteenth century both due to their identity and the political, economic and social order that the Ottoman state aimed to establish. Extreme reluctance to participate in compulsory military service owing to their own beliefs and the conversion policy launched by the state in the Hamidian period are the most prominent ones among all else.

This thesis, therefore, is pertinent to the impacts of the nineteenth-century Ottoman state policy on the Yezidis, rather than the history of Yezidi tribes specially, from the 1830s to 1909, namely to the end of the reign of Abdulhamid II. In other words, this is not an ethnological or anthropological study concentrating only on the community itself and its sociological, cultural, and religious patterns in this period. I attempt to indicate how a series of factors, which were shaped by status of the Yezidis in the Ottoman political structure, a new regime of power and the Hamidian attempts to integrate the “heretic” and marginal

groups into the imperial rule, affected the Yezidi tribes in eastern Anatolia, Syria, and northern Iraq, especially in the province of Mosul.

This thesis is built upon an introduction as an overview, three chapters on the basis of themes and a conclusion. The main themes, discussion points, conceptual framework and certain generalizations are presented in the introduction. The first two sections of chapter 2 cover a descriptive presentation about the Yezidis and Yezidism in company with the geographical location and population of the Ottoman Yezidis. The next section details how the Yezidis, unrecognized by the Ottoman State as a separate millet or believers of a religion, were placed in the Ottoman political structure and perceived by the political and religious elites. The last one is based on how the Ottoman efforts as to increase the revenues, take control over the provinces, maintain public security, and reinforce the state power over the tribal groups influenced the Yezidi community during the period from the 1830s to the 1870s.

Chapter 3 particularly focuses on the issue of Yezidi conscription, touching upon the Ottoman state's attempts to recruit the Yezidi population in the army and the reasons behind Yezidis' reluctance to fulfill military service. It is equally underlined that the conscription policy of the Hamidian regime was linked to the project designed to "tame" the Yezidis and transform them into an obedient community.

Chapter 4 deals with politics of integration and conversion initiated against the Yezidis, just as other "heretic" and marginalized groups were put on the agenda during the Hamidian period. A wide range of factors that shaped the policies formed against the Yezidis by the Hamidian regime, which aimed to subjugate them to a political and social order desired, are explained in company with the characteristics of the regime.

In the conclusion, there is a narrative dating back to the years 1895-1909, corresponding to a time slot in the reign of Abdulhamid II, as it perfectly summarizes all the

topics covered in the thesis and reinforces my arguments. Therefore, I decided to design this section as concluding chapter

Unfortunately I was unable to find the chance to dwell equally upon how the Yezidis, living in different geographies, were affected by the state policies and the process. The strongest reason was that the Yezidi population was highly concentrated in the province of Mosul. The second reason is the lack of resources to a large extent and the need that urged me to fix a master's thesis on central points to the extent possible. Hence I failed to analyze the case of Yezidis in Mardin, Haleb and Diyarbekir as consistently as I did with the Yezidis in Mosul. However, I tried to involve in my narrative the Yezidi tribes settled in these regions as far as possible. To put it this way, this thesis is focused on the Yezidis residing in Şeyhan and Sincar regions of Mosul.

The main sources of the thesis are historical documents in the Ottoman archives. These documents of the nineteenth century Ottoman state bureaucracy composed of correspondences, reports, and official decisions, were more in number than I expected. They were essentially very helpful as I was keenly interested in state politics and its way of thinking. Although I benefited from many catalogues, from which I examined hundreds of documents, the catalogues of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Yıldız collection, Council of Ministers Reports and decisions, the Prime Ministry records, and the İrade collection provided me with a rich spectrum of sources. In order to make it more understandable to Turkish speakers and familiarize them with the Ottoman rulers' language and discourse, I relegated certain important expressions in these documents to footnotes and deliberately did not translate them into English. In addition, I attached full transcription of some documents in the appendix.

For my study, the consulate reports and archives, especially those of Britain, could have been another important source. Those records obviously would pave the way for me to

see “what the Ottoman policy makers did not write”. Likewise, the missionary reports and archives, especially those of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM), must have been of great assistance to me so as to understand and historically construct the events and the policies of the government as well as the Yezidis’ reactions. On the other hand, considering the scope of a master’s thesis, I did not attempt to use those archives. However, John Guest’s great work and the accounts of travelers, observers such as consuls, archaeologists, and missionaries, as well as of researchers contemporary to the nineteenth century helped me make up for a deficiency.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

Case 1: As it appears for the first time, a group of Yezidi men in the Ottoman province of Diyarbekir and Mosul were registered in the population records and recruited in the Ottoman army by the state in the late 1840s.<sup>1</sup> According to the petition that the Yezidis gave to the Ottoman Grand Vizier, Mustafa Reşid Pasha, in order to demand the exemption from military services, 55 Yezidis from the province of Diyarbekir who had been conscripted and taken into the army forces in and around Aleppo died on the way and in the barracks.<sup>2</sup> In this petition, the chiefs of the Yezidi community stated that they were not Muslim and, therefore, could not be subjected to military service. They would be granted exemption but it would mark, at the same time, the onset of ceaseless struggles between the state and the Yezidi community.

Case 2: All the Yezidi villagers in the district of Garzan in Siirt affiliated with the province of Bitlis converted to Islam and notified the local authorities of their conversion.<sup>3</sup> The governor of Bitlis, who swiftly conveyed the news to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was then instructed in accordance with the decision of a special council set up in the capital city to build a school and mosque in the village in question. In addition, it was resolved that each of the 36 adult villagers should be given one hundred piasters as the cost of clothes worn by

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<sup>1</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereafter BOA.) Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî, (hereafter A. MKT.), 228/54, 20 Za. 1265 (7 October 1849); Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert* (London: John Murray, 1853) p. 3

<sup>2</sup> See, above-mentioned document, folio 2

<sup>3</sup> BOA. Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî Mühimme (hereafter A. MKT. MHM.), 495/21, 29 S. 1305 (16 November 1887), and BOA. Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları (hereafter MV.) 26/2, 23 S. 1305 (10 November 1887): “...Garzan kazasının Batryak (Batak) karyesinde meskun olan ve on iki hane zükûr ve ünsâ mecmu’-i nüfusları elli üç kişiden ibaret bulunan Yezidi efradı kamilen arz-ı ihtida etmekle icabı bi’l-icra ulema-yı İslamiyye tarafından kendilerine telkşnat-ı lazıme ifâ kılındığı...”

Muslims (*elbise bahası* or *kisve bahası*) so that they could buy those clothes.<sup>4</sup> The school and the mosque, sketches of which were enclosed among the documents, would not be built in a short time, and a couple of years later the local authorities would be instructed to do likewise.<sup>5</sup>

Case 3: As can be seen from the documents, at least, this decision of conversion was taken without repression. There are a few more examples similar to the afore-cited case in places like Midyat and Van. However, the story of Yezidi conversion in the Ottoman Empire is not limited to these examples. The *Fırka-i Islahiye*, or Reform Force, led by an Ottoman General, Ömer Vehbi Pasha, was sent to Mosul in order to implement a series of ‘reform’ in accordance with the eastern policies of the Hamidian regime.<sup>6</sup> Following the private directive of Yıldız Palace, Ömer Vehbi Pasha personally dealt with the Yezidi problem and Abdulhamid II (hereafter Abdulhamid) expected him to ensure that the Yezidis corrected their religious beliefs (*tashih-i itikad*). Before all else, the Pasha chose to invite the Yezidi leaders to the government office and forced them to convert to Islam under pressure and torture but he informed the palace that they had converted willingly and of their own accord. The Ottoman authorities, however, would understand after a while that this was a whopping lie.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> BOA. Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubî Kalemi (hereafter DH. MKT.) 1476/53, 27 R. 1305 (12 January 1888), and BOA. DH. MKT. 1486/64, 4 C. 1305 (17 February 1888)

<sup>5</sup> BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 501/30, 22 Ra. 1308 (5 November 1890)

<sup>6</sup> See, BOA. DH. MKT. 1971/82, 18 Z. 1309 (14 July 1892); BOA. DH. MKT. 1973/102, 24 Z. 1309 (20 July 1892); BOA. Yıldız Parakende Başkitabet (hereafter Y. PRK. BŞK.) 26/85, 27 Z. 1309 (23 July 1892); BOA. İrade-i Dahiliye (hereafter İ. Dah.) 100344, 11 L. 1309 (9 May 1892). For more on the Reform Force and Ömer Vehbi Pasha’s affairs, see, chapter 3 section 2.

<sup>7</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2012/117, 28 Ra 1310 (20 October 1892), and BOA. İ. Dah. 53, 27 S. 1310 (20 September 1892). Ömer Vehbi Pasha’s telegram dates to 25 M. 1310 (19 August 1892): “...nice asırlardan berü tarik-i dalalete salık olmakdan naşi diyanetlerine hale’l-tari olan ve istihsal-i hidayetleri zımında müte’addid hey’etler tarafından pek çok teşebbüsata müraca’at olunmuşsa da muvaffakiyyet hasil olmayan Şeyhan ve Sincar’da sakin seksen karyeden ibaret Yezidi(...) şeyhler taraf-ı aciziden vaki olan tebligatı hüsn-i telakki ve arzu-yı vicdaniyyeleriyle şeref-i islamiyyete mazhar olmak niyyet-i halisasıyle ileri gelenleri dünkü cum’a gecesini Musul’a gelmiş ve din-i mübin-i islamiyyetin şeref-u şan ve sa’adetini ira’e etmek ve bu babdaki arzularının bir kat daha te’min ve istikrarını mucib olmak üzere (...) bir taraftan musika takımı marş-ı Hamidî ile terennüm-saz-ı sürür olduğu halde müfti efendi tarafından bunlara yegan tefhim ve telkin-i din-i mübin olunarak kendüleri de kalben ve lisanen kabul etmeleri üzerine...” and BOA. Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat (hereafter Y. MTV.) 74/36, 18 B. 1310 (5 February 1893)

Case 4: One contemporary observer told the reader in his article that in 1887 a Yezidi woman had left her husband and appealed to the Ottoman authorities. The woman argued that she had not loved him and had been married by force, and therefore requested that her marriage be annulled.<sup>8</sup> As very contrary to the Yezidi religious and tribal customs, the government was said to have issued an imperial order forbidding the marriage celebrations performed by the Yezidi sheikhs and ordering that all marriages were to be solemnized in the presence of a Muslim imam.<sup>9</sup> This set a very challenging example for state intervention in the life routines of a tribal community governed by domestic rules.

Case 5: An Ottoman Cabinet, gathering on 29 July 1906, rejected the proposal to write down ‘Yezidi’ in the sect section of identification cards to be distributed to the Yezidis and agreed on “Muslim.”<sup>10</sup> The Yezidis, who were never recognized by the Ottoman Empire as separate *millet*, or community, or a separate religion or even a sect, were to be essentially Muslims according to this cabinet. For the cabinet, it would not be proper to view them as non-Muslims due to their ‘evil beliefs’ (*sû-i akidelerinden dolayı*).<sup>11</sup> A cabinet passed a resolution on the ‘real identity’ of a community. Likewise, demand of the Yezidis to be recognized as a separate religion or sect would invariably be turned down by Republic of Turkey, and therefore they would never be acknowledged as an individual religious group. The Yezidis, who did not consider themselves as Muslims and stated that they believed in an ancient religion, would demand that Yezidi be written in the religion section of their

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<sup>8</sup> See, W. B. Heard, “Notes on the Yezidis”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 41, (Jan.-Jun., 1911) pp. 200-219, p. 210.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> BOA. MV. 113/161, 7 C. 1324 (29 July 1906)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.: “...bu taife esasen İslam oldukları halde sû-i akidelerinden dolayı bir kısmına gayr-i Müslim nazarıyla bakılması ve sicil-i nüfus kaydıyla resmîyete konulması caiz ve mahzurdan salim olamayacağından bunların İslam olarak sicil-i nüfusa idhal ve tezkere-i Osmaniye’lerinin âna göre imla ve ita edilmesi...”

identification cards but the response would be a refusal. The birth registration office would draw a line in the religion box instead.<sup>12</sup>

These cases dating back to the different periods can be supposed to summarize the modern history of the Yezidis, a religiously heterodox or syncretistic<sup>13</sup>, tribal, and Kurdish community. If we assume that the modern history of the Yezidis is a period of two centuries, they experienced more than half of this time period under the hegemony of the Ottoman Empire, as can clearly be seen in the afore-mentioned examples. This modernity in question does not imply that it belongs to contemporary or recent history, rather it refers to the realities of modern state, politics and economics. Hence, in this thesis, I aim to tell about the “modern story” of the Yezidis. This study will be focused on how the Yezidis were affected in all aspects by a new regime of power and social and economic order in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire, rather than the history of Yezidi tribes.

This thesis concentrates on four interrelated themes. The first theme, as a starting point, deals with the question of the status of the Yezidi community in the Ottoman political structure. This was an issue, directly related to Ottoman politics of identity, that was resulted from the Ottoman rulers’ perception of “heterodox” and peripheral groups such as the Yezidis, Zeydis, Shiites, Kızılbaş, and Nusayris. On the other hand, I am not interested in identity politics, but in its consequences that provoked issue of conscription and conversion policies toward the Yezidis. The second theme is about the attempts of the Ottoman state to extend its authority over the Yezidis by the 1830s and over the Tanzimat period in order to take better control of economic and manpower resources, maintain public security, and to

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<sup>12</sup> See, Sabiha B. Yalkut, *Melek Tavus'un Halkı Yezidiler* (İstanbul: Metis, 2002) p. 28, and Ahmet Taşğın, *Türkiye Yezidiler Bibliyografyası* (Ankara: Aziz Andaç Yayınları, 2005) p. 85 and 93.

<sup>13</sup> I am trying to use the term “heterodoxy” with discretion because I personally do not approve in political and theological terms of the assumption about a main correct way, as orthodoxy. However, as a religious term, I call heterodoxy to the case of a community, which used to have local beliefs and cosmogony prior to the emergence of the religions of the book, adapting more than one system of beliefs to each other as a result of openly or secretly keeping their local beliefs but coming under the influence of religions like Islam or Christianity, and heterodox to groups that have such religious beliefs.

subjugate them. The third one focuses on the issue of conscription that was imposed on the Yezidis as a modern phenomenon. This issue is characterized by the Yezidis' reluctance to perform military service because of allegedly their religious tenets and tribal customs. Taking into consideration the fact that other communities of the Ottoman Empire seemed to have been reluctant to perform and escaped from military recruitment, I relate the Yezidi reluctance to a fear of modern institutions and search for survival. The last theme deals with the Hamidian efforts to 'tame' the Yezidi tribes and to bring them under firmer and more efficient control. It was aimed by the Hamidian regime through the systematic policies of conversion by 'persuasion' before, if not sufficient, by oppression and force, and also through military expeditions against the Yezidi tribes, especially those living in Mosul. Referring to the strategies for hegemony and eastern policy of Yıldız Palace, I examine these policies within the context of the Hamidian desire to justify the imperial domination and to shape loyal subjects.

These four themes are interrelatedly constructed. For instance, the efforts of the modern Ottoman government to strengthen its authority over the Yezidi tribes could be observed throughout the time period covered in the thesis. By the same token, the conscription issue, associated with the problem of status and interwoven with the conversion policies, is also one of the most remarkable items placed on the agenda by the Hamidian regime. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that, as can be clearly understood from the size of Chapters 2 and 3, the main focus is on the issue of conscription and the policies of the Hamidian regime towards the Yezidi tribes.

The Yezidi tribes, who were brought under the Ottoman rule after the Sultan Selim II's conquest of eastern Anatolia, Mosul, and Syria between 1514 and 1516, mostly lived in the Ottoman province of Mosul, Diyarbekir, Van, Bitlis, and Aleppo. The Yezidis, who lived almost semi-independently until the nineteenth century were not strongly affected by the

dynamics of the state policy at macro level, just like many other tribal or provincial groups, for 300 years except for a series of military operations launched to collect taxes and stop the banditry of some tribes residing especially in Sincar.

The Yezidis were a “heretic” group (*fırka-i dalle*, or *farak-ı dalle*) in the eyes of nineteenth-century Ottoman rulers, scholars and administrative elites. We see that the Yezidis are named as *fırka-i dalle*, *mezheb-i dalle* or *mezheb-i batıla* (sect of false) in tens of documents, especially in the documents dating back to the reign of Abdulhamid.<sup>14</sup> To the Ottoman ruler elites, the members of this community were essentially Muslims who had deviated from this religion centuries before and had become clueless and heretic.

Albeit having a peculiar perspective on the Yezidis before the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state basically did not know who the Yezidis were or what kind of a belief system they had. More importantly, they did not make any effort to learn about them. One of the unique aspects of the nineteenth century on the basis of relations between the state and the Yezidis is the fact that the state put forth efforts to familiarize with this group of people. The state’s endeavor to gather information about the subjects in order to make the population under its power inspectable, mobilizable and ready with its resources to be exploited at full potential is a modern practice that is connected with the concept of ‘governmentality’ that was offered by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to describe modern politics. In this sense, the concepts governmentality and modern politics or modern state are central to my thesis. Apart from these two concepts, power struggle over the resources during the Tanzimat period, popular reluctance to such modern institutions as conscription, and the Hamidian strategies for hegemony and policies of integration of the tribal, marginalized, and “heretic” into the

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<sup>14</sup> BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 723/4, 9 Z. 1311 (13 June 1894): “*Yezidi fırka-i dallesi meyanında melek-i tavus yani dirilen şeytan tarafından tebligata memur-ı itikad olunan ve Köçek Mirza ünvanı ifa kılınan şahsın Musul’dan menfasına...*”; BOA. Yıldız Esas Evrakı (hereafter Y. EE.) 139/15, 23 Ş. 1309 (23 March 1892): “*...bu mezheb-i batıl taraftarlarının tedenni eylemesi tabi’i bulunduğuna...*”

modern imperial order are the other generalizations that will be emphasized throughout the thesis.

Arguing that governmentality is a new mentality of administration, Foucault puts forth that it has been the most prominent characteristic of modern politics in different countries across the world since the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> For Foucault, by employing many different instruments the state makes the population and the resources become calculable, registered, and the objects of state policy. Governmentality is also related to the fact that the modern state attempts to know the political ideas of its subjects on the rulers and their policies.

It can be argued that the modern state was characterized by its increasing penetration of society over which it governs. This meant a transition or transformation from indirect towards a much more governance of the state over society and individuals. It has have created a highly effective governmental apparatus to increase its role in power and society, with the rise of statistics and with a growing desire to measure, describe, and investigate the population. In addition, such concepts and practices as surveillance, military conscription, sedentarization of tribes, mobilization of rural population, cadastral surveys, mapping, highly centralized administrative organizations, police forces, and new forms of control and punishment have emerged as the products of the modern state institutions, practices, and as the results of a modern regime of power.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Foucault, "Governmentality" in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by G. Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); see also Michael Foucault, "Omnes and Singulatim: Siyasi Aklın Bir Eleştirisine Doğru", in *Özne ve İktidar*, M. Foucault, translated by Osman Akinhay (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2000). Governmentality has various meanings in usage of Foucault, for example as a product of relationship between government and thought, and also as a new form of thinking about and exercising of power in society. As Mitchell Dean points out, this form of power is concerned with the discovery of new reality, that is, the economy, and a new object, that is, the population. Dean says that governmentality has emerged in early modern period when 'the art of government' of the state has become a distinct activity, and at the time when the forms of knowledge and techniques of the human and social sciences has become integral to it. The emergence of the governmentality meant that government has begun to involve the state of the population in all aspects than ever before. See, Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 19

<sup>16</sup> In the pursuit of the works of Michel Foucault, Max Weber, Michael Mann, and Anthony Giddens, I attribute six particular features to modern states. These are as follows: The claim to monopolize the use of force, or violence; centralization of power and of governmental apparatus; the existence of a clearly-defined physical

In the case of the Yezidis, one other reason why I have referred to concepts like modern state and governmentality is related to the projects concerning the order that the Ottoman state was in pursuit of establishing in the nineteenth century so as to penetrate and bring under control the population and resources, and also related to political and administrative instruments put into service in order to achieve these aims. All these would deeply affect the order of the Yezidi tribes that had managed to keep clear of the state's sphere of influence to some degree prior to the century in question.

As a matter of fact, by the 1830s and, in particular, during the Tanzimat period, the Ottoman states developed a series of means to intensify and consolidate its authority over the population. As Eugene Rogan points out, the Ottoman rulers began to extend their infrastructural power through new forms of communication networks and transportation.<sup>17</sup> All of these new forms of administration equipped the state with the means to penetrate society and provincial communities as well. This also meant that the state started to be more effective in intervening into the everyday lives of its subjects. However, it is impossible to say that it produced the same effect in all regions, and ensured the desired order, unswerving loyalty of the subjects or maximum use of resources. Nonetheless, it was a successful attempt at providing the deep application of the state power to the Ottoman subjects.

### Consolidation of State Power: Attempts at Penetrating the Yezidi Tribes

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space over which a modern state characteristically claims sole legitimate authority; anonymous power: this is necessitated to include an increase in division of labor in bureaucracy, impersonal budget, a system of salary, and meritocratic appointment and administration; giving a particular importance to legitimacy because of the great transformation of relationship between state and society; and, its increasing penetration of the society over which it governs. See, M. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) pp. 77-78; Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, v.1, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 54-56; Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results", in *State/Space: A Reader*, edited by N. Brenner, et al. (Malden: Blackwell Pub., 2003), 53-64, 54; and Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985)

<sup>17</sup> Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 5

Appearing as the products of the Ottoman modernity, the policies and instruments undoubtedly influenced the Yezidi tribes and the state-Yezidi relations, on which this study focuses. In the case of the Ottoman Yezidis, administrative and economic reforms would have allowed the state to attempt to gain better control of the manpower and economic resources of the Yezidi settlements. In fact, as Fuccaro argues, the processes by which the Yezidi tribes became affected by state power need to be considered within the context of the political and economic changes that had started by the 1830s and, in particular, the Tanzimat period.<sup>18</sup> During the late 1830s and the Tanzimat period, the attempts to consolidate the state power in the Yezidi settlements, especially in the province of Mosul, aimed to assure the loyalty of the Yezidis as a specific group living in tribal formations and threatening public order. In this period it was the main concern of the Ottoman rulers to maintain public security and collect taxes permanently.

I should make it clear at the very beginning that I do not ascribe certain abstract meanings to the Tanzimat era. In addition, the reason why I use the term ‘Tanzimat reforms’ for that group of reforms while trying to analyze the period is associated with the common language created by conventional historiography. I prefer this term to make it more intelligible. Those administrative reforms were attempts to set up a different power regime and new governing technologies in regions of the Yezidi settlement. Put another way, I will discuss how the projects of a concrete power based on a concrete need were put into practice under the influence of various complex factors, and what the impacts were.

To be exact, the influence of these modern state practices on the Yezidis is linked to three main issues. The first is providing public security and subjecting the Yezidi tribes to authority. This was to be ensured by violent means at certain times, and sometimes by integrating tribe leaders into the administrative structure and conferring pecuniary rewards on

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<sup>18</sup> Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999) pp. 31-37.

them. The second was to ensure that the Yezidi tribes regularly paid their taxes. The third was to subject the Yezidis to the law of compulsory military duty, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

### Issue of Yezidi Conscription: Resistance to Military Service

Universal military conscription, as a modern project, refers to non-voluntary military service in the army, which came into the common practice after the French Revolution in France and then Prussia. Before the time when military service became a wide-spread practice in constructing the armies, there were different forms of conscription such as military mobilization campaigns, conscription by force, recruitment in free labor market and indirect conscription.<sup>19</sup> Having many implications on the relationship between the state and its individual subjects, the difference of the universal conscription system is that military service was imposed on the subjects living in a given territory as an obligation. In this sense, many scholars have called attention to the close relation of military conscription with the concept citizenship.<sup>20</sup> Military conscription has been also seen as an important instrument for constructing nation-states and nation. Thanks to the studies of Charles Tilly and Anthony Giddens, we know well that war and modern armies were central to the formation of modern nation-states.<sup>21</sup> For one thing, a common language to communicate in the army and the mobilization of a particular population for war were motives for the appearance of national

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<sup>19</sup> For a short analysis of different forms of medieval and early modern practices of conscription, see, Jan Lukacsen and Erik J. Zürcher, "Introduction: Conscription and Resistance, The Historical Context" in *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925*. edited by Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> For a theoretical analysis of universal military conscription and its relation to citizenship, see, Margaret Levi, "The Institution of Conscription", *Social Science History*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 133-167. See also, Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society*. translated by Andrew Boreham (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> See, Charles Tilly, *Capital, Coercion, and European States* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990); and, Giddens, *Nation-State*.

units. In this study, however, I am not interested in the role of military conscription and modern armies in nation-building or the afore-mentioned relationship military service and citizenship. Otherwise, central to this thesis is that how in the nineteenth century conscription affected the conscript, and therefore why there was resistance to compulsory military service. In this connection, I will not touch upon the aspects positively attributed to conscription.

First of all, military service meant to conscripts regular training under firm discipline, and the obligation to carry arms for a long time and fight, if needed. It is not so difficult to guess how they imagined the possible effects of war on themselves: injury and death. Military service implied for many young men being far from their home for relatively long periods of time. It must have been an uncomfortable and frightening experience for young people who rarely left their geographical virginity to be removed from their localities. Having little chance of entering into a marriage, and the liability of leaving one's business or means of production were also among the negative effects. In addition, mistreatment, undernourishment, cultural estrangement, disease and more were the other reasons for reluctance, evasion or desertion.<sup>22</sup>

Even though there is not a sufficient number of monographs, we find out that there existed identical conditions in the Ottoman Empire that obliged its subjects to fulfill military duty after the promulgation of the Gülhane Imperial Edict, or *Tanzimat Fermanı*, and subjects subsequently reacted to military service in the same manner.<sup>23</sup> For example, according to a

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<sup>22</sup> There are several cumulative studies on the effects of compulsory military service, causes and forms of resistance to it in different geographical locations. For example see, Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Isser Woloch, "Napoleonic Conscription: State Power and Civil Society" *Past and Present*, no. 111 (1986), pp. 101-29.; Alan R. H. Baker, "Military Service and Migration in Nineteenth-Century France: Some Evidence from Loir-et-Cher" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, vol. 23, no. 2 (1998), pp. 193-206; Khalid Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lukacsen and Zürcher, *ibid.*, pp. 1-7; and Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)

<sup>23</sup> For Ottoman conscription methods and reasons of reactions to it, see, Erik J. Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918" in *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925*. edited by Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); VeySEL Şimşek, *Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Recruit: 1826-1853* (A Master's Thesis, Bilkent University, 2005), pp. 35-79; Odile Moreau, "Bosnian Resistance to Conscription in the Nineteenth Century." In *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925*. edited by Erik J. Zürcher. (London: I.B.

balance sheet from 1826 to 1837 one-third of 161.036 conscripts died in camps, barracks, and hospital, and one-eighth deserted.<sup>24</sup> Although the circumstances were improved in the coming years, subjects continued to resist military service. Males were handcuffed and taken away to army by force<sup>25</sup> and, as Zürcher points out, even if conscripts went to it voluntarily, this was too rare, they often sought to desert from the barracks after faced with the conditions in the army.<sup>26</sup> Among the most widespread methods of evading conscription were to desert from villages, run into the hills or ‘leave for mountains’ (*dağa çıkmak*), run away from the drawing of lots, immigrate to another country, escape from cities, bribe officials, and even self-mutilation.<sup>27</sup>

According to the Yezidis, they had more and valid excuses: their religious beliefs and customs. When the Ottoman state attempted to conscript some of the Yezidi men in the late 1840s, the community began to look for ways to escape it in a flurry.<sup>28</sup> They would appealed to the government to ensure exemption from recruitment, explaining that they did not expect to be recruited to the army like Muslim subjects, as regarding themselves non-Muslim sect (*haric-i mezheb*). In addition, they repeatedly stated that military service was contradictory to their beliefs.<sup>29</sup> As will be seen in Chapter 3, although they were exempted several times from military obligation, the issue of Yezidi conscription would remain the same over subsequent

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Tauris, 1999); Dick Douwes, “Reorganizing Violence: Traditional Recruitment Patterns and Resistance against Conscription in Ottoman Syria” in *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925*, edited by Erik J. Zürcher. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999) especially, pp. 123-124

<sup>24</sup> Şimşek, p. 82

<sup>25</sup> Musa Çadırcı, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Kura Usulüne Geçilmesi, 1846 Tarihli Asker Kanunu”, *Askeri Tarih Bülteni*, no. 18 (1985) pp. 59-75, p. 61

<sup>26</sup> Zürcher, *The Ottoman Conscription System*, p. 85.

<sup>27</sup> See, Şimşek, pp. 71-73; Zürcher, *ibid.*, pp. 85-86; Douwes, p. 123

<sup>28</sup> BOA. Hariciye Nezareti Tercüme Odası (hereafter HR. TO.) 213/28, 18 February 1850; and A.MKT. 228-54

<sup>29</sup> See for example, BOA. DH.MKT. 1555/58, 12 S. 1306 (18 October 1888): “...*Yezidi taifesi ayinleri iktizasınca silk-i celil-i askeriye giremeyecekleri bahanesiyle şimdiye değin bedelat-ı nakdiye ifa etmekte iseler de...*”

years. They were again to be called up to military service at each great change in the Ottoman administration and implementation of each new military regulation; consequently the community would strongly resist recruitment on the grounds that it was against their religion.

At this juncture, the case of the Yezidi conscription was related to the ways they sought to avoid recruitment and reasons behind them, rather than the results arising from actual conscription. In fact, other than a few attempts in Mosul and the recruitment of Yezidis who lived sparsely in the province of Diyarbekir in the reserve armies, the state failed to conscript the members of the community. Moreover, in Sincar, the district in which the most important number of Yezidi population resided, the state could not even conduct the census and lot drawing required for conscription.<sup>30</sup> The other Yezidis in Mosul, Van and Diyarbekir adopted methods of resistance such as migrating, actively resisting, running away from their villages, hiding, ignoring summons, bribing officials, or applying to foreign consulates. Therefore, the conscription problem of the Yezidis is equally an exemplary topic of investigation for resistance against compulsory military service and its evasion.

### Hamidian Strategies for Hegemony, Eastern Policies and the Yezidi Tribes

The fact that the most striking ones among all the examples provided at the beginning of this chapter corresponded to the reign of Abdulhamid is no coincidence. The Yezidi tribes had never been faced with such a systemic and institutional state policies on attempts to subjugate throughout the time period in which the Yezidis had lived as subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

I have mentioned above that I consider the state's efforts to gain information about the communities under its sovereignty and employ several forms of social control as modern state practices. The Hamidian regime carried out such actions against the Yezidis in the most

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<sup>30</sup> See, Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Abede-i İblis: Yezidi Taifesinin İtikadati, A'datı, Evsafı* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i İctihad, 1328 [1909]), p. 40-41. Mustafa Nuri Pasha was the governor of Mosul between 1902-1904, and very interested in the Yezidis.

intensified and systemic form. Tens of reports, plans or projects written about the Yezidis, numerous committees of advice, reform forces, and councils sent to the areas in which they lived are the most evident examples of it. Aiming at full control of the population and strong loyalty from Muslims, in the first place, and from marginal groups, such as the Yezidis, which could not be integrated into the state order, the Hamidian regime would try by means of the above-mentioned instruments to localize, convert, conscript, discipline and embody the Yezidis, sometimes by granting gifts and ranks or using force at other times. It is exactly this quality of Abdulhamid that made him a modern-minded figure, leave aside an unprogressive mentality. As a matter of fact, the new literature on the Hamidian period successfully illustrates my point.<sup>31</sup>

It appears that there was a series of factors that determined the policy of Yıldız Palace against the Yezidis during Abdulhamid's reign. These policies, as I observe to be the characteristic of the era, resulted from a bunch of strategies that I call 'the strategies for hegemony.'<sup>32</sup> In my opinion, Abdulhamid's strategy for hegemony was originated from two overall aims. The first aim was to centralize his own power as the Sultan by agency of a circle of people around him, namely advisors, bureaucrats and high-rank commanders in whom he had placed absolute confidence, and to maintain substantive policies from that single center, Yıldız Palace. Oppressing the Young Turks was an extension of this plan in question. During his reign, which corresponded to a time of social crisis resulting from the loss of more than half of the Balkans, the second aim was to sustain the political and economic independence of the empire and eliminate separatist activities of particularly Bulgarian, Macedonian and

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<sup>31</sup> It is impossible here to mention all components of the new Hamidian historiography, however, a very good criticism of it can be found in Nadir Özbek's article. See, Nadir Özbek, "Modernite, Tarih ve İdeoloji: İkinci Abdülhamid Dönemi Tarihçiliği Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme" *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, no. 3, (2004), 71-90.

<sup>32</sup> I do not come a cross this conceptualization in any study. However, I am inspired by a few studies, see for example, Selim Deringil *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*, London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999, and Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 9 (1973): pp. 139-155.

Armenian nationalists striving to break away from the empire, and foreign states involved in internal politics through the medium of these activities. Strengthening the empire on the basis of an integrated political and social structure was a way to achieve this target. In addition, the aim to congregate all subjects of the empire as an imagined community would throw into sharp relief “under one umbrella of Islam” as a political project due to conditions of the time.<sup>33</sup> To this particular end, the Hamidian regime aimed to exert absolute social control over subjects by means of various policies and political tools.

In this sense, in the peculiarities of the eastern provinces during the Hamidian period, these strategies for hegemony in the tribulations of the imperial rule seem to have shaped and developed particular forms of policy towards the peripheral, marginal and “heretic” groups such as the Yezidis. Central to my thesis and directly related to the project of creating and mobilizing a dependable population segments,<sup>34</sup> especially ones living in tribal formations such as the Kurds and Arabs, this is a policy of integration of the Muslim and heterodox or “heretic” groups of the periphery into the center. The nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, like every modern political entities, especially as an imperial power, desired to have a population that was loyal, educated to some extent, and able to be mobilized in accordance with the state’s political and economic purposes. In this connection, aiming to produce an obedient population, it can be argued that the Hamidian regime strived for disseminating its values, first of all religious ones, to the peripheries.

The Hamidian use of religious identity, none other than Islam and its Sunni sect, was central to the creation of a loyal and dependable population in order to save the empire based on the integrated units. It can be seen in this a process of disseminating Islam as an integrating

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<sup>33</sup> See, Duguid, *ibid.*, and, Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

<sup>34</sup> Deringil thoroughly analyzed the Hamidian regime’s aim at creation of a reliable population. See for example, *The Well-Protected Domains*, especially chapter 3 and 4; and “From Ottoman to Turk: Self-Image and Social Engineering in Turkey”, in *The Ottomans, the Turks, and World Politics: Collected Studies*, Selim Deringil (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2000)

and legitimizing ideology to the population segments which were distant from the values of the imperial center and deemed undependable. Deringil seems to consider this process “a systematic policy of conversion to the official faith, the Sunni Hanefi *mezheb*” in order to gain the consent of the subjects.<sup>35</sup> He also argues that the Hamidian regime sought to stabilize ethnic and religious composition. I argue, however, that it was not a serious and forceful policy to homogenize the subjects ethnically for Yıldız Palace.<sup>36</sup> It was not a shared agenda or systematic policy for the Ottoman rulers in that period. In this sense, the Hamidian attempts dealt with the aim of religiously homogeneous subjects to some extent and in terms of orthodox Islam. This was thought of as a means to bring the provincial, marginal, and religiously ‘confused’ subjects under more efficient control and to prevent their activities against the political and social order.

It seems that the Hamidian policy of integration and dissemination of the ideological configuration into peripheral subjects, first of all “heretic” groups such the Yezidis, provoked systematic efforts in many different forms to ‘correct the beliefs’ or *tashih-i akaid*,<sup>37</sup> of heterodox segments and to convert them to Sunni Islam by propaganda, education, punishment, or by force.<sup>38</sup> It also meant very systematic attempts to ensure the loyalty and

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<sup>35</sup> Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, p. 68. In a broader and global context, to grasp conversion policies as a government technology and a way of dominating imperial rule, I offer to see other modern imperial formations. The Tsarist Russia is a perfect epitome, which established the Orthodox Missionary Society in Moscow in 1865, as a government policy, in order to convert non-Christian and ‘heretic’ population segments in almost all Russian dominated-areas, especially in Siberia, Volga-Kama region, and among the Kazakhs. For two very good studies of conversion policies in nineteenth-century Russia, see, Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds.), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), and Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia’s Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 91. Deringil, in another study I just referred as well, calls attention the ‘proto-nationalist’ tendencies of some Ottoman elites in the Hamidian era. See, *Ottoman to Turk*, pp. 165-167.

<sup>37</sup> For two of many samples, see, BOA. İrade-i Hususi (hereafter İ. Hus.) 6/1310.Ca/18, 6 Ca. 1310 (12 November 1892): “...*mezkur aşiret şimdiye kadar din-i mübin-i İslam’ın hilafında bir yol tutmuş olduklarından tashih-i itikad eylemeleri zımında canib-i hükümetden tedabir-i lazıme icra kılınmış...*” and BOA. DH. MKT. 2002/56, 23 Safer 1310 (16 September 1892): “*Yezidi taifesinin din-i mübin-i İslama rücu’ları hususunda hüsn-i hizmetleri görüleceği ve rütbe ve maaş ile taltifleri halinde memalik-i şahanede bulunan Yezidiler’in daire-i münciye-i İslamiyet’e rücu’ları esbabını istihsal edeceklerini taahhüd ve temin eyledikleri Musul’da bulunan fırka-i islahiye...*”

obedience of heterodox religious elements to the Ottoman imperial rule. By no means approaching recognition of the Yezidis as a separate religious group but thinking of them as heretics who were deviated from Islam, savage and ignorant, Yıldız Palace employed all these methods and instruments to convert the community to Islam. In this sense, Chapter 3 examines these systematic conversion policies and efforts along with the other Hamidian endeavor to ‘tame’ the Yezidi tribes.

Although the Yezidis were forced at different times to denounce their religious beliefs and were thus exposed to serious massacres up until the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid, the same aim was planned in a more determined way during the Hamidian period giving way to the exercise of different methods. Among these methods were peaceful and persuasion-oriented ones along with the ones based on the use of force and violence. For instance, the Persuasion and Advice Committee, which was established under the chairmanship of Major Abdulkadir Bey, and brought under its roof numerous members from the Islamic scholar society, tried to solve the problem via the method of “persuasion,” in total contrast to the *Fırka-i Islahiye* or *Kuvve-i Islahiye*, or Reform Force, which was established in the summer of 1892 for three Ottoman provinces, i.e Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, which make up today’s modern Iraq, in order to implement a series of ‘reforms.’ Led by General Ömer Vehbi Pasha, the Reform Force exercised much harsher instruments and tried to recruit the Yezidis by force and convert them to Islam. During the Hamidian period, the greatest problem of the Yezidis, especially those who lived in Mosul, was conscription, conversion and the military expeditions aimed to guarantee these goals.

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<sup>38</sup> It is possible to find in Deringil’s study a remarkable analysis of the Hamidian policy of conversion through different cases and population groups. See, *The Well-Protected Domains*, pp. 68-92. He have already examined the conversion policies in the case of the Yezidis as well as other groups such as the Istavri, Nusayries, Kızılbaş, and many others. My study dealing with the conversion policies towards the Yezidi tribes means a further and detailed research and an effort to link them with the other systematic policies imposed on the community by the late Ottoman State. In addition, I try to examine all aspects of the identity politics of the Hamidian state, which can be seen in the case of the Yezidis. I also attempt to indicate that there were very close relations between conscription issue, the Yezidis’s status in the Ottoman political structure, the attempts to ‘tame’ the community and the conversion policies.

By the Hamidian regime, the Armenian Question was regarded as a serious threat to the unity of the empire. It was the most important factor that specified the Eastern politics of the Abdulhamid regime along with the viewpoint towards issues in the region and population groups. It is possible to find in various documents of the time a reference to Armenians or the Armenian Question even though they bore no relation to those topics. For example, a document revealing the complaints of the officers and notables of Mosul province about Ömer Vehbi Pasha may be taken as a proof of that. Upon the Pasha's arresting of a few Administrative Council members in Mosul, it is quite striking that Sultan Abdulhamid pronounced that such activities would serve to the purpose of the Armenians.<sup>39</sup> The fact that it was not the Armenian gangs, organizations, nationalists or separatists that were addressed but a whole nation in addition to be considered as enemies clearly shows what an important place the Armenian Question occupied on the political agenda of the time.

Here at this juncture, the Armenian question and the state's fear, or even paranoia, of the Armenian's tendency to rise in revolt for independence at any moment obviously influenced relationships with the other groups in the region. The Hamidian regime was worried that those groups would cooperate with the Armenians and sought measures to prevent it. Especially regarding the Kızılbaşs, there are many examples of this fear revealing on archival documents.<sup>40</sup> Concern pertaining to the Yezidi's collaboration with the Armenians surfaced after 1908. After his visit to the Yezidis in Caucasia, İsmail Beg, the *Mir* of the

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<sup>39</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 27/46, 5 S. 1310 (29 August 1892): "...paşa-yı müşarün-ileyhin bir takım münasebetsizlikleri işdilmekte olup bununla beraber rüesa-yı İslam'a gadr ve taaddi edilmesinin ma'nen Ermeniler'e hizmet demek olacağından!..." Emphasis is mine.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, BOA. Yıldız Parakende Umum Vilayetler Tahriratı (hereafter Y. PRK. UM) 30/85, 10 R. 1312 (11 October 1894). In this document, it is argued that the governor of Sivas protected the Bektaşis. According to the Yıldız Palace, it would distract the unity of Muslim community and servet to the purpose of the Armenians. As mentioned above, the emphasis on Muslim identity during the Hamidian period is closely related to the dismay at the Armenians. And it consequently shaped the state relations with groups such as the Bektaşis, Kızılbaşs and Yezidis. It is possible to further illustrate it with various examples. For a case in Malatya, see, BOA. Y. PRK. UM 28/70, 29 R. 1311 (9 November 1893). In this document, it is argued that three Alevi children were found to be schooled in Armenian Catholic schools, and the province authorities were instructed to ban it.

Yezidis, came to İstanbul and had a talk with the Armenian Patriarch. Having launched an investigation into the case, the state was alarmed at the possibility that the Yezidis would try to become Armenian.<sup>41</sup> In this connection, the Hamidian regime endeavored to cooperate with the Arabs and Kurds in the region in order to strengthen the Islamic unity and integrate marginal groups into the state order after Sunnizing them in addition to an effort to strengthen both the afore-mentioned unity and the groups of cooperation against the Armenians. If one part of this policy was the Hamidian Regiments, the other was Islamizing or Sunnizing.

Missionary activities, considered a serious threat during the Hamidian period, also led Yıldız Palace to increase efforts of Sunnizing the heterodox population groups.<sup>42</sup> As Deringil argues, it was a reaction of the Hamidian regime to the missionary presence to reinforce Islamic orthodoxy and seek to convert the marginal segments of the empire.<sup>43</sup> The state then put on its agenda the groups that it had excluded, marginalized and turned a blind eye to previously due to the Armenian question and missionary activities. As mentioned above, among these groups the Kızılbaş of Dersim and the Yezidis, in particular, were exceptionally important.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the state tried to block these relations through certain

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<sup>41</sup> See, BOA. Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Tahriratı (hereafter, DH. EUM. THR) 5/29, 10 N. 1327 (25 September 1909). This document is available via internet, see, <http://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/kitap/belge/2600belge/214.doc>. See, for another instance, BOA. Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdaresi (hereafter DH. MUI.) 108-1/50, 26 C. 1328 (5 July 1910): “*Reisleri Yaşar bin Mustafa'nın muhakemesi üzerine dahil-i vilayetdeki Yezidilerin Ermeni olmak için müracaatda buldukları halde meclis-i ruhanice talepleri kabul edilmediği Pozantiyun gazetesinde görülmekle bu babdaki malumatın ve sıhhati halinde esbab-ı müracaatlarının bi't-tahkik müsaraat-ı ibnâsı.*”

<sup>42</sup> Much has been examined about the Ottoman State-missions relations during the Hamidian period, for the studies directly related to my thesis, especially, see, Hans-Lukas Keiser, *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetler'inde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet, 1839-1938* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), which is based on an excellent research; Jeremy Salt, “A Precarious Symbiosis: Ottoman Christians and the Foreign Missionaries in the Nineteenth Century”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 3 no. 3 (1985-86), pp. 53-67; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, Chapter 5

<sup>43</sup> Deringil, *ibid.*, p. 112

<sup>44</sup> It is possible to find numerous examples illustrating these topics in the Ottoman archival documents, see for example, Y.PRK.UM 30/85; BOA. Yıldız Parakende Askerî Maruzat (hereafter Y. PRK. ASK.) 43/104 27 R. 1305 (12 January 1888). For this issue see, Hans-Lukas Keiser, *ibid.*, especially see for the relationship between Kızılbaş and the missions, pp. 102-116. Also see, Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant

policing and political precautions. In fact, Hans-Lukas Kieser argues that the policy of the Hamidian state succeeded in isolating the Alevis and Yezidis from the ABCFM (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions), even if it failed to incorporate them into the official order.<sup>45</sup>

### Education and *Temdin-i Aşair*, or Civilizing Mission

When the Yezidis or other heretic heterodox groups corrected their beliefs in any region, the first task of Yıldız Palace was to order that a mosque and a school be built in that particular region, and imams and teachers be subsequently appointed there.<sup>46</sup> Above the function of mosques was mentioned more or less. What about the reason behind this visible interest in and desire for building schools? Thanks to the studies of Benjamin Fortna, S. Akşin Somel, Bayram Kodaman, and Deringil, we know that there was a considerably increase in educational mobilization during the Hamidian period, which especially emphasized mass primary education.<sup>47</sup> As Deringil points out, the Ottoman Empire proved to be an “educator state” that made systematic efforts to indoctrinate its subjects in order to create a dependable

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Utopia. The Interactions between Alevis and Missionaries in Ottoman Anatolia”, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 41, Issue 1, (Mar., 2001), p., 97

<sup>45</sup> Kieser, Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia, p. 97

<sup>46</sup> See, A. MKT. MHM. 495/21; A. MKT. MHM. 501/30; İ. Dah. 53; and BOA. Y. MTV. 68/90, 19 Ra. 1310 (11 October 1892): “...*tashih-i akaid eden Şeyhan nahiyesindeki aşair-i Yezidiye ile Musul kurâsından birkaç karyede sâkin olub mezheb-i Şüiden bulundukları halde mezheb-i Hanefiye tahvil eyleyen Şebekler'in tadrîs etdirilmekte olan etfali için der-dest inşa bulunan on bir mektebde ve mekatib-i mevcude-i sairede kıraat olunmak üzere 300 kelim-i kadim ve 700 elifba ve sıbyana mahsus ecza-yı şerif ve 500 mekatib-i ibtidaiyyede kıraat etdirilecek ecza-yı mahsusa ve 700 aded akaid-i İslamiye 'ye dair risaleye lüzum olduğu...*”

<sup>47</sup> J. Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*, (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001); Deringil, Selim, *The Well-Protected Domains*, Chapter 4: Education: the Answer to all Evil?; and Bayram Kodaman, *Abdülhamid Dönemi Eğitim Sistemi*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1990). Fortna helps us to reflect on educational policies of the Hamidian regime within a global context, and thus shows that the conservative propensity of the Hamidian educational policies resulted from a modern desire rather than Islamism and they function as a social control mechanism. See, especially pp. 1-42. Deringil's study demonstrates that during the reign of Abdulhamid, mass education campaign was placed in a position central to the project of civilizing different population groups and making them obedient individuals.

population.<sup>48</sup> In fact, like every modern state and empire, the Ottoman Empire offered its schooling policies in an attempt to use education as a tool of social control and to consolidate legitimizing ideology of the Hamidian rule.

In this connection, how the Hamidian rulers employed educational instruments and similar forms of propaganda in order to “correct the beliefs” and gain the loyalty of the Yezidis who were considered to be “unenlightened” and “deviant” will be illustrated in Chapter 4. Though the regime failed to ensure the attendance of the Yezidi tribes at these schools and mosques, the projects and activities initiated by the Hamidian regime for this particular purpose positively contribute to our understanding of what policies were produced against the tribes. These projects were, at the same time, a part of the civilizing mission designed for tribes called *temdin-i aşair* or *temeddün-i aşair* or civilizing the tribes, in the Ottoman terminology. At this point, the Ottoman elites came to view themselves as civilizing missionaries.<sup>49</sup> Due to the implementation of such projects, it would be easier to govern the Yezidi tribes if they were enlightened in the “lights of civilization.”

For the Hamidian rulers, apart from the formal education, another way of “civilizing” and subjugating of the Yezidi tribes was military service. In fact, though I have devoted a distinct chapter to conscription issue, covering the reign of Abdulhamid as well, I consider this issue in company with the identity and conversion policies pursued against the Yezidis. In fact, these two spheres were closely interrelated. Recruitment would help both to civilize and subjugate the Yezidis, which would consequently result in conversion.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, a Yezidi’s

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<sup>48</sup> The Well-Protected Domains, p. 93

<sup>49</sup> Deringil, in his recent study, demonstrates how Ottoman rulers during the Hamidian period saw its peripheral, tribal, and marginal subjects, as was in colonial rulers’ eyes, therefore, applying to the concept of “borrowed colonialism.” 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, no. 2 (2003), pp. 311-42. Likewise, Ussama Makdisi examine similiar themes within the context of Ottoman imperialism or orientalism, see, Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism” *American Historical Review*, 107, no. 3 (2005), pp. 768-96. Though dealing with the earlier Ottoman period, it is worthwhile that Makdisi include the Ottoman perception of the Yezidis in his analysis.

proposal to join the Hamidiye regiments, as a more plausible way, against Abdulhamid's insistence on conscription, was turned down by Yıldız Palace, which aimed to recruit these tribes in mixed reserve armies, believing that they would be isolated from each other and be saved from "evil beliefs."<sup>51</sup> According to the members of the special council, eliminating the "uncivilized and nomadic" lifestyle (*vahşet ve bedavetleri*) of the Yezidis was totally dependent on fulfilling military duty. This emphasis is unquestionably related to the role of military service in "making citizens", loyal and obedient.

### Reactions to the State Policy

The Yezidi tribes were not passive subjects of the state policies in the story which I will tell. The Yezidis actively reacted to the state policies during the late Ottoman period. For instance, just as cited above, the story of Yezidi's desertion on the subject of conscription will be held. They resorted to popular ways of active resistance such as migration, armed resistance, denial of census and inspection officials' access to their villages, joining the Hamidiye regiments and thus shirking military duty, and taking refuge with consulates or other foreign institutions.

As will be read in chapter 4, when Ömer Vehbi Pasha and his soldiers attacked Yezidi villages, they were met with equal strength by the other party. In addition, having gone through a terrible ordeal due to pressure for conversion and military attacks during the reign

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<sup>50</sup> BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 499/2, 13 Ca. 1306 (14 Februry 1889); and, Y. PRK. BŞK. 22/57, 9 Z. 1308 (16 July 1891): "...iş bu fırka-i dalle umde-i tarikatlerinin telkinatından uzak ve efrad-ı İslamiye arasında bulundurulub kendilerine adeta ehl-i sünnet muamelesi edilmek ve bu mezhebde kalanlar değil kabul-i Nasrâniyet ve Yahûdiyet etmiş olsalar bile yine asker olacaklarına ve devletin kararı lâ-tagyir bulunduğuna dair tefhimat icrasıyla beraber ahz-ı asker maddesinin hiçbir harfi tagyir olunmıyarak mevki-i icraya vaz' olunmak..."

<sup>51</sup> BOA. Y. EE. 139/13, 21 Ş. 1309 (23 March 1892); and, Y EE. 139/15: "...efradın esas-ı itikadları zaten evhen-i min beytü'l-ankebut olmasıyla efrad-ı müslime arasında bis-suhule kabul-i İslamiyet etmeleri ve bu suretle bu mezheb-i batıl taraftarlarının tedenni eylemesi tabi'i bulunduğuna binaen mezheb-i riyasetinde bulunan söz sahiblerinin hükümsüz ve taifesiz kalmalarını intac edeceğinden..." and, "Bina-berin gerek Musul ve Hakkari cihetlerinde bulunan Yezidiler ve gerek Dersim ve sair ol havalide sakin Kızılbaşlar ayruca Hamidiye alayı tertibatına kabul olunmayub irade-i hikmet-ade-i mülikaneleri hükm-i celili vechile bidayet-i emrde vahşet ve bedavetlerini idareye salih-i tasavvur ve tasim olacak bir suret-i tedbiriyeve tevfikân bunların yavaş yavaş ve fakat katiyen ahz-ı asker mükellefiyetine alıştırılmaları icab-ı maslahatına göre lazım ve la-büd görünür."

of Sultan Abdulhamid, the Yezidis of Sincar revolted a few times by reason of economic distress on top of all especially after the withdrawal of the Reform Force from the region. Armed and closely allied with other Yezidi tribes, they went up to Mount Sincar and revolted, spending a significant part of 1892 and 1893 in disputes and fights with the Ottoman soldiers. Hence I will devote a section of Chapter 4 to these attempts at revolt and fights. However, I do not intend to write a “history from below.” The focal point of this study is Ottoman state policies and practices. Although this study does not reduce the Yezidis to a metaphor, it claims to be a part of the nineteenth-century Ottoman history, far greater the history of the Yezidis alone.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE YEZIDIS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: A RELIGIOUSLY “HETEREDOX”, KURDISH, AND TRIBAL COMMUNITY AND THE STATE

#### The Yezidis and Yezidism

Widely and incorrectly known as “devil worshippers,” the Yezidis are a mostly Kurdish-speaking and religiously heterodox or syncretistic group.<sup>52</sup> They are settled mainly in the region of Mosul, Iraq and some are scattered in Armenia, Russia, Syria, Iran, Turkey and Western Europe, notably Germany, originated from the immigrant generations from Iraq and Turkey.<sup>53</sup> Sincar and Şeyhan districts in northern Iraq are specific areas of the Yezidi

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<sup>52</sup> A very important literature on the Yezidis and Yezidism is available. Among these, there are more remarkable studies of the Yezidis, their religious tenets, as well as of ethnic, geographical and social background, including, first of all, the great study by John Guest: *Survival among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis* (London: Kegan Paul, 1993); Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston: Edwin Melle Press, 1995); Ahmed Sami Said, *The Yazidis: Their Life and Beliefs* (Miami: Field Research Projects, 1975). For the studies based on testimony and field research, see, C. J. Edmonds, *A Pilgrimage to Lalish* (London: Aberdeen University Press, 1967); E. S. Drower, *The Peacock Angel* (London: John Murray, 1941). In particular, for the history of the Yezidis, the reader should refer to, apart from Guest’s work, R. Lescot, *Enquête sur les Yezidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjar* (Beirut, [Institut Français de Damas]1938); R. H. W. Empson, *The Cult of Peacock Angel* (London: Witherby, 1928). For me, an inspiring study of the Yezidis in the late Ottoman period, see also, Ufuk Gülsoy, “Sıradışı Bir Dini Topluluk: Osmanlı Yezidileri” *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, no. 7 (2002) pp. 129-162; a study focusing on the colonial period of Iraqi Yezidis, Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999). The same author, “Communalism and the state in Iraq: the Yazidi Kurds 1869-1940” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35 (2) 1999: 1-26. Christine Allison studied the oral tradition of Yezidis and produced a significant work, see, Allison, Christine, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001). There is also a recent study of the Sinjar and Sheikhan Yezidis, focusing on the present time, see, Eszter Spat, *The Yezidis*, second edition (London: Saqi Books, 2005). Three brief but significant studies can present an overall picture to the reader, see, P. G. Kreyenbroek, “Yazidi” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. XI, (Leiden: Brill, 2002) pp. 313-316; Theodor Menzel, “Yezidiler” *İslam Ansiklopesi*, vol. 13, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1986) pp. 415-423; and Christine Allison, “Yazidis” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online version of this article is on the website <http://www.encyclopediairanica.com>. Moreover, for both Yezidism and the Yezidis of Turkey in particular, see, Sabiha B. Yalkut, *Melek Tavus'un Halkı Yezidiler* (İstanbul: Metis, 2002). For the primary accounts of the Yezidis in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, see the bibliography of the present study. Works of A. H. Layard, A. G. Badger, W. Ainsworth, W. B. Heard, Nuri Pasha, M. Sykes, I. Joseph are particularly recommended. Lastly, a perfect bibliography can be found in Guest and Kreyenbroek’s studies.

It should be noted that, if not needed in particular, I will not refer to any work in this descriptive part on the Yezidis and Yezidism.

population. Likewise, the holy place of the community, the Sheikh Adi shrine and the cult of *Melek-i Tavus*, or Peacock Angel is at Lalish in northern Iraq. Estimate number of the Yezidi population in the world is a complicated issue and varies according to the source. Estimates rank from 300.000 to one million since no dependable data can be found in population records, especially in today's Iraq. In a moderate way, it can be argued that the Yezidis are estimated in the world as from 200.000 to 650,000, 80-85% of whom live in Kurdish-controlled Northern Iraq.

The Yezidis and Yezidism are two of the most controversial, enigmatic, and interesting communities and religions. They have been said to be devil worshippers, Iranian-rooted, "real Kurds", heterodox Muslims, to be from a branch of Shiism, Sufis, and many others. It is impossible to discuss all of these arguments and to examine all aspects of Yezidism and the Yezidis in the scope of this chapter. Therefore, based on secondary literature, I seek to present the basic aspects of the community such as its demographic, geographical, ethnic, religious background, aligned with social customs and cultural practices.

### Origins: Ethnic and Religious Background

The Yezidis are observably a Kurdish community, and almost all of them speak the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish, with the exception of Bashika and Bahzane villages in Northern Iraq, where the Yezidi community speaks Arabic. The religious identity has been more important than the ethnic one for the Yezidis until at least 1960s, when the Kurdish nationalism arose and affected them. Since identity is fictionalized from time to time, the Yezidis approach their identity under the influences of political and social circumstances. In a world in which ethnic

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<sup>53</sup> Turkey had an important Yezidi population until the 1980s, when the Yezidis started to emigrate to mainly Germany, Belgium, France, and Sweeden. There are many members of Yezidi diaspora in these countries now, most of whom are living in Germany. For a good account of the Yezidis in diaspora immigrated from Turkey, see, Yalkut, *ibid.*, pp. 27-42, 56-66, and 100-110. For a good bibliography of the Turkish books, articles, and references on the Yezidis, see Taşgın, *ibid.*

and national identities have become dominant, the Yezidis “discovered” their Kurdish roots, especially in Western Europe, and as a result of the impacts of Kurdish nationalism.

Nevertheless, many Yezidis see their religious identity as what makes a Yezidi Yezidi, as referring to Yezidism first and foremost.

Today it is well known that the name Yezidi, or Yazidi, is by no means related to Yazid b. Muawiya, son of the Umayyad caliph Muawiya. The term originally comes from the Persian word *Yazdan*, meaning “God,” and *Yazata* or *Yazad*, meaning “divine” or “angelic being.” In Kurdish usage and for the Yezidis themselves, the true name of the community is from the word *Ezdi*, or *Ezidi*, which means “the worshipper of God”. In popular eyes, the Yezidis are still considered to be associated with Yazid b. Muawiya, in general with the purpose of insulting and slandering them as they hate this figure of persecutor. However, from time to time, some Yezidis have found such an association advantageous and exploited it so that they could escape from the accusation of being heretical and rootless. Some Yezidis, however, believe that the Caliph Yazidi was a Muslim ruler who eventually became disenchanted with his religion and converted to Yezidism.

The religious origins of Yezidism are also complex, and have been the subject of much controversy ideas. It is impossible to know “the real” founder of the Yezidi religion, reflecting a syncretistic combination of Zoroastrian, Manichaean, Jewish and Christian with Sufi Islamic elements. First of all, the cosmogonies seem to have many common points with those of ancient Iranian religions, especially Zoroastrianism. An argument can be made on the origin of the Yezidi religion that, as a complex process of syncretism, was originated from the deep influence of adherents of the Adawiyya, or Adaviyye, Sufi order, which deviated from Islamic norms after its founder Sheikh Adi bin Mūsafir’s death, on a local faith, associated with ancient Iranian religion or religious tenets. In other words, it seems that a group of people called Ezidis, or Dasani for themselves, settled in the Kurdish mountains, religiously

originated from ancient Iranian traditions, were influenced by Sheikh Adi's doctrines and faiths coming from a Sufi Islamic order during the eleventh century.

Such an argument seems insightful and gives way to the claim that Yezidism can be seen as a heterodox religion. This is the reason behind the claim of Sufi influence can be seen, says Allison, "in their religious vocabulary, especially in the terminology of their esoteric literature, but much of the mythology is non-Islamic".<sup>54</sup> However the Yezidi religion should be considered as the product of a long period of transmission that occurred in a given area, affected by many factors.<sup>55</sup> Because there is no written tradition, it is hard to see a development of a formal theology or a certain monolithic system of religious precepts.<sup>56</sup>

Sheikh Adi, a descendant of the Umayyad Caliph Marwan ibn al-Hakem, who was born in the 1070s near Lebanon, was the founder of Sufi Islamic order. His shrine is located at Lalish, which was a place of pilgrimage for the Yezidis. According to Kreyenbroek, some characteristics of his faith and doctrines were differentiated from other Adawis and acquired by the Yezidi tribes.<sup>57</sup> Seemingly, they adapted the Sufi Islamic elements to their local faith by combining them. The Yezidi tribes' combination of religious ideas changed through a long process of alienation.

For some Yezidis, especial older and more pious ones, their religion is one of the oldest and its founder was lost in ancient history. In this hypothesis, the faith was survived over the centuries by its followers, who were to be converted into later religions such as Islam and Christianity.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Allison, Yazidis

<sup>55</sup> Kreyenbroek, Yezidism, p. 19

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Guest, 29

## Basic Religious Tenets

The Yezidis believe in one god and that they were created separately from the rest of humanity and are descended from Adam without Eve, unlike the other religious cosmogonies. Therefore, they also call themselves “the people of Adam” and see themselves as a chosen community. The Yezidi communities believe that God created the world, but delegated his authority to a hierarchy of seven archangels, or “Seven Mysteries,” (*haft sur*), one of whom, Melek Tavus (the Peacock Angel) was the first in rank and but not representing Satan, in Yezidi belief. Most Yezidis reject this identification and find it hostile although it is truth that Melek Tavus remain as an ambiguous figure.<sup>59</sup> In this narrative, the Peacock Angel denied worshipping Adam and punished by God by casting out of heaven. However, he was pardoned and acquired the first rank again. The Yezidis are different from Muslim, Christian, or Jewish believers in the way in which things are qualified as evil or devil.

The Peacock Angel is the ruler of the world. The Yezidis do not curse him. On the contrary, they see him as the representative of God in the world. Due to the place of Satan in the Yezidi faith, they have been called “devil worshippers” by Muslims, Christians, Jews, or any other religious communities who consider them heretics and have cruelly persecuted them from time to time. They do not, however, actually worship Satan, but see him as honorable, believing that the Supreme Being has authorized him to dominate the world. Therefore, no Yezidi pronounce the name ‘Satan’ or marked it with ‘sh’ beginning of Arabic word ‘*Şaytan*’.

In the Yezidi belief, the Peacock Angel appeared on different forms and periods of time. The final incarnation appears as Sheikh Adi and his companion Sheikh Hasan, and a group known as the “four Mysteries”, Şemseddin, Fahreddin, Saceddin and Nasireddin. The

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<sup>59</sup> Allison *ibid.*; Kreyenbroek, Yazidi, p. 314

seven archangels are worshipped by the Yazidi in the form of seven bronze peacock figures called Sancak.

### Holy Books

Yezidism is based on oral tradition, but has two holy books: *Kitab-ı Cilve*, or Book of Revelation, and the *Mishefa Reş*, or Black Book, published at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> These books, written in Arabic, have been known as sacred books among Muslim and Christian neighbors of the Yezidis. One can find all cosmogonies of the Yezidis, Sheikh Adi's revelations, religious tenets of Yezidism, and Yezi rituals in these books. In addition, the Yezidis for the first time wrote their religious beliefs in a petition known as the 1872 Petition, given by them to the Ottoman Government to gain exemption from military service in the nineteenth century. I will examine this petition in the third chapter dealing with Yezidi conscription.

### Prayer, Holy Places and Days, Festivals, and Taboos

The Yezidis pray three times a day, facing the rising, noonday, and setting sun and kiss the soul where the sun's first ray fall. Prayer is, however, an individual matter and not obligatory. The prayers are called in Kurdish and praying habits vary according to prayer texts. The weekly holy days are Wednesday and Friday, when they gather in a local pilgrimage centre called *Ziyaret*. Sexual intercourse is banned on these days.

Every Yezidi village has its local shrine dedicated to a holy figure. The most important shrine is the Sheikh Adi Sanctuary at Lalish. Yezidis from all locations visit the Tomb once a

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<sup>60</sup> For full text of the books, see, Isya Joseph, *Devil Worship: The Sacred Books and Traditions of the Yezidiz*, (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1919); for the interesting story of publishing the books, see Guest, pp. 146-163.

year to make a yearly pilgrimage and attend the Feast of the Assembly in September, which is very important period for the Yezidis to contact each other and affirm their religious and social identities. There are also special rites for marriage, circumcision, baptism (*mor kirin*), death, and new years. In New Year festivals, sheep are sacrificed and houses are decorated with flowers. The Yezidis celebrate other festivals, including two days at the end of the Muslim Ramadan and a Jesus feast (*ida Isa*).

Like every society, the Yezidis have many interesting taboos, some of which are seen in Muslim and Christian communities. Among these are a prohibition of eating lettuce, wearing blue colored clothes, peeing on earth, water, and fire, and being in much contact with non-Yezidis, who can be seen polluted. Using words connected to Satan and cursing it are also banned, as well as eating foods such as fish, cockerel, gazelle, cauliflower, okra, and pumpkin. Apart from these, we will see in the 1872 Petition other prohibitions and superstitions.

### Social Organization and Customs

Religiously, the Yezidis are divided into three endogamous, hereditary major castes as clergy: Sheikhs, *Pirs*, and *Murids* (laymen). The sheikhs are allegedly descended from five families closely related to Sheikh Adi and divided into three endogamous groups: the Shamsani, Adani and Qatani, with several sub-groups. The sheikh is also the chief of each *sancak*. The sheikh at Sheikh Adi Sanctuary is the most honorable. The pirs are allegedly descended from some of Sheikh Adi's disciples. Therefore, the difference between the two groups comes from not their religious tasks, but ancestry. The pirs are divided into four main groups, and forty clans, most of whom can intermarry. These two groups receive alms from their laymen, to whom most of the Yezidis belong. The responsibility of the sheikhs and pirs in theory is to provide

the spiritual welfare of the laymen families and to teach them the Yezidi faith, rites and ceremonies as well as to lead to the religious festivals and the rites of passage such as baptism and marriage.

Socially, the Yezidis are divided into three groups: *Kawwals*, *Fakhirs*, and *Kocheks*. These groups are also hereditary. The Kawwals are responsible for Yezidi learning and singing and playing music at festivals. The representatives of Kawwals carry the Sanjaks around Yezidi villages to invite them to the pilgrimage to Sheikh Adi. Kawwals also collect the Yezidis' alms to the Mir as well as to keep the religious centre. They live in Bashika and Bahzane and belong to either of two tribes, Hakari and Dumili.

The Fakhir, who always wear black shirts, *khirka*, and black turbans, are expected to lead a life of piety and self-discipline, fasting and refraining from drinking and smoking. Their office is hereditary. They are permitted to marry and live at other sancaks. The Kocheks, or "little ones", who wear white clothes, are very pious and responsible for tenting the Sheikh Adi Tomb as religious chief.

The Yezidis are ruled by a *Mir*, or emir, as temporal or spiritual leader of the community. The Mir, who is believed to be sacred, lives in Skeaikhan and represents all Yezidis in theory. The Mir, with other dignitaries, is a member of the Yezidis' '*Meclis-i Ruhani*', or 'Religious Council'.

#### The Ottoman Yezidis: Geography and Population, the nineteenth century

The Yezidi tribes came under Ottoman rule after the Sultan Selim II's conquest of eastern Anatolia, Mosul, and Syria between 1514 and 1516. At that time the Yezidi tribes were concentrated in the province of Diyarbekir, Mosul, and Aleppo, all of which were given Ottoman governors among the powerful Kurdish Begs. One of them was the Yezidi leader

Sheikh İzzeddin, who was appointed to the emirate of all Kurds after Qasım Beg's, chief of the Kurds around west Aleppo, execution.<sup>61</sup> After that time, the Yezidi tribes lived under Ottoman domination, but formally and semi-independently.

Over four centuries, the Yezidis lived in the province of Mosul, Diyarbekir, Van, Bitlis, and Aleppo.<sup>62</sup> The province of Erzurum also had a small Yezidi population, near Kars and Bayezid. Mosul was the province that had the greatest Yezidi population, especially in district of Sinjar, or Sincar, and Şeyhan, or Şeyhan.<sup>63</sup> Apart from these two settlements, among the most important districts in which there were serious numbers of Yezidi tribes were Mardin, Midyat, Nisibin, Viranşehir, Beşiri, the center of Bitlis, Urfa, and Van, Adilcevaz, Mahmudi, Garzan, Hınıs, Rıdvan, Bayezid, Cebel-i Semann near Aleppo, and Amediye.

The Şeyhan and Cebel-i Sincar regions were almost fully populated by the Yezidis. The former was a mountainous area located in the middle of the northern Cezire south-west of Mosul, the latter a transitional zone between the Mosul and the mountains of İraqi Kurdistan. Şeyhan was the center of the most important Yezidi tribes, in the villages of Başhika and Ba'adre. Sincar district, center of which was Beled consisted of 72 villages and a sub-district named Tel-Afer.<sup>64</sup> Cebel-i Sincar was an isolated plateau, south of which was surrounded by the desert, therefore hard to access and occupy. The Sincari Yezidis were settled in the hills of Sincar, around 30 villages, and could protect themselves against military expeditions due to the geographical advantages of the region.<sup>65</sup> In such a protected area, the armed Yezidi tribes

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<sup>61</sup> For a history of the Ottoman Yezidis, see Guest, 44-61; R. Lescot, *Enquête sur les Yezidis*; and to many extent a summary of secondary sources, Yurdaer Abca, *Yezidilik ve Osmanlı Yönetiminde Yezidiler*, (A Master's Thesis, Osmangazi Üniversitesi, 2006) pp. 48-54

<sup>62</sup> *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye sene 1307*; BOA. Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları MV. 113/161, 7 C. 1324 (29 July 1906); BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 98/102, 1311 (1894); and also see, Nuri Paşa, p. 39

<sup>63</sup> As far as the Ottoman period is concerned, I use the Ottoman Turkish pronunciation for the names of particular places, for example Sincar, not Sinjar, Şeyhan, not Sheikhan as well as Cebel-i Seman, not Mountainous Seman, or Jebel Seman.

<sup>64</sup> *Salname-i Vilayet-i Musul sene 1308*

were inclined over the centuries to plunder merchant and pilgrim caravans and raid the villages around themselves. Their main resources were based on those actions, which was the reason for the Ottoman government's increasing attempts to take control over the region in order to keep public order in the nineteenth century.

### Population in the Nineteenth Century

It is impossible to know the Yezidi population in the nineteenth century. The main reason is the fact that the Yezidis were not included as a separate community in the Ottoman censuses, except for the 1895 and 1906 censuses. The second reason is related to the characteristics of the Ottoman census system.<sup>66</sup> Until the early 1880s, for the provincial areas there were no exact population records, especially of the eastern, even much later for the province of Mosul, Basra and Baghdad, where an important Yezidi population lived, since Abdulhamid ordered that women must not be counted in censuses.<sup>67</sup> Another reason is about popular resistance to the census. Especially provincial and communal groups would avoid being counted in order to escape from the burden of taxation and military service. Moreover, as mentioned above, some of Yezidi tribes, especially those settled in Sincar, were in a position that provided them with the possibility of escape from the census due to the political, administrative and geographical limits.

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<sup>65</sup> For Cebel-i Sincar and Sincari Yezidis, see, Frederick Forbes, "A Visit to the Sinjâr Hills in 1838, with Some Account of the Sect of Yezidis, and of Various Places in the Mesopotamian Desert, between the Rivers Tigris and Khâbûr." *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 9 (1839), pp. 409-430. Frederick Forbes's exploration is a very good contemporary source on the Yezidis, their culture, religion and settlement, Sincar, in the late 1830s. See also, Şemseddin Sami, *Kamusü'l-A'lam*, vol. VI, İstanbul: 1316, p. 4480

<sup>66</sup> For a detailed analysis of Ottoman census system, see, Kemal Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003), especially, pp. 41-75; see also, Shaw, Stanford J., "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (1978): 325-38

<sup>67</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1985/22, 16 M. 1310 (10 August 1892)

On the other hand, it seems possible to grasp an approximate figure for the Yezidi population owing to different sources. The earliest population record of the Ottoman Yezidis in and around Mosul, which I was able to find and do take seriously, belongs to Mehmed Hurşid Pasha, who was a member of the international boundary commission (*tahdid-i hudud komisyonu*), which was established to resolve the border problem between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Hurşid Pasha, traveling four years between 1848 and 1852 in the regions around the border from Bayezid to Basra, wrote a book entitled “*Seyâhatnâme-i Hudûd*” that gives a rather important account of the region, its geography, and peoples, that is also full of detailed statistical information, including population statistics by village and tribe. In his book, Hurşid Pasha dedicates a couple of pages to the Yezidis of Sincar. According to the Pasha, the population of the Yezidis at the center of Mosul was 2489 in those years, while that in Sincar was 900, in total 3389.<sup>68</sup>

Vital Cuinet, whose book consisting of four excellent volumes is still one of the most important statistical sources for the Anatolian and eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, notes that the Yezidi population of the province of Mosul was in total 14.900 at the end of the 1880s.<sup>69</sup> In addition, according to the same source there were 750 habitants in Ayn-Sıfni, 700 in Baadre, and 1000 in Bashika, three important Yezidi settlements.<sup>70</sup>

In the census registers taken in 1895, the Yezidi population in Mosul was given as 5.358 and in 1906-7 as 2. 830, only for men.<sup>71</sup> But these numbers are suspect because of the

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<sup>68</sup> Mehmed Hurşid Pasha, *Seyâhatnâme-i Hudûd* (Istanbul: 1277 [1860]), p. 300. Reissued copy with a transcription by Alâattin Eser, Istanbul: Simurg, 1997, p. 219. Badger gives an amount of population of Mosul according to the census of 1849 as 3.350 yet it does not seem reliable, see, George P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals, with the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844*, vol 1. (London: Joseph Masters, 1852) (Reprinted version: London: Darf Publishers Limited, 1987) p. 82

<sup>69</sup> Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie: Géographie Administrative Statistique Descriptive et Raisonnée de Chaque Province de l'Asie-Mineure*, vol. 2, Istanbul: Isis, 2001 (first edited in 1891, Paris)

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190

<sup>71</sup> *Salname-i Vilayet-i Musul sene 1312*, p. 335. In this Almanac, appraisal amount of Muslim population is 18.800 men alone, one-third of official amount, the same rate can be assumed for the Yezidi population; See also, *Musul-Kerkük Arşiv B Musul-Kerkük ile İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri (1525-1919)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık

unreliable census, in my opinion, and the fact that the people may have avoided participating in the census so that they could dodge the military service and taxes. In addition, in Karpat's account, we see a serious decrease in Yezidi population from 1906-7 to 1912 for all regions, such as Mosul, Diyarbekir, and Haleb. If it is considered that there was no event such as a serious migration or epidemics that caused the Yezidi population to decrease as such, these numbers become questionable. Moreover, it is reported that the district of Sincar had a population of 4,784 in the year 1912 according to the Mosul Almanac, whereas Cuinet points out that the total population of Sincar was 17,350, almost half of which was Yezidi.<sup>72</sup>

All these accounts indicate the diversity of the information on the Yezidi population, especially in Mosul. Moreover in an archival document, a report on the Yezidis dated to 1894, it is argued that total Yezidi population is not over 50.000.<sup>73</sup> In addition we know from many documents that there were 70-80 villages in which the Yezidis were living alone.<sup>74</sup> If each village had more than 200 people the amount would be around 16.000 in total that would not be absurd. As a result when all these accounts are taken into consideration, it can be estimated that the province of Mosul had approximately 30-35.000 Yezidi population in the late nineteenth century.

According to Cuinet again, the province of Van had a population of 5,400 Yezidis at the end of the 1880s, many of which settled in the kaza of Hakkari.<sup>75</sup> Cuinet also says that there were 1,400 Yezidis in the Sancak of Van with its all kazas having a population of

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Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1993), p. 13-14; Karpat, Osmanlı Nüfusu, p. 205; Sinan Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı döneminde Kuzey Irak, 1831-1914* (İstanbul : Eren, 1998) p. 52-3.

<sup>72</sup> Cengiz Eroğlu, and others (eds.), *Osmanlı Vilayet Salnamelerinde Musul* (Ankara: Global Strateji Enstitüsü, 2005) p. 45 and Cuinet, vol. 1, p. 199.

<sup>73</sup> Y. PRK. ASK. 98/102, p. 1

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, BOA. Y. MTV 53/73, 17 Muharrem 1309 (23 August 1891): “*Yezidilerin seksen pare karyelerini mukavele-i rehine suretiyle...*” and DH.MKT. 1555/58: “*Musul’da bulunan ve yetmiş seksan kurayı havi olan Yezidi taifesi ayinleri...*”

<sup>75</sup> Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 1, 182

140,000, which is 1% of the total population of the city.<sup>76</sup> The other districts attached to the Sancak of Van had a Yezidi population as follows according to the same account: In the district of Kardigan 175; Çatak 200; Adilcevaz 340; Ardeş 95; Pergri 115; and Mok 350<sup>77</sup>

Unlike the present time, one of the most important Ottoman sancak in terms of Yezidi population, the sancak of Hakkari had 4,000 Yezidis, 2,500 of which lived in the kaza of Mahmudi, and 1,500 in Amadiye, or Amediye.<sup>78</sup>

For the province of Bitlis, Cuinet notes 3,863 of Yezidi population in total, while in the province of Diyarbekir 2,000 together with *Kızılbaş*.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, according to the 1894-95 Almanac of Diyarbekir, 483 Yezidis are recorded in Midyat, and 247 in Nusaybin.<sup>80</sup> In addition, we know from different archival documents that there were small Yezidi communities in the province of Aleppo, Sivas, Erzurum, and districts of Viranşehir, Siverek, and Savur. As a result, based on different sources referred above, it can be estimated that all Yezidi population was not less than 55,000 and more than 65,000.

#### The Question of Status: The Yezidis in the Ottoman Political Structure

The Ottoman state did not recognize the Yezidis as a community like Christians and Jews, who were given administrative and religious autonomy under the *millet* system. As Fuccaro properly argues, “the Yezidis had no defined status vis-a-vis the Ottoman administration”, therefore, “state-community relations developed outside formalized institutional frameworks

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 220

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 227-236

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 239, also see for Mahmudi, p. 257 and for Amadiye p. 266. In addition, according to this account, there were 300.000 people in Hakkari in total at that time.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 271 and 345

<sup>80</sup> Ahmet Kankal, “Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet Dönemlerinde Midyat”, in *Makalelerle Mardin I. Cilt Tarih-Coğrafya*, edited by İbrahim Özcoşar (İstanbul: Mardin Tarihi İhtisas Kütüphanesi, 2007) p. 400; and the same author, “XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Nusaybin (Salnâmelere Göre)”, in *Makalelerle Mardin*, p. 485

and were mainly dictated by political circumstances”.<sup>81</sup> I conceptualize the political and legal relationship the Yezidi community and the Ottoman state as “the question of status”, which would give rise to various problems in the nineteenth century such as military conscription and conversion policies.

Just like the Kızılbâşs, Zeydis, Shiites, Shabaks and Nusayris, the Yezidis were a religious and ethnic group that lived on the margins in the Ottoman Empire and were not integrated into the political, economic and cultural organization of the empire. There was not a relationship based on a certain legal framework between these types of groups and the state. As mentioned above, these religious and ethnic groups could not have established a formal relationship with the state just as the communities of the empire, other than Sunnite Muslims, recognized by the state, such as Orthodox Greeks, Gregorian Armenians, Protestants formally recognized as nations. They tried to survive away from the political, economic and cultural order of the empire without benefiting from the rights, at least, bestowed by this order.<sup>82</sup>

As is known, the Ottoman Empire classified its subjects according to their religious identities. Within the framework of the structure, known as the *millet system*, segments of subjects, whose religious identities were recognized by the state, were called as millets and were granted certain rights specific to their own groups. These communities were bestowed a special legal status and their relations with the state were maintained by certain representatives of communities. It would be beside the point to discuss the system here in this chapter but it would be useful to touch upon a few points for the purpose of our topic.

This system, a product of traditional Islamic law, was not an invention of the Ottomans. In lands governed according to the principles of Islamic law, the people of the books, other than Muslims, were regarded as *zimmi* and granted a separate status. It was

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<sup>81</sup> Fuccaro, *Communalism and the State in Iraq*, p. 3

<sup>82</sup> See, İlber Ortaylı, “19. Yüzyılda Heterodoks Dini Gruplar ve Osmanlı İdaresi” *İlam Araştırma Dergisi*, vol. 1 no. 1 (1996)

unavoidable for a state, administering laws of punishment, inheritance, debts and general public on the basis of Islamic norms, to adopt such a system so that it would be able to gather under its roof non-Muslims, in other words, people who could not be made to conform with those rules. Needless to say, granting the status of millet to a community was linked to a series of political, demographic and ideological factor. No matter how ‘sound’ their theological rationale were, every community regarding itself as a different segment of subjects was not granted a status. This was a result of both the official Ottoman state ideology<sup>83</sup> and political conditions. As a matter of fact, the Yezidis, who did not consider themselves Muslims, yet had a different understanding of cosmogony along with different religious exercises, rules and a sacred book, are a very good example of this exclusion.

In conjunction with the fact that the ruling and administrative elite of the empire designed the rules of power exercising on the basis of an Islamic idea and law, they also adopted a particular interpretation of Islam. This interpretation was based on Sunnite Islam, and, more importantly, on the Hanefi sect. The Ottoman scholars grounded public law on the interpretation of Hanefi Islam. Therefore, they did not officially recognize non-Sunnite interpretations of Islam or communities that represented those interpretations, and they even regarded them with suspicion.<sup>84</sup> The Zeydis, Shiites and Druzes are the most widely-known of such communities. Imposing a series of cultural practices and only one religious perception of the world on the societies that were out of the mainstream classification of religions, in other words, orthodoxy, the Ottoman political and religious elites took a much more skeptical, even aggressive approach to the segments named as Islamic heterodoxy. Groups like the Melamis, Kalenderis, Kızılbaşs and Gülşenis were labeled as *mülhid* or *zındık*, or abjurer and hidden

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<sup>83</sup> For a remarkable analysis of Ottoman official ideology, see, A. Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler, 15.-17. Yüzyıllar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003) pp. 71-105

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

atheist respectively,<sup>85</sup> by the Ottoman state and scholars, and they were prosecuted or even executed. Though the Yezidis were not addressed as ‘*zındık*’, they were considered to be infidel/enemy (*kefere*), and seceder (*mürted*) in the Ottoman documents until the first quarter of nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> In other words, they were members of an infidel, aberrant community that had deviated from Islam in the eyes of the Ottoman administrators and sultan. This approach would set the place of the Yezidis within the Ottoman political system.

I link the basis of this approach to the official state ideology of the Ottomans. Although it was quiet an abstract and controversial concept, the Ottomans at least embodied a certain ideology up until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. When I say official ideology I mean, just as in the way Ahmet Yaşar Ocak has defined it, that it is the way the Ottoman state perceived itself, its subjects, the land it controlled, countries with which relations were established, the world around it, and it is the value system considered to be supreme.<sup>87</sup> This is to say that the Ottoman political and religious elite had the norms and conceptual tools by which in a given social order the world makes sense.

The most striking characteristic of this ideology was that the Ottoman administrative elites demanded absolute compliance and loyalty from the subjects. Expecting its subjects to recognize its political authority and put their bodies into state service if necessary, the Ottoman state allowed all groups of people to live under its sovereignty as long as they did not violate these rules and were obedient.<sup>88</sup> However, there is a point missed by Ocak about

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<sup>85</sup> The terms *mülhid* (abjurer) and *zındık* (hidden atheist) are sometimes alternately used but the first rather refers to deviance or open impiety while the latter describes the case of hidden atheism. For an in-depth analysis of these terms, see, Ocak, *ibid.*, pp. 6-15

<sup>86</sup> For instance, see, BOA. Hatt-ı Hümayun (hereafter HAT) 3430A, 9 L. 1209 (29 April 1795): “...*cebel-i Sincar olan Yezid eşkıyaları mecbul oldukları küfr ve şeraret ve maktûr oldukları ilhad ve şekavet iktizasıyla envai’ mefaside mübaderet ve kat-ı rah-ı ebna-ı sebile muvazabet edegelmeleriyle...*”; BOA, HAT. 13441, 29 Z. 1210 (5 June 1796) “*Hâlâ Bağdad Valisi Vezir Süleyman Paşa kulları tarafından varid olan tahriratda Mardin ile Musul beyninde katl-i nüfusa ictisar iden Yezid keferesinin...*”

<sup>87</sup> Ocak’s work that I just mentioned is a very important study on this issue.

<sup>88</sup> Ocak, p. 92

the Ottoman perception of sovereignty: the Ottoman state, having adopted a particular interpretation of Islam, even of theology, was always suspicious of non-orthodox sects, sub-groups and interpretations of Islam, and also considered them as a threat to its sovereignty. The nonconformity with the state of these groups whose religion was not known by the state and who were labeled as deviant, in terms of religious identity, was constantly a threat to the state. The state always was suspicious of their obedience. The Yezidis were such a group in the eyes of the state.

The Ottoman ruler elites, scholars and authors considered the Yezidis as an infidel/enemy (*kefere*), heretic (*dalle*), seceder (*mürted*), barbarous and clueless group.<sup>89</sup> The fact that they were called *mürted* has a political implication. If one was a *mürted*, then it was incumbent on a Muslim to kill him/her, in other words it was not illicit to shed their blood. For that reason, for instance, even in the nineteenth century, the Sultan was recommended in the imperial edict, or *irade*, to punish them by bloodshed, except for the children. This document also shows how the Yezidis were perceived by senior administrators.<sup>90</sup>

In any case, together with the fact that the state could not collect taxes regularly from this community, the tribes of which lived in light of their own domestic rules, the Yezidis were a group never officially recognized by the state, not even in the nineteenth century. The state, only considered them to be an infidel and deviant community, did not even attempt to gain information about them. It came onto the agenda of the state only after the second half of the nineteenth century to try to dig for information about this community. The state's endeavor to gather information about its subjects is a modern practice. The Ottoman state in

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<sup>89</sup> For the terminology of the late 18th century, see, HAT 3430A: "...*cebel-i Sincar olan Yezid eşkıyaları mecbul oldukları küfr ve şeraret ve maktûr oldukları ilhad ve şekavet iktizasıyla envai' mefaside mübaderet ve kat-ı rah-ı ebna-ı sebile muvazabet idegelmeleriyle...*"; HAT. 13441: "*Hâlâ Bağdad Valisi Vezir Süleyman Paşa kulları tarafından varid olan tahriratda Mardin ile Musul beyninde katl-i nüfusa ictisar iden Yezid keferesinin...*"

<sup>90</sup> BOA. HAT. 2088, 29 Z. 1216 (2 Mayıs 1802): "...*karib-i ümidgahları Musul ve ... Diyarbekir eyalâtı olmağla kangı bir tarafa tedevvür iderler ise vücuhla sabilelerini kat itmekden baska dahil-i havza iman olmayanlarının izale-i vücûdlarıyla def-i mevaddı seraretlerine külli ikdam itmek üzere eyalat-ı mezkûrenin valilerine tevzii havi başka başka birer kıta ferman-ı âli-şan ısdar ve taraf-ı çakeraneme irsal buyurulmakdan maada...*"

the nineteenth century, as a modern state aiming to benefit from their bodies more effectively and mobilize them in line with its modern policies, and demanding their obedience to its sovereignty and authority, and wishing to carry out policies accordingly, began to take a keen interest in the Yezidi tribes.

Examples illustrating this action during the Hamidian era are quite striking, effectively reflecting the characteristics of the time. In order to get to know the Yezidis, the Hamidian regime sent a series of committees to the regions in which they lived at various time intervals and had reports made, and additionally, put forth great efforts to find out what kind of a policy was to be designed so that they would pledge their allegiance to the state. This practice presents an illustrative example of the modern mentality of Abdulhamid, who wanted to convert the Yezidis to Sunnite Islam. It is not a paradox; on the contrary, it is the original aspect of the Hamidian regime. Although the Hamidian regime was not able to achieve its aim, it made greater efforts than ever in order to familiarize with this group, make them obey the state order and discipline them. Islamizing these tribes was the way they found to do so.

In conclusion, although the Ottoman state conferred degrees or granted rewards under the name of imperial gift to some Yezidi leaders from time to time through semi-official channels in accordance with the political conditions of the time<sup>91</sup>, it did not recognize them as a millet by way of recognizing them as a certain identity, designating as official addressees or granting rights or privileges. Despite the Yezidis' demands to be recognized at different times, the Ottoman state, even the Turkish Republic now, did not acknowledge Yezidism as a separate religion, and the Yezidis as a separate religious group or sect. In population censuses, the Ottoman state assorted this group separately under the name of Yezidis only twice (1895 and 1906-7 censuses). The Yezidis were registered as Muslims in all other censuses and population registers.

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<sup>91</sup> For example see, BOA. DH. MKT. 2002/56, 23 Safer 1310 (16 September 1892)

As can be seen, the issue that I have termed “the question of status” was one of the most determining factors in relations between the state and the Yezidi tribes. For instance, compulsory military duty, which will be thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, was directly linked to this status question. Because the state did not officially or virtually recognize the Yezidis, as a non-Muslim group, it did not grant the right of exemption from military service to the Yezidis unlike the other non-Muslim groups. However, the Yezidis, regarding themselves as an external sect, explained that they were not Muslims, but had a religion much older than Islam, and also stated that the state needed to recognize them the way they were and grant them exemption from military service.<sup>92</sup>

#### The Tanzimat State: Consolidation of Power over the Yezidi Tribes, 1830-1872

It seems that, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the government had no permanent access to Cebel-i Sincar and Şeyhan as well as other Yezidi locations although there were various military expeditions to prevent Yezidi banditry, which was the main economic resource for the Yezidi tribes.<sup>93</sup> We see that, by this time, the government became particularly interested in extending and consolidating its authority in the rural parts of Mosul. Therefore, for the Yezidi tribes, the nineteenth century would be different from the previous centuries.

#### First Penetrating Attempts

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<sup>92</sup> See, A.MKT. 228/54. “...reaya hükmünde olarak şimdiye kadar haric-i mezheb-i reayadan kimesneden asker alınmadığından kulları saye-i şahanede her bir virgüyü mertebemizi eda ve fakat askerlik usulü harici-i mezheb bulunub Yezidi olduklarımızdan askerden afv buyurulmak tazarru ve niyazıyla...”

<sup>93</sup> There are several examples of military operations to the Sincari Yezidis, dating to the end of the eighteenth century and the early 1800, for instance, two times by Süleyman Pasha of Baghdad, see, HAT, 3430A, and HAT. 2088

The military expedition of Hafız Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Sivas, in 1837 was the starting point of the attempts to consolidate the Ottoman rule over the powerful Kurdish tribes and the Sincari Yezidis. The military intervention of the government in Sincar in the early 1830s was the part of an Ottoman campaign against the major Kurdish chiefdoms settled and dominated the area between Cezire and south of Mosul, consisting of a number of Kurdish tribes and tribal confederations. The first campaign was started under the leadership of Reşid Pasha in 1836, first against the Kurdish Beg of Rewanduz, Mir Muhammed, who was seen as a threat by the government since he had expanded his authority through Amediye to Cezire in alliance with the Kurdish Bedirhan Beg, the powerful emir of Botan.

Reşid Pasha of Baghdad with his well-equipped army firstly surrendered the region of Cezire in the spring of 1836 and attacked Bedirhan Beg. The great Yezidi population in the area was massacred and enslaved during the battles.<sup>94</sup> The Ottoman army succeeded in forcing Bedirhan to join the Pasha though not exactly overpowered, and for a while, captured Mir Muhammed of Rewanduz. He was sent to İstanbul and given the governorship of Rewanduz, however murdered on the way back, in Amasya.<sup>95</sup> Muhammed was a terrible figure in the eyes of the Yezidis since in 1832 he united some Kurdish tribes and assaulted the Yezidis. It was one of the cruelest attacks against the Yezidi tribes in Şeyhan. Muhammed's army captured Mir Ali Beg and almost all of the Yezidis they could find were looted, buried

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<sup>94</sup> BOA. HAT. 20475B, 29 Z. 1251 (16 April 1836): “...Diyarbakir’in ilerüsünde kain aşair ve Ekrad’ın ve Yezidhane tabir olunan cibalde mutavattın ı kabail-i rezilenin taht-ı itaata idhalleri zımında bazılarını harben tedib ve bazılarını dahi te’min ve taltif ile nizam-ı lazimeyi icra ve Diyarbakir’in kırk elli saat ilerüsünde envai şekavet ile meluf olan aşair ve Ekrad’ı Diyarbakir’in bir tarafında kain sahra köylerine nakl ve iva iderek saye-i hazret-i cihan-daride oralari şimdilik fi’l-cümle tasfiye etmiş...”; see also, Layard, Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, pp. 9-10. Layard stress that Reşid Pasha had a great knowledge of the region over which he tried to take a control and its inhabitants, saying “according to the Pasha, the tribes are idolatrous, worshipping venerable oaks, great trees, huge solitary rocks, and other grand features of nature. He was inclined to attribute to them mysterious and abominable rites.” Through Layard’s account, we can also see the Pasha’s aim to restore the country so that the government could be gain a perfect control over the region. Layard says that the Pasha spoke of “re-opening the road, rebuilding caravanserais, and restoring trade to its ancient channel.”

<sup>95</sup> Guest, p. 73

down or slaughtered. Moreover the Yezidi leader Ali Beg was taken a prisoner, tortured and killed.<sup>96</sup> This event has been called “the Soran Massacre” among the Yezidis.

After Reshid Pasha’s death in 1837, Hafiz Pasha of Sivas undertook the former Pasha’s military campaigns in the region. In April, the Pasha moved to Cebel-i Sincar in an attempt to subjugate and punish the Yezidis for being plunderers. Before attacking the tribes, Hafiz Pasha surrendered the mountain and ordered the Yezidis to submit to the government; however this order was refused by the tribes, who opened fire on the Ottoman soldiers. It triggered a battle of three months, in which both sides heavy lost, including Pasha himself. According to Guest, although Hafiz Pasha could not succeed to beat them, the Yezidis agreed to submit because of lack of sufficient ammunition.<sup>97</sup> Hafiz Pasha seized some amount of money and the booty that was captured during the plunders and buried by the Yezidis<sup>98</sup>, among of which, notes Guest, were stolen uniforms belonging to the government<sup>99</sup>, 30.000 sheep, and a few female captives.<sup>100</sup>

After the expedition and submission of the Yezidi tribes of Cebel-i Sincar, Hafiz Pasha said in his report to the Sultan that he was attempting to sedentarize the Yezidi tribes in Sincar.<sup>101</sup> However, the Pasha gave up this plan because, he reported, tribe leader named Lalu “asked for mercy” (*arz-ı dehalet*) and obeyed. Thus, he had permitted them to stay in Sincar.<sup>102</sup> In addition, a *mütesellim*, or administrative representative, from notable tribesmen

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<sup>96</sup> Austen H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849) p. 196; see also, Guest, p. 68-69

<sup>97</sup> BOA. HAT. 22332A, 13 Ra 1353 (17 June 1837) and Guest, *ibid*.

<sup>98</sup> The above-mentioned document

<sup>99</sup> In a document, it is reported that the uniforms sent to Mosul for the Ottoman soldiers were stolen by the people of Sincar. These must be those which were got back in Hafiz Pasha’s expeditions. See, BOA. HAT. 22378, 28 N. 1252 (6 January 1837)

<sup>100</sup> Guest, *ibid*

<sup>101</sup> BOA. HAT. 22350, 18 C. 1853 (19 September 1837)

<sup>102</sup> BOA. HAT. 22350F, 21 C. 1853 (22 September 1837)

was appointed to the Yezidis to mediate between Hafiz Pasha and the tribesmen.<sup>103</sup> He established a garrison at Tel-Afer attached to district of Sincar, consisting of permanent Ottoman soldiers, who functioned as the main forces to control the Yezidis. The Pasha also registered the community on tax rolls. They were expected to pay their taxes regularly with the debts and avoid banditry.<sup>104</sup>

Frederick Forbes, who visited to the Yezidis of Sincar in 1838, describes Hafiz Pasha's attack and its impact on Yezidi tribes as follows:<sup>105</sup>

Their [the Yezidis] depredations at length became so frequent and extensive, that Hafiz Pasha of Diyar-Bekr [sic], was compelled to attack them, as the only means of preventing a great part of his Pashalik from becoming a desert. He collected a large force of the Nizami Jedid, and, after an obstinate resistance and considerable loss, succeeded in overcoming them, took possession of all their villages in succession, and made the population tributary to the Sultan, leaving a governor, or musellim, to watch over them, but permitting them to retain their own religion, laws and customs.

In fact, the Pasha's officials functioning as tax collectors regularly began to go to Sincar villages in order to force the tribes to pay their taxes although the Yezidi tribes could not effort to pay them. Moreover, the Ottoman soldiers permanently kept surveillance of the Sincar villages from a top of hill. As Forbes notes, quoting a Yezidi Sheikh's statements: "Do you see that hill opposite the village? Before Hafiz Pasha came here , the whole employment of the people of Kirsi was to sit on the top of it all day, looking out for travelers and caravans, in order to plunder them: now that this at an end, they have nothing to do."<sup>106</sup>

It seems, on the other hand, the Kurdish tribes and Yezidis settled in Cezire as well as in Sincar were not under as much control as described above. In fact, Hafiz Pasha renewed his

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<sup>103</sup> HAT. 22350 and BOA. HAT. 22350D, 24 C. 1853 (25 September 1837)

<sup>104</sup> Frederick Forbes, *A Visit to Sinjar Hills*, p. 411 Guest, p. 75; Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, p. 33;

<sup>105</sup> Forbes, p. 409

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. 418

campaign against the Kurds and Yezidis in 1838.<sup>107</sup> This time, the Pasha and his soldiers attacked the tribes more violently, resulting in a series massacre. Helmuth von Moltke, Prussian General, who was training the Turkish soldiers in the region at that time, witnessed the terrible massacre of Yezidis. In his letters, he says that it was a terrible scene, all the male population was killed, whereas women and children were taken as slaves, because they were Yezidis or devil worshipers.<sup>108</sup> However, the Pasha's campaigns were interrupted by an order from Sultan Mahmud II to concentrate his army at Malatya and prepare to move south against Mehmed Ali's Egyptian army.<sup>109</sup> One observer reports that, from 1832 to 1838, the Yezidi population was reduced by three-fourth due to the massacres.<sup>110</sup>

After 1838, the Yezidi settlements would be exposed to the military expeditions of the local governors several times, during the years 1840-1848. The agenda was the same: maintenance of public order and collection of taxes. George P. Badger, a Protestant missionary traveling around Mosul in 1838, narrates how changes were brought to Mosul by İnce Bayraktar Pasha after the Celili dynasty ended, saying "the city is now more completely under the authority of the Sultan than it has been for a century past."<sup>111</sup> According to Badger, the Pasha had introduced "salutary reforms in administration" and "a new order of the military", which included recruited soldiers. These brought about a panic among the people in Mosul, some of whom fled the town to escape from military campaign.<sup>112</sup> For the Yezidis at that time, both Badger and Layard say that they were attacked by the Pasha's new army, and

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<sup>107</sup> BOA. HAT. 22332, 13 Ra 1353 (16 March 1838)

<sup>108</sup> Helmut von Moltke, *Moltke'nin Türkiye Mektupları*, translated by Hayrullah Örs (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1969) pp. 192-193

<sup>109</sup> Guest, p. 72.

<sup>110</sup> Austen H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, p. 196

<sup>111</sup> George P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, p. 74

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

their refusal to pay the taxes which by were demanded by İnce Bayraktar gave rise the massacre resulting in several hundreds of the Yezidis were killed in Sincar.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from the local governor's attacks, the Yezidis also suffered from the persecutions of the major Kurdish tribesmen. One of the most violent actions took place in 1844, by Bedir Han in Tur Abidin, who used force to convert the Yezidis to Islam. Those who rejected to being converted were arrested and killed. Some of the Yezidi villages surrendered and had to accept to be converted to Islam by force.<sup>114</sup>

Despite a general improvement of public security, the Ottoman government failed to take control over the Yezidi tribes in Cezire and Cebel Sincar although Yezidi banditry was considerably reduced due to the permanent presence of Ottoman soldiers in the region.<sup>115</sup> The Ottoman presence was, nevertheless, still confined to a certain area in the region. Nevertheless all displayed the insistence and attempts of the government to consolidate their authority over the Kurdish and Yezidi tribes.

### The Tanzimat Period

With the purpose of assuring the viability of the Ottoman rule, the establishment of direct Ottoman administration in Mosul province after the Jelili dynasty and powerful Kurdish tribe leaders such as Bedir Han Bey and the Sorani leader Muhammed were eradicated in the 1830 and 1840s, had important implications for the Yezidi communities of Sincar and Şeyhan, though not entirely positive. The administrative reform that was implemented in Mosul should be considered within the context of Tanzimat reforms during the early 1850s.

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<sup>113</sup> For the military attacks by Mehmed İnce Bayraktar Pasha of Mosul in 1842 and 1844, see Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, pp. 211-214; Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1, pp. 74-75; Guest, pp. 89-90.

<sup>114</sup> Badger, *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>115</sup> Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, pp. 31-32.

These reforms could not be put into effect in a short time and easily in Mosul, which is the main geographical focus of my thesis.<sup>116</sup> In the 1850's, even a series of complex changes were implemented in the administrative structure of Mosul. Mosul was first dependent on the province of Hakkari in 1851, and then the eastern part of Mosul was left to the initiative of the local governor in Hakkari and the western part to the local governor in Baghdad. Having been attached to the province of Van in 1855, Mosul was administrated as such until 1861 when it was turned from a sub-province (*mutasarrıflık*) into an administrative district.<sup>117</sup> From this date, it was aimed to make Mosul a part of Baghdad and govern it from a single central authority. These administrative changes resulted from an attempt to strengthen the state against local power groups, such as tribes and notables, and to mobilize the economic resources and manpower in the region in the employ of the state.

The biggest complaint voiced by the Mosul administration and local merchants was that the Yezidis in Sincar committed theft and banditry, though not as frequently as before. Just as in the previous years, several military operations were launched against Sincar during that time. The military interventions were short-lived and aimed to either punish the Yezidi tribes or collect taxes, but not effective and conclusive.<sup>118</sup> As can be seen in the documents, generally a troop or a less number of soldiers blockaded the mountain and the Yezidi tribes, who noticed the soldiers, withdrew to secure spots and responded to them.<sup>119</sup> In letters sent from Mosul to the Prime Ministry, it was typically expressed that soldiers were marched off to the Yezidi settlements and they had forced them to obey. However, there is no clear

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<sup>116</sup> For the administrative and economic implementations in the scope of the Tanzimat reforms in Mosul, see, Davut Hut, *Musul Vilayeti'nin İdari, İktisadi ve Sosyal Yapısı (1864-1909)*, (Ph.D dissertation, Marmara University, 2006), and Sarah D. Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-sided Cells*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000)

<sup>117</sup> I see, Hut, pp. 25-27

<sup>118</sup> For a few examples, see, BOA. Sadaret Mektubü Umum Vilayet Evrakı (hereafter A. MKT. UM.) 140/23, 3 Za. 1269 (8 August 1853), and BOA. A. MKT. UM. 143/65, 6 M. 1270 (9 October 1853)

<sup>119</sup> See for example, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 757/21, 18 Za. 1269 (23 August 1853)

reference to what exactly is meant with “making them obey” and why these operations were successful.

Taxation was secured mostly during these military operations in the sense that the property and livestock of tribes were seized by soldiers. Just as in a report sent by Midhat Pasha, it was stated that taxes previously had been collected from the Yezidis by sending soldiers from Mosul to the region and expropriating their livestock and products.<sup>120</sup> There is no evidence, however, showing that the government could permanently collect the taxes from the Yezidi tribes until the 1870s.

### The Governorship of Midhat Pasha

It was possible to implement the 1864 Province Regulation in Mosul and strengthen modern state practices in the region only after 1869 when Midhat Paşa was appointed as the governor of Baghdad. Once Midhat Pasha took up his duties, he made Baghdad a province separated into various sub-provinces, districts, and sub-districts.<sup>121</sup> Mosul was one of the sub-provinces attached to Baghdad.

After the appointment of Midhat Pasha to the governorship of Baghdad in 1869, the application of the Tanzimat reforms to the Mosul province brought many changes which gave rise to intensified attempts to impose more pervasive forms of political and social control over Mosul. Before all else, Midhat Paşa made arrangements to install state power in Baghdad and sub-provinces attached to it, to solve security problem and to secure taxation.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> BOA, İ. Dah. 41492, 25 R. 1286 (4 August 1869)

<sup>121</sup> Hut, p. 36

<sup>122</sup> For details, see, Hut, 35-40; Shields, *ibid.*; Adem Korkmaz, *Midhat Paşa'nın Bağdad Valiliği* (Master's Thesis, İstanbul University, 2005); Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Reading: Garnet, 2002)

In fact, the central administrative organs played a significant role in extending and consolidating central authority in the Mosul province. The implementation of the Vilayet Law of 1864 allowed the provincial administrative mechanism to extend the state power into tribal dominions and incorporate them into the provincial administration. In this sense, Midhat Pasha's policies of administration, taxation, tribes, and recruitment influenced the Yezidi tribes as well as other local groups. It is not possible to argue that these policies were fully fruitful. My aim here is to show how these policies changed the local reality and what type of practices the Yezidi tribes were exposed to by the state.

First and foremost, Midhat Pasha planned to "discipline" the Yezidi tribes who strived to live beyond state control to a large extent, did not pay taxes, were not used as physical power and were exempted from military duty. When Midhat Pasha arrived in Baghdad as the governor, the Mount Sincar inhabitants had taxes due for a couple of years.<sup>123</sup> In his report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Midhat Pasha criticized the former governors for having resorted to forceful military operations against disobedient and lawless Yezidis, and having seized their products and livestock in place for taxes. According to the Pasha, these did not bring along permanent changes and, on the contrary, "spoiled" the Yezidis. He suggested, as a solution, that the Yezidis be punished, but without ravaging. In addition, in order to secure constant control in the region, he ordered, as an administrative measure, that Mount Sincar be turned into an administrative district together with Tel-Afer sub-district and that a government building be built and soldier transfer be ensured.<sup>124</sup>

For the purpose of making the Yezidis obey, pay taxes, and fulfill military duty, one of Midhat Pasha's first steps was to send an army to the Sincar in order to force Yezidi tribes to pay up their taxes and agree to provide recruits annually to the army. In June 1869, three

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<sup>123</sup> BOA, İ. Dah. 43898, 11 S. 1288 (2 Mayıs 1871): "...*Cebel-i Sincar'da sakin olan Yezidi taifesi daima hükümete izhar-ı serkeşi ve muhalefete meluf olduklarından ve muamele-i cebriye görmedikçe tekalif-i mürettebelerini dahi vermediklerinden...*"

<sup>124</sup> BOA, İ. Dah. 41492, folio 3; see also, Korkmaz, p. 63

infantry battalions and two troops, composed of approximately 2500 soldiers, were sent to Mount Sincar along with four cannons.<sup>125</sup> The first task of the soldiers was to catch and detain the tribe leader, who had given shelter to a group of Yezidis accused of having previously killed two butchers, and the suspects of murder.<sup>126</sup> Another action was drafting and starting census for tax due.

After a while, we learn that an administrative district was established here and Ahmet Bey was appointed as the governor. Ahmed Bey, hoping to make the Yezidi leaders increasingly linked to the local administration, especially for purposes of tax collection, appointed the chief of the Yezidi tribe, Sufuk Agha, as Paramount Sheikh of Cebel. This indicates that the government wanted to integrate the Yezidis into the administration and, thus, achieve the control over them.

However, it appears that this method was not sufficient to get the Yezidis under control. As a matter of fact, two battalions were sent to Cebel-i Sincar again in 1871.<sup>127</sup> According to Midhat Pasha, it was previously tested and proven that the Yezidis would go on to act just as in the same manner. Therefore, it was decided that their leaders, called *agha* (ağa), needed to be taken out from the mountain, and after necessary arrangements were made, a troop of soldiers were to be located in a suitable spot of the mountain. Ahmet Pasha was also given a directive so that he would act in the stated manner.<sup>128</sup>

Governors appointed to Cebel-i Sincar were to be changed a few times by reason of not efficiently fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, but the measures taken would not be

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<sup>125</sup> See, afore-mentioned document, folio 1; Hut, p. 42. In his thesis, Davut Hut argues that the Yezidis were thus enforced to obey but he does not put forward an explanation to prove his argument. As we will see below, a new military operation to be launched later, constant change of Cebel-i Sincar governors and exemption of the Yezidis from military duty again even after Midhat Paşa prove that this argument is not accurate.

<sup>126</sup> Based on archival documents, Korkmaz argues that two suspects, called Hasan and Halef, were tried and punished with death penalty. See, Korkmaz, p. 63, footnote 3

<sup>127</sup> BOA, İ. Dah. 43898, folio 1; Korkmaz, p. 64

<sup>128</sup> Afore-mentioned document

enough to get the Yezidis under control. Cebel-i Sincar was separated from the administration of Baġdat Province in June 1871. It was then affiliated to the sub-province of Zor formed as an independent administration in order to oversee and upgrade the desert areas.<sup>129</sup> After a while, Midhat Pasha would resign from his position as the Baghdad governor and return to İstanbul.

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<sup>129</sup> BOA, BEO Ayniyat Defterleri, no: 851; Korkmaz, p. 65

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ISSUE OF YEZIDI CONSCRIPTION

It is not false to argue that the history of the modern Ottoman army, *Muallem Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (Trained Victorious Soldiers of Muhammed), has not properly been written yet. Even though we come to know about the Ottoman conscription system and practices by means of the conscription regulations and some studies, monographs dealing with how the Ottoman subjects were recruited and gathered in the barracks, which reactions were displayed in different places, and the dimensions of draft resister issue have not been discovered yet.<sup>130</sup> In this sense, we can only hypothesize a few assumptions related to how conscription, as a modern practice, was met by the Ottoman subjects of different areas and social backgrounds. Beyond that, studies covering demographic components and distribution of the army along with reaction by the conscripted segments are, one and all, on the waiting lists of researchers.

Military service, as an obligation for the subjects of the Ottoman Empire, was introduced for the first time in the late 1840's. Since 1826, the army had already been

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<sup>130</sup> For remarkable and non-descriptive studies of the Ottoman army based on recruitment and of conscription system and practices in the Ottoman Empire, see, Avigdor Levy, "The Officer corps in Sultan Mahmud II's New Ottoman Army, 1826-39" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2 (1971), pp. 21-39; Avigdor Levy, *The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II*, (Ph.D dissertation., Harvard University, 1968); Hakan Erdem, Recruitment for the 'Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad' in the Arab Provinces, 1826-1828, in *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions*, eds. Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem and Ursula Woköck (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Erik J. Zürcher, The Ottoman Conscription System; Çadırcı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Kura Usulüne Geçilmesi; Veysel Şimşek, Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Recruit; Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayr-i Müslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2000). See also, a newly appeared Ph. D. Dissertation, though focusing on the new army, its process of construction, structure and political effects, rather than military conscription, Gültekin Yıldız, *Osmanlı Kara Ordusunda Yeniden Yapılanma ve Sosyo-Politik Etkileri* (1826-1854), (Ph. D. Dissertation, Marmara University, 2008). For the conscription law and regulations, see, Faruk Aydın, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tanzimat'tan Sonra Askeralma Kanunları* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Yayınevi, 1994). Of course, the literature includes a few exceptional and pioneering studies I just mentioned but there are no monographs written yet, for instance, that are of equal standing to Khalid Fahmy's "All the Pasha's Men".

constructed on an actual conscription system.<sup>131</sup> The abolition of the Janissary troops paved the way for an army based on conscription. There were also many different examples of indirect conscription in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>132</sup> What changed after 1839 is that the military conscription was ascribed a legal framework in the Ottoman Empire, providing the government to enlist its Muslim and male population on the basis of law. This meant that the male Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire had to be conscripted into the army.

In this chapter, I will try to explain, in respect of the Yezidis' conscription issue, how this community's members were forced to be recruited and how they reacted in return. In this study I am not aiming to form a narrative about the Ottoman conscription system, depending on such an instance regarding a community. If I had attempted to do otherwise, the Yezidis would have only been a metaphor on the agenda of this study. However, while viewing the compulsory conscription system, which definitely was a serious problem for the Yezidis, in the light of Ottoman resources and modern observers' accounts, I sincerely hope to present the conscription system and practices of the modern Ottoman army along with the reactions against it as well.

In case of the Ottoman Empire and its Yezidi subjects, I treat military conscription as a modern phenomenon and project that was imposed on the population by using the state's monopoly on violence, which was made possible with highly centralized power. I will take the first step into the conscription issue, which is one of the main themes in my thesis, and discuss the compulsory military service of the Yezidis between the years 1849-1872, i.e the time period which I have designated as the first stage of the conscription problem.

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<sup>131</sup> See, Levy, *The Officer Corps*; for the samples of recruitment before the Tanzimat period, see, Hakan Erdem, *Recruitment for the "Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad"*.

<sup>132</sup> Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman Military Recruitment Strategies in the Late Eighteenth Century", in *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925*, edited by Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999)

## The First Encounter with Military Service and Seeking Exemption

As a matter of fact, if one is to look at a serious resource about the Yezidis, such as studies of Layard, Guest, Nuri Pasha, Fuccaro, and Kreyenbroek, one could easily observe that the Yezidis experienced a serious problem of compulsory conscription in the Ottoman Empire, beginning from the mid-nineteenth century, even leading to the same problem in colonial Iraq. In this regard, for instance, when compared to the Kızılbaş, Shiite communities or Turcoman/Yörük segments of Anatolia, the Yezidis are luckier, in regards of analyzing the conscription issue, because there are very few articles written about the other groups. It is at one's fingers' ends to put forth such an argument, for a "history from below" regarding military service of even the Sunnite Muslim subjects has not been written down.

The archival evidence and some secondary sources about the history of the Yezidis point out that the Ottoman government called some of the Yezidi men to the army in late 1840. According to the statements that can be seen in the petition submitted by the chief of the Yezidis to the Grand Vizier, Mustafa Reşid Pasha the Ottoman government first attempted to recruit some of the Yezidi men in 1849.<sup>133</sup> In their petition, the Yezidis noted that 55 members of the Yezidi community from the province of Diyarbekir had been conscripted and taken into the army forces in and around the province of Aleppo. It is also stated that one of them died on the way, and the remaining 54 could not endure and died (*tahammül edemeyüb telef olduklarından*).<sup>134</sup>

This is an important event that indicates the formal relationship between the state and the Yezidi community since the Yezidis were treated as if they were Muslim as the

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<sup>133</sup> A.MKT. 228/54

<sup>134</sup> See above-mentioned document: "...Diyarbekir'de Nüfus Nazırı Muhammed Efendi defter-i nüfusa nazaran elli beş asker alub birisi telef elli dördü Haleb ve sair mahallere ordulara dağılmış ise de hiç birisi tahammül edemeyib telef olduklarından..."

government called the Yezidis to the army. Imposing the military service obligation only on Muslims, the Ottoman state treated the community on the same basis as Muslims. This also meant that the Sublime Porte aimed to transform its official approach towards various communities. As a result, some of the Yezidi men from Diyarbakır and the vicinity of Aleppo province had been conscripted for the first time as far as is known. Although there were several attempts by Ali Rıza Pasha to recruit some males in Mosul in 1835 and 1839, we do not if the Yezidis were included in this recruitment.<sup>135</sup>

In his famous book *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* which presents a good account of the Yezidis, Austen Henry Layard, the British archeologist, art historian, diplomatist, best known as the excavator of Nimrud (*Nemrud*) as well as very close to the Yezidis because of his survey and excavations at Nineveh, near the Yezidi settlement in Mosul, describes the starting of the conscription process as follows:<sup>136</sup>

[...] in 1847, the military conscription enforced among the Mussulman [sic] inhabitants of the Pasha- lie was extended to the Yezidis, who, with the Christians, had been previously exempted from its operation on the general law sanctioned by the Koran, and hitherto acted upon by most Mohammedan nations, that none but true believers can serve in the armies of the state. On the ground that being of no recognized infidel sect, they must necessarily be included, like the Druses and Ansyri [sic] of Mount Lebanon, amongst Mussulmans, the government had recently endeavored to raise recruits for the regular troops amongst the Yezidis.

He also argues that the conscription regulations were put into practice with great severity, and brought about many acts of cruelty and oppression by the local authorities. The Yezidis strongly opposed the order of the government just like all other groups who were forced to levy in the armies. According to Layard, the Yezidis were compelled to stay with Muslims in barracks, and to bathe weekly in a Turkish bath. They had been also worn the blue color

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<sup>135</sup> See for example, BOA. HAT. 18920A, 19 Za 1254 (3 February 1839). For recruitment example of 1835, see, Sinan Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı Döneminde Kuzey Irak, 1831-1914*, (İstanbul : Eren, 1998)

<sup>136</sup> Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 3

Turkish uniform that were, actually are, absolutely forbidden by their religious tenets. It can be seen in Layard's account that the Yezidis objected to all of these circumstances and tried to state that these practices contradicted their religion. On the other hand, Layard says that "the recruiting officers refused to listen to these objections, enforcing their orders with extreme and unnecessary severity."<sup>137</sup>

The Yezidis of Diyarbekir province who had never been recruited until this time, composed a committee to go to İstanbul and gave a petition to the Grand Vizier, which demanded their exemption from military service on the same basis as non-Muslims. Narrating this decision of contacting him and giving a petition to the Minister, Layard says that "in this state of things Hussein Bey and Sheikh Nasr, the chiefs of the whole community, hearing that I was at Constantinople, determined to send a deputation to lay their grievances before the Sultan, hoping that through my assistance they could obtain access to some of the Ministers of State. Cawal Yusuf and his companions were selected for the mission; and money was raised by the sect to meet the expenses of the journey."<sup>138</sup> The committee consisted of Davudî Muhtarî Muhammed, Sheikh (Kavval) Yusuf, Şahin, Hızır, and Hasan.<sup>139</sup>

The members of the committee were met in Istanbul by Layard. They were also in contact with the British ambassador in İstanbul, Stanford Canning who was very interested in the Yezidi community and supported them during "the negotiation". Staying in the capital city for approximate five months in İstanbul, they firstly were introduced to Canning by Layard and then interviewed with the Grand Vizier.<sup>140</sup>

The committee gave the grand vizier the petition in August 1849 and evaluated by the Sultan and Sublime Port in the September. In this petition they described themselves as

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>139</sup> See, A.MKT., 228/54. Signatures by "*Diyarbekr Yezid [sic] Milleti'nden Davud Muhtarî Muhammed ve Şeyh Yusuf ve Şahin (?) ve Hızır ve Hasan*"

<sup>140</sup> Layard, pp. 3-10, and 40

'*haric-i mezheb*', or external sect or non-Muslims, thus, objecting to the government on the grounds that the Sublime Porte treated the community as Muslim, whereas, for their part, the Yezidis had never accepted this claim. Therefore, the government should not have demanded military service from the Yezidis.<sup>141</sup> They, referring to the previous violent attacks by the powerful Kurdish leader Bedirhan Bey and K r Muhammed, the leader of the Revanduz Kurds, connoted in this petition that Yezidis had regularly paid their taxes and lived in safety thanks to the government.<sup>142</sup> However, they objected to being conscripted by the government because they were not Muslim and, therefore, the government should not have demanded for the military service.<sup>143</sup>

According to Layard, after months of waiting and his and Canning's interventions, an edict was issued in the middle of 1849, and this lies buried in the Ottoman and British archives.<sup>144</sup> Layard argues that the edict freed the Yezidis from "all illegal impositions, forbade the sale of their children as slaves, secured to them the full enjoyment of their religion, and placed them on the same footing as other sects of the empire. It was further promised that arrangements should be made to release them from such military regulations as rendered their in the army incompatible with the strict observance of their religious duties."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> See, A.MKT. 228/54.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.: "...*Revanduz ve Bedirhan Bey zulmlerinden bir iki senedir leh 'l-hamd-lillah halas olduklarımız...kulları saye-i  ahanedede her bir virg y  mertebemizi eda...*"

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.: "...*reaya h km nde olarak  imdiye kadar haric-i mezheb-i reayadan kimesneden asker alınmaduđundan kulları saye-i  ahanedede her bir virg y  mertebemizi eda ve fakat askerlik usul  harici-i mezheb bulunub Yezidi olduklarımızdan askerden afv buyurulmak tazarru ve niyazıyla...*", see also: "...*bu kullarından asker matlub olunmayub ve Yezidi taifeleri askerden muafv olmak  zere irade-i  ahaneleriyle c mlemizi mesrur ve ferađ buyurulmak babında...*"

<sup>144</sup> Layard, *ibid*, pp. 3-10

<sup>145</sup> Layard depicts this process as follows: "After encountering many difficulties and dangers, they reached the capital and found out my abode. I lost no time in presenting them to Sir Stratford Canning, who, ever ready to exert his powerful influence in the cause of humanity, at once brought their wrongs to the notice of the Porte. Through his kind intercession a firman or imperial order was granted to the Yezidis, which freed them from all illegal impositions, forbade the sale of their children as slaves, secured to them the full enjoyment of their religion, and placed them on the same footing as other sects of the Empire, it was further promised that arrangements should be made to release them from such military regulations as rendered their service in the army incompatible with a strict observance of their religious duties. So often can influence, well acquired and

After having negotiated and received a “guarantee”, Seyh Yusuf and Layard moved from İstanbul on 28 August 1849 to first Bitlis, and then the group arrived in Mosul. The Yezidis living in these regions to which Yusuf and Layard visited, who received the news, greeted them happily. The other Yezidis who came to İstanbul with Yusuf had to stay in İstanbul to obtain some certain documents from Sublime Porte. These documents should have been related to their application to be exempt from military service.<sup>146</sup>

After arriving in Mosul, Layard urged the Yezidis to trust the government and to send letters of appreciation to the grand vizier and the British ambassador.<sup>147</sup> Hereupon, the Yezidis wrote two letters to send both to the grand vizier and the ambassador in October 1849. In the letter sent to Canning, the Yezidis expressed their gratitude him for help and support to themselves.<sup>148</sup>

Your sincerity towards us when we received the royal decrees in wich the Sublime State ordered that no one may harass our sons and daughters, and the absolute prohibition on selling us like slaves, and that the Sublime State is determinend to maintain the protection on our lives and propery. Who would be mean or ungrateful not to appreciate your exceeding graciousness? [...] the Sublime State [*Devlet-i Aliyye*] has determined to impose military conscription upon our community; our answer is that the decree of our master the Sultan is obeyed and no one of us would disobey his momentous decrees. But we hope that the Sublime State would exempt us for five years until our condition improve, and our community, which the previous Viziers used to oppress, may grow. After then, whenever the Sublime State demands from us military service, our young men will be ready for the service of the empire [...] We have nothing whereby we can reciprocate te [*sic*] favors of Your Excellency, but we always pray to God to protect you and prolong your life.

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well directed, be exercised in the great cause of humanity, without distinction of persons or of creeds! This is but one of the many instances in which Sir Stratford Canning has added to the best renown of the British name.” (ibid., p. 4)

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>147</sup> Guest, p. 102.

<sup>148</sup> See, for the copy of the Yezidis’ letter to the ambassador and to the Grand Vizier, see, ibid., pp. 215-218

Moreover, the community requested from the “Ambassador Bey” to continue his support. What is interesting was that the Yezidis stated that they wanted to be employed in separate troops from those of Muslims and asked for a guarantee that the Ottoman authorities would not threaten their faith.<sup>149</sup>

Guest presents a transliterated and translated copy of the second petition of the chiefs the Yezidis to Mustafa Reşid Pasha, and it is interesting to make a long quotation from the letter:<sup>150</sup>

[...] Sheikh Yusuf informed us that the intention of the Sublime State is to apply the conscription system upon us; we are your slaves, and that is an idea we do not shun, knowing that in the past and especially in the reign of Sultan Murad-may God illuminate his tomb with light- we provided military service to His Majesty when he demanded troops from us, and we are always ready at the service of our Master the Sultan, but we desire from your bountiful judgement that you would exempt us from the conscription system for a period of five years, so that our conditions may improve and our community may multiply, which the previous Viziers used to oppress. After that, whenever Your Excellency demands from us military service, our young men would be ready for the service of the Imperial State. We only entreat to the merciful understanding of the Sublime State that when you obtain from us recruits, you would not merge our boys with the Muslim troops, but rather set them aside in separate units by themselves or with the Christian troops, and that no one would threaten their faith. We have long been your subjects; when we were oppressed we assumed we were a neglected herd without an owner, but now we firmly believe that we are faithful subjects loyal to His Majesty our Master the Sultan and we know that if any injustice is inflicted upon us we have a State that would alleviate our distress. And we also used to resemble lost sheep, but now we have a protector and a State that we are proud of. We shall never forget the charitable deeds of our admirable superior His Excellency the illustrious Highness Kamil Pasha [governor of Mosul], who on the day of his arrival to our region showed great pity for our conditions and brought justice to us; his kindness towards us is exceedingly great-we pray to the Almighty that He may keep for us His Majesty our Master Abdul Mejid Khan and protect him and make him victorious over his enemies and perpetuate the Sublime State and give it strength.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 216

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 218. This letter is almost the same with the afore-mentioned document, but not quite.

As seen above, in their second letter to the Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Pasha, the Yezidis expressed their loyalty to the Sublime State and mentioned their satisfaction because they had been guaranteed by the government that their children would not be sold as slaves and no one would intervene in their religion. Likewise, they requested from the government to exempt them from military service for five years, and expressed that they would like to be set themselves aside in separate units by themselves or with Christians, not with Muslims, emphasizing that “you [the Grand Vizier] would not merge our boys with the Muslim troops”.<sup>151</sup>

Despite the fact that Layard argued that the Yezidis were given an edict (*ferman*) and a guarantee, the government, on the other hand, had made a decision about the Yezidis’ military service, on 7 October 1849, when the letter had not arrived in İstanbul yet, and rejected the demand of the Yezidis, stating that the Yezidis were obligated to do the military service regardless of their religious or cultural position.<sup>152</sup> This decision should have been amazing for the Yezidis. However, several months later, in the early 1850 a note sent from the British Embassy in İstanbul to the Mosul Consulate contained that the Yezidis should not be worried about the issue of conscription, and the diplomatically intervention would be made for resolution the problem.<sup>153</sup>

In fact, the Sublime Porte delayed the conscription of the Yezidis, which gave them a right to pay an amount of money, *bedel-i nakdî*, in place of conscription, which allowed the community to be exempted from military service for a time period.<sup>154</sup> We understand that the Yezidis from that time began to pay the *bedel-i nakdî* in lieu for military service, although I

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<sup>151</sup> Guest, p. 103

<sup>152</sup> A.MKT 228/54: “...*Dar-ı Şura-yı Askerî ifadesine nazaran taise-i merkumenin hizmet-i askeriyeden istisnası uyamayacağına...*”

<sup>153</sup> Guest, *Survival among the Kurds*, 104, and Ufuk Gülsoy, “Sıradışı Bir Dini Topluluk: Osmanlı Yezidileri”, pp. 140-141

<sup>154</sup> Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Yezidileri*, p. 141

could not find an official and direct document indicating an order to exempt the Yezidis from military service. Nevertheless several documents demonstrate that Yezidis paid money for military obligation.<sup>155</sup> What is more, in another significant resource about the Yezidis by Mustafa Nuri Pasha, who was one of the governors of Mosul in the early 1900s, it is noted that the Yezidis were paying 50 lira per head to be exempted from the military service.<sup>156</sup>

Fuccaro argues that the government decided to impose on each Yezidi tribesman liable to military service the commutation tax, meaning in the usage of Fuccaro as *bedel-i askerî*, a tax which had replaced the old *cizye* after 1856 and which was imposed only on protected communities.<sup>157</sup> However, the *bedel-i askerî* began to be applied after 1856, as I have just said, which was recognized for only non-Muslim communities. Therefore it was *bedel-i nakdî*, but not *bedel-i askerî*.<sup>158</sup>

Why had the government decided to delay the Yezidis' military service? It is clear that something had happened, although we do not exactly know what it was for the present. The literature is considered with the efforts of the British ambassador, Canning, to make the government give the right of exemption, permanent or temporary. It seems possible that it was the result of Canning's intervention due to his close relationship with Layard, therefore with the community. As a result, the government has not called the Yezidis to the army since 1850 until 1870 as far as seen. According to Guest this period was relatively uneventful for the Yezidis.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> See for instance, DH.MKT. 1555/58 "...Yezidi taifesi ayinleri iktizasınca celil-i askeriyeye giremeyecekleri bahanesiyle şimdiğe değin bedelat-ı nakdiye ifa etmekte iseler de şu usulun devamı olamayacağı..."

<sup>156</sup> Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Abede-i İblis: Yezidi Taifesinin İtikadâtı, A'datı, Evsafı*. (İstanbul: 1328 [1909], 3

<sup>157</sup> Nelida Fuccaro, Ethnicity, "State Formation, and Conscription in Postcolonial Iraq: The Case of the Yazidi Kurds of Jabal Sinjar" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4. (Nov., 1997) p. 567

<sup>158</sup> Nuri Paşa, *ibid.*; Gülsoy, *ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Guest, p. 114.

Also, we see in many documents that some of the Yezidis from the province of Van, Diyarbekir, and Mosul immigrated to first around Kars and then to Russian territories because of the attempt by the government to recruit them.<sup>160</sup> According to several archival documents, the Yezidis who had immigrated to Russia in the late 1820s stated that they would come back to the Ottoman Empire if they were exempted from the military service. In these documents it is clear that the Yezidis had emigrated to Russia due to fear of conscription.<sup>161</sup> In addition, it can be seen from a document that the Yezidis in Redwan, or Rıdvan town, even approached a group of Ottoman officials with a bribe in order to escape from the conscription.<sup>162</sup> On the other hand we understand from these documents the government did not allow the Yezidis to return to the Ottoman territories.

As a result, although we do not know the reason, the government has not called the Yezidis to the army since 1850 until 1870 as far as seen. After the appointment of Midhat Pasha to the governorship of Baghdad, the application of the Tanzimat reforms to the Mosul province brought many changes which gave rise to intensified attempts to impose more pervasive forms of political and social control over Mosul and its rural parts.

### The 1872 Petition

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<sup>160</sup> BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 200/55, 8 Ca 1277 (22 November 1860) BOA. A. MKT. MHM, 351/66, 27 L. 1282 (15 March 1866): *Hizmet-i askeriyeden kurtulmak üzere mukaddema Rusya elkasına (ülkesine) gitmiş olan taife-i Yezid bedel-i nakdi verilme şartıyla yine avdet etmek arzusunda bulduklarından bahisle ol babda bazı ifadeyi havi Erzurum Vilayeti'nden mevrud tahrirat leffen savb-ı valalarına irsal kılınmış olmağla bi'l-mütalaa iktizasının ifade ve tahrirat-ı merkume iadesi menut-ı himmet-i behiyeleridir.* See also, BOA. A. MKT. MHM, 353/66, 28 Za 1282 (14 April 1266)

<sup>161</sup> See for example, A. MKT. MHM, 351/66; A. MKT. MHM, 353/66; BOA. A. MKT. MHM, 354/37; BOA. A. MKT. MHM, 357/79; BOA. A. MKT. MHM, 359/15: *"Hizmet-i askeriyeden kurtulmak üzere mukaddema Rusya'ya gitmiş olan taife-i Yezidiye bedel-i nakdi verilme şartıyla yine avdet etmek arzusunda bulduklarından..."* *"Yalnız kur'a-i seniyye icrasından müstesna tutulmak üzere Rusya memalikinden berü tarafa hicret arzusunda bulunan Yezidi taifesinin..."*

<sup>162</sup> BOA. A. MKT. UM. 395/20, 14 B. 1276 (6 February 1860): *"Rıdvan Kazasında bulunan Yezidi taifesinin yetmiş dört senesi kur'alarının icrası sıradaki esnan-ı askeriyeye erbabından altı neferinin kur'adan müstesna olmaları zımında Nası (Nahi?) ve Merzo nam kimesneler tarafından kur'a memurlarına ba-sened arz olunan sekiz bin üç yüz kırk gurus merkumenin icra kılınan istintaklarında memur-in-i müma-ileyhe rüşvet olarak virülüüb neferat-ı merkumeye bedel olarak virdiklerini...ifade ve beyan eyledikleri..."*

In the previous chapter, it was noted that the Midhat Pasha' first steps had been to send a military troop to the Sincar to force the Yezidis to pay their tax debts and agree to provide twelve recruits annually to the army.<sup>163</sup> It seems that no Yezidi man was conscripted at the time. After two years, Colonel Mehmed Tahir Bey from the Bağdat Army Corps was sent to Mosul again to arrange the recruitment of the Yezidis.<sup>164</sup> Colonel Tahir took a census of healthy and young males and conscripted some of them. However, Midhat Pasha resigned from the governorship of Bağdad, and Rauf Pasha was appointed as his successor, who would eventually pave the way for a second chance of exemption.

After indicating that they had been exempted from military duty until that time and that they did not want to be recruited because of their religious beliefs, the Yezidis demanded from the new governor a new chance of exemption. Upon this remark, Rauf Pasha suggested that the Yezidis prepare a statement setting forth their religious objections to the military service in the Ottoman army.<sup>165</sup> The Yezidi leaders prepared a petition putting forward their desires and submitted it to Rauf Pasha. This document, known as '1872 Petition' consisting of fourteen articles. Written in Arabic, Turkish, and French, it indicates the religious nature of the Yezidism and, for their part, the Yezidis' refusal to serve in the army.<sup>166</sup> A copy of this document was kept and preserved by Jeremias Shammir, a Christian known to be very close to the Yezidis, and Shammir sent the document to the Library of Berlin, which was in contact with him to obtain rare books in return for money. Later on, when the sacred texts of the

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<sup>163</sup> İ. Dah. 41492

<sup>164</sup> İ. Dah. 43898, and Nuri Paşa, p. 53

<sup>165</sup> Nuri Paşa, p. 54

<sup>166</sup> Ibid: "...olzaman Bağdad Valisi ve Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun Müşiri bulunan devletlü Rauf Paşa hazretleri vesatetiyle der-bar-ı saltanat-ı seniyyeye takdim olunmak üzere bi'l-umum Yezidi ümera ve meşaihiyle muhtarâmı taraflarından Arabî ve Türki ve Fransevi lisanlarıyla bi'l-tanzim mir-i müma-ileyhe itâ olunan üç kat'a arz-hal-i mufasalda âhere işfa ve işaa etmeleri dahi memnu olan ve on dört maddeden ibaret bulunan akaid-i batılalarını bi'l-mecburiye derc ve tasrih etmeleriyle..."

Yezidis were published as a book for the first time, the petition in question was also brought to light.<sup>167</sup>

It should be pointed out that the Yezidis put their religious belief into written form for the first time by means of this petition. In this document, they also talked about the existence of two sacred books that belonged to their religion. With the help of this document, many researchers would therefore be able to learn the principles of Yezidism from a written text. The extent of state intervention in the lives of the Yezidis is comprehensible from this example. When we take into consideration the reluctance of the Yezidis to inform those outside their community of the Yezidi language and ways of prayer, especially to document in written form, it could be better understood.

The petition, signed by Mir Hüseyin Bey, Sheikh Nasr, and fifteen Şeyhan headmen, clearly listed the reasons why the Yezidis should avoid conscripting in terms of a religious discourse, and it for the first time revealed the religious and cultural code of conduct prescribed by the Yezidis.<sup>168</sup> However, it would be an illusion to consider the petition as only a pure expression of a religious loyalty without political and social context; that is, it is also a discursive text as a means of a form of the resistance to the conscription. Guest and Fuccaro neglect that aspect of the petition though drawing attention to revelation of the code of conduct.

It seems that the religious nature of the Yezidism and the fear of modern institutions and state control over the everyday life caused the Yezidis to object to military conscription. Why were the Yezidis reluctant of military service.? What were those religious rules and codes and what were the reasons precluding the military service? It is possible to find them in

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<sup>167</sup> See, Joseph, *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Fuccaro, *Conscription in Postcolonial Iraq*, p. 567.

the petition consisting of 14 articles, which can be found in several sources.<sup>169</sup> Here I try to summarize these tenets and beliefs, which stood as an obstacle to military service, as follows:

1. Every Yezidi must visit to the cult of the Peacock Angel, or Melek Tavus three times a year, in April, September, and November (according to the Julian calendar). If any Yezidi does not visit it, he is an infidel.<sup>170</sup>
2. Every member of the Yezidi sect must visit to the shrine of Sheikh Adi at least one time a year as part of attending the yearly pilgrimage, from 15 to 20 September.<sup>171</sup>
3. At sunrise, every Yezidi must go to a place where he can see the rising of the sun, where also there is no Muslim, Christian, or Jew.<sup>172</sup>
4. Every Yezidi must kiss the hand of his “Brother in the next world” (Bira Ahirati) and of the sheikh everyday.<sup>173</sup>
5. If a Yezidi heard any Muslim saying the phrase “I take refuge in God” in his morning prayer, he must kill that Muslim. For a Yezidi it is intolerable to hear that.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> The full text of the 1872 petition was published by Isya Joseph who firstly compiled the Yezidis’ holy books. The petition was added by the Yezidis to the text “Extract from the History of the Yezidis”. Here Joseph says: “At one time (A. H. 1289; A. D. 1872), the Ottoman power wanted to draft from among them an army instead of taking the tax which was its due. They presented to the government all the rules that prevented them from complying. These all pertain to religion and are moral obligations upon them.” See, Isya Joseph, pp. 77-82. The petition can also be found in several works. See, for instance, Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, pp. 6-7; and Heard, *Notes on the Yezidis*, p. 212.

<sup>170</sup> I would like to present the articles in the original text translated by Joseph into English. See, article 1: “According to our Yezidi religion every member of our sect, whether big or little, girl or woman, must visit Melek Tâ’ûs three times a year, that is, first, from the beginning to the last of the month of April, Roman calendar; secondly, from the beginning to the end of the month of September; thirdly, from the beginning to the end of the month of November. If anyone visit not the image of Melek Tâ’ûs, he is an infidel.”

<sup>171</sup> See article 2: “If any member of our sect, big or little, visit not his highness Sheikh ‘Adî bn Musâfir--may God sanctify his mysteries! once a year, *i.e.*, from the fifteenth to the twentieth of the month of September, Roman calendar, he is an infidel according to our religion.”

<sup>172</sup> See article 3: “Every member of our sect must visit the place of the sunrise every day when it appears, and there should not be Moslem, nor Christian, nor any one else in that place. If any one do this not, he is an infidel.”

<sup>173</sup> See article 4: “Every member of our sect must daily kiss the hand of his brother, his brother of the next world, namely, the servant of the Mahdi, and the hand of his Sheikh or pir. If any one do this not, he is regarded as an infidel.”

6. If a Yezidi dead, his sheikh or pir, or Kawwal, or, his ‘brother in the next world’ should be present at his burial and say ‘Oh servant of Melek Tavus’ and this man lived in the religion of Yezidi and did not believe any other religion.”<sup>175</sup>
7. The Yezidis have a thing called the ‘blessing of Sheikh Adi’, that is, the earth from his tomb. Every Yezidi must carry some of it in his pocket and eat some of it every morning.<sup>176</sup>
8. When a Yezidi fasts, he must do it at home, not elsewhere, and be with his people. Everyday of the fast he must go to the house of his Sheikh or Pir in the morning to start fasting, and must return there to break the fast there.<sup>177</sup>
9. If a Yezidi travels abroad and stay there more than one year, his wife has the right to desert him, and no Yezidi woman can be his wife.<sup>178</sup>
10. Just like ‘brother in the next world’, every Yezidi has a ‘sister in the next world’. If a Yezidi has a new shirt, it is necessary that his ‘sister for the next world’ make the opening its neck with her own hands.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> See article 5: “Every member of our sect must daily kiss the hand of his brother, his brother of the next world, namely, the servant of the Mahdi, and the hand of his Sheikh or pir. If any one do this not, he is regarded as an infidel.”

<sup>175</sup> See article 6: “When one of our sect is on the point of death, if there be no brother of the next world and his Sheikh, or his *pîr* and one of the *kawwâls* with him to say three sayings over him, viz.: "O servant of Melek Tâ'ûs whose ways are high, you must de in the religion of the one we worship, who is Melek Tâ'ûs, whose ways are high, and do not die in any other religion than his. And if some one should come and say to you something from the Mohammedan religion, or Christian religion, or Jewish religion, or some other religion, do not believe him, and do not follow him. And if you believe and follow another religion than that of the one we worship, Melek Tâ'ûs, you shall die an infidel," he becomes an infidel.”

<sup>176</sup> See article 7: “We have something called the blessing of Sheikh ‘Adî, that is, the dust of the tomb Sheikh ‘Adî--may God sanctify his mystery! Every member of our sect must have some of it with him in his pocket and eat of it every morning. And if he eat not of it intentionally, he is an infidel. Likewise at the time of death, if he possess not some of that dust intentionally, he dies an infidel.”

<sup>177</sup> For more, See article 8: “Regarding our fasting, if any one of our sect wish to fast, he must fast in his own place, not in another. For while fasting he must go every morning to the house of his Sheikh and his pir, and there he must beg-in to fast, and when he breaks his fast, likewise, he must go to the house of his Sheikh and his *pîr*, and there break the fast by drinking the holy wine of the Sheikh or the *pîr*. And if he drink not two or three glasses of that wine, his fasting is not acceptable, and he becomes an infidel.”

<sup>178</sup> For more, See article 9: “If one of our sect go to another place and remain there as much as one year, and afterward return to his place, then his wife is forbidden him, and none of us will give him a wife. If anyone give him a wife, that one is an infidel.”

11. If a Yezidi has a new shirt, before putting it on, he must wash it in the holy water of the shrine of Sheikh Adî<sup>180</sup>
12. The Yezidis are forbidden to dress dark blue clothes. In addition, no Yezidi can use the comb or razor belonging to Muslims, Christians, or Jews.<sup>181</sup>
13. A Yezidi can not enter the water-closet of a Muslim, or wash himself in a public bath. He can not also eat with the spoon of a Muslim, nor can drink from the cup of a Muslim or of one from any other religion.<sup>182</sup>
14. The Yezidis do not eat fish, squash, okra, beans, cabbage, or lettuce, nor may they live in a place where those foods are grown.<sup>183</sup>

The petition had been signed by many senior leaders of the Yezidi tribes. Among the most important figures were Mir (Emir of Şeyhan) Hüseyin, Sheikh Nasır (religious leader of the Yezidis), and the chief of the village of Mam Reşan, Pir Süleyman. These chief of the Yezidis noted at the end of the petition that “for these and other reasons, we cannot enter the military service.”

In turn, the Sublime Porte confirmed that the Yezidis were exempt from the military service once again in 1875.<sup>184</sup> However, they were not subjected to the *bedel-i askerî*.

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<sup>179</sup> See article 10: “Regarding our dress, as we have mentioned in the fourth Article that every one of our sect has a brother for the next world, he has also a sister for the next world. Therefore if any one of us make for himself a new shirt, it is necessary that his sister for the next world should open its neck band, *i.e.*, the neck band of that shirt, with her hand. And if she open it not with her hand, and he wear it, then he is an infidel.”

<sup>180</sup> See article 11: “If some one of our sect make a shirt or a new dress, he cannot wear it without baptizing it in the blessed water which is to be found at the shrine of his highness Sheikh ‘Adî may God sanctify his mystery! If he wear it, he is an infidel.”

<sup>181</sup> For more, see article 12: “We may not wear a light black dress at all. We may not comb our heads with the comb of a Moslem or a Christian or a Jew or any other. Nor may we shave our heads with the razor used by any other than ourselves (Yezidis), except it be washed in the blessed water which is to be found at the shrine of his highness Sheikh ‘Adî. Then it is lawful for us to shave our heads. But if we shave our heads without the razor having been washed in that water, we become infidels.”

<sup>182</sup> For more, See article 13: “No Yezidi may enter the water-closet of a Moslem, or take a bath at a Moslem's house, or eat with a Moslem spoon or drink from a Moslem's cup, from a cup used by any one of another sect. If he does, he is an infidel.

<sup>183</sup> See article 14: “Concerning food, there is a great difference between us and the other sects. We do not eat meat or fish, squash, *bamia* (okra), *fasulia* (beans), cabbage, or lettuce. We cannot even dwell in the place where lettuce is sown.”

Instead, between 1875 and 1885 the Iraqi Yezidis were allowed to commute their military service obligation by paying the ‘*bedel-i nakdî*’, as was the case in 1866.<sup>185</sup> As a result the Yezidis had succeeded to obtain exemption from military obligation again and were not exposed to recruitment between the years 1875 and 1885.

#### The Conscription Issue during the Hamidian Period until 1895

The Yezidis represented an anomaly in the eyes of the government during the Hamidian period because of the lack of military obligation for the community, as Guest argues.<sup>186</sup> Showing a particular interest in the region of eastern Anatolia, Kurdistan, and Iraq, Sultan Abdulhamid aimed to put an end to this relative autonomy in respect of military service. The state was still reluctant to giving the Yezidis a status of millet. Although the state-Yezidi relations continued to exist outside the official framework in terms of Ottoman political order, the government did not want to make an exception for the Yezidis in terms of the obligation of its subjects to be conscripted.

However the very first attempts did not immediately bring a result. Especially the Yezidis in Mosul instantaneously refused the idea of being conscripted when faced with an obligation of recruitment after a long while. The government decided to demand the *bedel-i nakdî* (cash payment in-lieu), as 50 lira once again while forcing the Yezidis to participate in military training in addition to the 50-lira-commutation.<sup>187</sup> Guest argues that the new arrangements were applied without trouble to the Yezidis in the provinces of Halep,

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<sup>184</sup> See, Nuri Paşa, p. 54

<sup>185</sup> See, BOA, A.MKT. M. 354/37, and, BOA, İrade-i Mesail-i Mühimme (İ.MMS) 20/895. Here, it can be seen that the government rejected the Yezidis to pay the *bedel-i askerî*.

<sup>186</sup> Guest, 133

<sup>187</sup> BOA. MV. 39/10; See also, Guest, p. 133.

Diyarbakir, and Van.<sup>188</sup> The Yezidis living in the province of Mosul, however, reacted to the new demand.

According to a document sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Commander-in-chief, in 1888 the government decided to locate the Yezidis on the same conscription basis as Muslims, and called them to the army. It is mentioned in the documents that the Yezidis, who lived in around 70-80 villages, opposed conscription due to their religious beliefs (*ayinleri iktizasınca silk-i celil-i askeriye giremeyecekleri*). In this document, it was obvious that the Yezidis used to pay an amount of money (*bedel-i nakdi*) in order to avoid military service but after that time it was no longer acceptable. Therefore, an order was given to the reserve army so that those who could not be conscripted together with draft dodgers would be recruited as soon as possible.<sup>189</sup> In addition, the Yezidis who had a debt of *bedel-i nakdi* amounting to 40.000 liras, were said to have the intention of running away to Russia to escape conscription. We see that the government declared, in the document, that the Yezidis were in a poor state due to the above-mentioned conditions.<sup>190</sup> At this point, the government was, on one hand, trying to persuade them not to immigrate and was expecting, on the other hand, them to be enrolled in reserve armies.

I highlighted the afore-mentioned document as I believe it is significant in the sense that it shows the inclination of the government towards conscription issue during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid. It should be pointed out that this time the government was clearly dedicated and determined to recruit the Yezidis whatever the factors were. The government

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<sup>188</sup> Guest, *ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> See DH. MKT. 1555/58 “*Musul’da bulunan ve yetmiş seksan kurayı havi olan Yezidi taifesi ayinleri iktizasınca silk-i celil-i askeriye giremeyecekleri bahanesiyle şimdiye değin bedelat-ı nakdiye ifa etmekte iseler de şu usulun devamı olamayacağı cihetle bakaya bulunanların der-destiyle beraber haklarında ahz-ı asker muamelesi icrası lüzumu mahalli redif komutanlığına bildirilmiş olub...*”

<sup>190</sup> See the afore-mentioned document: “...*taife-i merkumenin düçar u vahşet olarak terk-i dar u diyar bir takımının Rusya içinde bulunan hem-mezhepleri nezdine hicret eylemeleri mucib olacağından ve kendileri zaten bedel-i askeriyeden dolayı kırk bin lira kadar medyun olub mahv olmak derecelerine gelmiş olduklarından bunların izale-i vahşet ve sefaletleri...*”

was not aiming to charge cash payment in lieu just as in the past, but insisted on bringing a permanent solution to the Yezidi conscription issue.

In a different document, we see that the government ordered the local authorities in the provinces of Mosul and Haleb to conscript the Yezidis. Up until 1885, the government accepted payment in lieu, but clearly declared that it was obligatory for them to be recruited from that date on.<sup>191</sup> The government demanded serious attention to one particular matter: the Yezidis in Haleb should be prevented from being influenced by the Yezidi community in Mosul in the sense that the first would not take the latter as a role model with respect to their resistance to conscription (*Haleb'dekilere sirayet mahzuriyeti de müstelzim idiğü*).

This critical matter is strongly underlined in another document.<sup>192</sup> This order led some of the Yezidis, especially in Şeyhan, to leave their villages. As can be understood from the documents, the Yezidis strongly resisted the idea of being conscripted each and every time it emerged. Fleeing from their villages and avoiding the military census are two examples of their resistance activities.

Despite immigration and the request by the Yezidi community not to be included in the army, the government, as a direct provision of law, required the local authorities in provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Haleb to recruit the Yezidis.<sup>193</sup> This important phrase mostly finds place in the documents: *hüsn-i tedbir ile askerliğe alışdırılmaları* (familiarizing

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<sup>191</sup> See BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 499/2 13 Ca 1306. (15 January 1889): "...Yezidi taifesi simdiye kadar kur'aları isabet edenler için an-ı cema'ate bedel-i nakdî i'ta etmek olup ba'demâ ahz-ı asker kanun-name-i hümayun hükmüne tevfikeyn bedel-i nakdî vermiş olsalar bile beş mâh bi'z-zat hidmet-i askeriyede bulunmaları lazım gelerek halbuki hidmet-i fi'liyye-i askeriyeye hilaf-ı ayinleri idüğünden ve mahallî redif kumandanlığınca taife-i merkume haklarında hükm-i kanunun tamamen icrası talep olunmakta olması hasebiyle rihlete başladıklarından bahisle üç yüz senesine kadar bakayada bulunan ahalinin ve bu meyanda Yezidilerin afvı ahali-i saire ile beraber bunların dahi teskin-i melce'ini mucib olacağı gibi üç yüz bir senesinden itibaren ahali-i saire misüllü ahz-ı asker muamelesine muvafakat etmeleri memül oldduğuna..."

<sup>192</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1784/46, 11 R. 1308 (24 November 1890) "...Meclis-i İdare-i Vilayet'den cevaben varid olan mazbata üzerine tarafı vala-yı Seraskeri ile cereyan eden muhabereyi şamil tezkere cevabında Haleb'deki Yezidiler hakkında da hükm-i kanun tamam-i icrası irade-i aliyye iktizasından olduğu ve Suriye'deki Yezidiler'in dahi fiilen hidmet-i askeriyeye ile mükellef olduğu halde Musul'dakilerin askerlik diyanetlerine mugayyer denilerek bedel-i askeriyeye rabtı munasib olmamakla beraber Haleb'dekilere sirayet mahzuriyeti de müstelzim idiğü..."

<sup>193</sup> See, for instance, BOA. DH. MKT. 1809/105, 7B.1308. (16 February 1891).

them with conscription via favorable measures).<sup>194</sup> However, this method of “familiarization” did not work as demanded.

In this context, *Seraskerî*, or the commander-in-chief, attempted to establish a troop called the Battalion of Reşidiye (*Reşidiye Taburu*) that would also include Yezidi members. However, efforts to establish this battalion failed. The Commander-in-chief notified the governorship in the province via the Ministry of Internal Affairs many times of why the set up of the troop was continuously cancelled. Although the Ministry and Commander-in-chiefi explained the reason for the cancellation by referring to the incapability of the local authority, the Mosul governorship denied that their office was the reason behind the failure and put the blame on the fact that the troop was to be made up of Muslim and Yezidi members.<sup>195</sup> The Ministry and Commander-in-chief finally found out the real cause of the failure and it was the fact that the Yezidis and other subjects refused to join the army.

Consequently, at the end of the 1880s, the conscription policies of the Ottoman state started substantially to affect the Iraqi and south-eastern Anatolian Yezidis again. On the other hand, the government was still unable to establish a permanent presence in northern Sincar, although some attempts to recruit a few male members of the community were successful. At this point, even though it is impossible to say in depth how each individual or villager avoided being a soldier, it could be assumed that the Yezidis ignored the call of the government. If we assume that the government did not try to recruit the Yezidis with armed force or troops exercising violent methods, only one explanation remains, that is, to persuade them to join the imperial army. Yıldız Palace clearly began to indulge in such a policy of persuasion.

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<sup>194</sup> See for another example: DH. MKT. 1784/46: “...tedabir-i hasene ittihazıyla ikna-i ahaliye va-beste olduğundan bunların nesaih ve tedabir-i lazımiye ile askerliğe alışdırılması...”

<sup>195</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1766/56 16S 1308 (1 October 1890) and DH. MKT. 1784/46: “Reşidiye Taburu'nun üçyüz üç ve dört senesi kura muamelesinin sebab-i tehiri mezkur tabur dairesinde bulunan ahaliyat-ı İslam ile Yezidi taifesinden mürekkeb olması maddesi olduğuna ve teferruatının Meclis-i İdare-i Vilayet'den cevaben varid olan mazbata üzerine...”

As I will seek to indicate deeply in the next chapter, Yıldız Palace decided to send the *Heyet-i Tefhimiye*, or Advisory and Persuasion Commission, led by Colonel Abdulkadir, to Mosul with the purpose of persuading the Yezidis to be conscripted and converted to Islam. Arriving in the spring of 1891, the commission attempted to fulfill the duty of convincing the Yezidis. On the other hand, the Yezidi community of Sincar and Şeyhan sharply refused to be converted and perform military service in the army. Abdulkadir Bey and the committee members, who stayed in the region for fifty-seven days and realized that the Yezidis would not be “tamed”, attempted to conscript some leaders of the Yezidis by force.<sup>196</sup>

### The Yezidis and the Hamidiye Cavalries

In the following chapter, I will discuss the activities and the policies followed in the region by the Investigation Committee, which was among the important tools used during the Hamidian regime in order to get the Yezidis under control and Sunnitize them. However, a riveting application submitted by the Yezidis to the Ottoman state after the committee members had left the region was directly related to the conscription problem, and it merits an in-depth analysis. This question is, at the same time, one of the key phenomena that had a crucial role in Abdulhamid’s eastern policies and set the conditions in the region in the late nineteenth century. I am talking about the Hamidiye cavalries and the Yezidis’ suggestion to form a battalion from their own tribes and join the cavalries.

A group of Yezidi chiefs, led by Mirza Bey, put forward an interesting demand to the 4<sup>th</sup> Imperial Army Commander Mehmed Zeki Pasha. The Pasha sent a telegram to Yıldız Palace and reported that the Yezidis in the district of Hakkari and Mosul applied to the government to join the Hamidiye Cavalry. He noted that this offer had been made by the

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<sup>196</sup> See for these attempts, BOA. DH. MKT. 1850/43, 7 Z. 1308 (14 July 1891), and, BOA. Y. MTV 53/73, 17 Muharrem 1309 (23 August 1891) The telegram from Abdulkadir Bey to the Palace

highest Yezidi chief Mirza Bey.<sup>197</sup> It seems that the Yezidis thought that joining the Hamidiye Cavalry would be better than enrolling in the standing army that could lead to direct control of the government.

Hamidiye Cavalries, which were central to the eastern policy of Abdulhamid, started to establish in 1891 allegedly, which was inspired by the model of the Russian Cossacks by Şakir Pasha, one of the most dependable advisor of Abdulhamid, who was Ottoman Ambassador in St. Petersburg.<sup>198</sup> The cavalries consisted of tribesmen, mostly from Kurdish tribes in Kurdistan as well as a few Arab tribes. The cavalries were divided into seven regiments and commanded by the chief of the tribe on which the regiment was based.<sup>199</sup> In another words, each regiment consisted of tribesmen from the same tribe. The Hamidiye regiments were not directed by the regular army commanders, but all commanders of the regiments were brought under the authority of the commander of the 4th Army in Erzincan, Zeki Pasha.<sup>200</sup>

By forming the Hamidiye Cavalries, the Hamidian regime was preeminently planning both to benefit from the power of the tribes constituting those cavalries and to keep them under control. Trying to use and mobilize all resources of the empire in order to achieve his political goals, Abdulhamid was endeavouring to exert political and social control over such a problematic geography by means of those cavalries. In addition, the tribes who were potentially inclined to get out of control at any moment, and resisting to fulfill military service in the proper

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<sup>197</sup> Y. EE. 139/13: “*Van Vilayeti’ne müzaf Hakkari Sancağı dahilinde 14 pare karyede sakin oldukları halde şimdiye kadar nüfusları yazılmayan ve kendülerinden asker alınmayan diğer Yezidi taifesi asakir-i Hamidiye silk-i celiline dahil olmak şerefini istida’ eylediler beyan olunur.*”

<sup>198</sup> For two most important study on the Hamidiye Cavalries, see, Bayram Kodaman, “Hamidiye Hafif Suvari Alayları (II. Abdulhamid ve Doğu Anadolu Aşiretleri)” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, no. 32 (1979), pp. 427-480; and Janet Klein, *Power in the Periphery: The Hamidiye Light Cavalry and the Struggle Over Ottoman Kurdistan, 1880-1914* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2002)

<sup>199</sup> Kodaman, pp. 443-449

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p. 443

sense, and harboured powerful leaders capable of going against the state were thus to go into state service.<sup>201</sup>

Another major driving force behind the formation of these cavalries was the Armenian question. The Hamidian Cavalries were skillfully designed and mobilized against almost all members of this community. Moreover, it is claimed that it was anticipated to use these cavalries in a possible war between the Ottoman state and Russia or Iran.

The Kurdish tribes constituting the cavalries also tried to benefit from this opportunity offered by the state. In fact, when Zeki Pasha announced the formation of such cavalries in the region, in a short time many tribes advanced a demand so that a cavalry be set from their tribes.<sup>202</sup> The Hamidiye provided the tribes that constituted a regiment with a high degree of legal immunity, gave a way to acting without the restrictions of civil administrators and regular military authorities. As Kodaman has also stated, the tribe leaders and members would find a chance to act in relative independence against other tribes in the region thanks to the special legal status granted.<sup>203</sup> As a matter of fact this was the case. A Hamidy commander and his tribesmen could politically and socially strengthen and expand their authorities over the neighboring tribes that were not involved in the Hamidiye regiments. The tribes in question could also gain some economic advantages in addition to political and social priorities. Tax exemption was the most prominent factor among these economic advantages.

It appears that the Yezidi tribes' leaders were willing to join the Hamidiye regiments in order to benefit from the advantages of legal and political status, and to escape from military service imposed by the state on them. What had urged the Yezidis to take such a decision must have been the threat of becoming Sunnitized and fear of being constantly under state control as well as their willingness to act more independently in regiments composed of their own

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<sup>201</sup> For the regulation of the Hamidiye regiments, see, *ibid.*, pp. 443-445

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

tribesmen. The Yezidis, who were previously opposed to military service because they did not want to carry arms other than many different reasons, would thus agree to do so. It would not be wrong to read this action as a way of resistance of the community. Nevermore, there is no evidence to prove that they were earnest about doing it. Perhaps they had considered this way as the lesser evil in presence of a state firmly resolute in the idea of military service. What is more, they also believed that in those regiments they would be able to exercise their religious practices more easily, which they had presented as the reason for their opposition to military service.

However, Abdulhamid immediately declared that such an offer was unacceptable and the Yezidis had to fulfill their military service in regular armies.<sup>204</sup> The reasons behind the refusal of Yıldız Palace were very remarkable, clearly demonstrating both the Hamidian regime's perception of the Yezidis and the seriousness of the conscription issue. In addition, it also explicitly reveals the regime's Sunnizing plan designed for the Yezidis. at this point, it would be useful to open it up.

Having assessed the application and put forward their view, the grand vizier, Abdulhamid's most favourite assistants and a general staff member authority proposed to the Sultan that the offer needed to be declined. For this board, the Yezidis had to be recruited in reserve troops of standing armies instead of irregular ones so that they could gradually get accustomed to military service. The reason why the Yezidis were so keen to form a Hamdiye regiment was that they understood how serious the state was about the issue.<sup>205</sup> According to Abdulhamid's favourite advisors and soldiers, since the members of this community to be recruited, stepping out of line with deviant belief, had a faith as weak as if it were attached to

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<sup>204</sup> Y. EE 139/15: "...*gerek Hakkari'de ve gerek Musul civarında sakın Yezidi taifesini asakir-i hamidiye sülkuna idhali münasib olunmayacağı gibi hallerine bırakmak dahi caiz olmayacağından yavaş yavaş hizmet-i askeriyeye alışdırılmış olmak ve nüfusları dahi ale't-tedric yazılmak ve vakt-i hazırda mevasım-ı münasebe talim etdirilüb esna-yı muharebede asakir-i redif gibi istihdam edilmek üzere taife-i merkumenin hizmet-i askeriyeleri hakkında bir tedbir düşünülerek hakipa-yı hümayunlarına arzı*"

<sup>205</sup> The above-mentioned document: "*tarik-i dalaletde puyan olan bu taifenin Hamidiye alayları teşkili bahsinde bu derecelerde inhimak göstermelerinin illet-i gaibesi Musul Vilayeti'nde kendülerinden asker ahz olunmak üzere edilen teşebbüsat-ı ciddiye hasebiyle umumun hizmet-i askeriye mükellefiyetinde bulunacaklarını kanaat gelmiş olmasından münbahis olub...*"

“the meshes of a spider web” (*evhen-i min beytü’l-ankebut olmasıyla*), would be away from their leaders while on military duty, and thus leave their religion. For the Hamidian regime authorities, this fear was the reason behind the willingness of the Yezidis to join the Hamidiye regiments.<sup>206</sup>

Although this application was positive in the sense that it helped conscript such a small group in the Hamidiye regiments and ensured that they would fulfill their military service peacefully, it would, on the other hand, culminate in a worse result in practice because including some tribes but isolating others in the recruitment chain was not as constructive as it sounded in theory. Therefore, the Yezidis of Hakkari and Mosul, for example, were not to be allowed to join the Hamidiye cavalries. The committee members believed that, in accordance with the Sultan’s decision, it was necessary to take measures against this community as well as the Kızılbaş in Dersim to cope with their state of savagery and nomadism (*vahşet ve bedavetlerini idareye salih-i tasavvur ve tasmim olacak bir suret-i tedbiriye*), and additionally, it was required to train them to military duty progressively but without fail.<sup>207</sup>

The fact that a group of Yezidi tribesmen were recruited a few months ago led the committee members to think that they would abide by the recruitment plan. According to the committee, though it was needed to assess each group on their own terms, when the overall picture was taken into account, the best way would be to recruit the Yezidis and most of the Kızılbaş in reserve armies.<sup>208</sup> Therefore small groups of tribesmen were to be recruited and

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.: “...asker edinen efradın esas-ı itikadları zaten evhen-i min beytü’l-ankebut olmasıyla efrad-ı müsleme arasında bis-suhule kabul-i İslamiyet etmeleri ve bu suretle bu mezheb-i batıl taraftarlarının tedenni eylemesi tabi’i bulunduğu binaen mezheb-i riyasetinde bulunan söz sahiblerinin hükümsüz ve taifesiz kalmalarını intac edeceğinden bu hale meydan verilmemek ve yine kendü içlerinde ve birlikde bulundurulmak üzere ayrıca alay teşkili arzusuna düşmüş ve aşuri derecelerde inhimak göstermekte bulunmuşlardır”

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.: “Mahallin ihtiyacatına ve her bir taifenin eftar ve adatına tabi olacağı der-kar olmağla bu noktalara dair mahallinden alınacak malumat ve tafsilata bina olunmadıkça bunlar hakkında ittihazı lazım gelen suver-i tedriciyye dair tamamıyla arz-ı mütaala mümkün değil ise de herhalde mahz-ı hikmet olan ferman-ı isabet-beyan-ı hümayunları vechile taife-i mezkurenin redif ciheti ehemiyetli tutmak yani tertib-i evvel olarak cüzzi efrad alınıp tertib-i sanisi ziyade bırakılmak ve tertib-i sani efradı rediflerle beraber her ne memleketleri hâricinde bir ay müddet ta’lîme da’vet olunup hitâmında hemân mahallerine i’âde kılınmak...”

trained for a month in a place other than their hometown. Once the one-month period was over, other groups were to be recruited. This method would, in turn, help to change their attitudes towards military duty.

As can be seen, the state was insistent upon conscription and there is an inseparable bond between military service and the state approach towards the Yezidis and their belief system. Another example that proved this fact is that the application of the Yezidi tribe in Midyat to join the Hamidiye cavalries was accepted only after they converted. Hüseyin Kanco, one of the Yezidi chiefs, settled in Tur Abdin, near the west skirts of the Sincar Mountain, with his tribesmen became Muslims and joined the Hamidiye Cavalries.<sup>209</sup>, Hüseyin (Guest writes Hasan) Kanco also, after a while, came to be the right hand man of İbrahim Pasha Milli, highly powerful leader of Milli Tribe and also commander of the Hamidiye Cavalries.<sup>210</sup> Guest also argues, however, that Kanco's followers and their families seem to have been able to keep their Yezidi faith.<sup>211</sup>

It is an interesting fact that when the regime of the Committee of Union and Progress opened hostilities against the loyal and powerful commander of Abdulhamid, İbrahim Pasha, and blockaded Viranşehir in October 1908, aged İbrahim Pasha succeeded in escaping from Viranşehir after a small-scale armed clash and set off for Mount Sincar with the help of Hüseyin Kanco in order to take refuge with the Yezidis, but he died on the way. After a while, the Ottoman soldiers blockaded Haleli in order to catch Hüseyin Kanco, the closest person to İbrahim Pasha. Already the converted tribe leader did not strongly resist and gave himself up

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<sup>209</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2843/39, 25 Ca. 1327. In this document that I have not had a chance to read because it is reportedly worn, Hüseyin Kanco is said to be a major of Hamidiye Cavalries and his two daughters were reportedly kidnapped and converted into Islam, but voluntarily. Also for joining the Hamidiye; Guest, *Survival among the Kurds*, 140

<sup>210</sup> Guest, p. 140; See also, Ziya Gökalp, *Şakî İbrahim Destanı* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1953) p. 20. Gökalp's satire on İbrahim Pasha of Milli and Kanco is very interesting and noteworthy: "*Berho Ağa iki alay yazarak/Padişahıtan aldı ferman/Hain Kanco oldu sana sancaktar*". Berho was the other name of Milli İbrahim.

<sup>211</sup> Guest, *ibid.*

to the army, who was taken as captive.<sup>212</sup> After Kanco was captured, the Ottoman soldiers set fire to the tents around Kanco's fortress. According to Guest, quoting from the report of Alpheus Andrus, the head of American Board mission in Mardin, hundreds of Yezidis were killed in this attack.

Apart from the Kanco tribe of Yezidi in Mardin, there were a few Yezidi tribes that joined the Hamidiye regiments. We see from a document among the decision and reports of the Ottoman Cabinet, some Yezidi tribes from the province of Diyarbekir were the parts of the Hamidiye.<sup>213</sup> In addition, Azad Barış, a Yezidi sociologist living in Germany, says that his grandfather's father Miho Keleş'in was one of the three officers in the Hamidiye Regiments.<sup>214</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Were the Yezidi beliefs and codes of conduct really obstacle for conscription? Probably, it should be acknowledged that they avoided having close contacts with Muslims and thought that they were exposed to pressure to convert to Islam. At the same time, social customs of the Yezidis could also be regarded as a reason for them to avoid military service. As a small community, the Yezidis who were treated with prejudice, and more importantly, who were insulted and exposed to violence by the other groups, would feel themselves under threat in a community that embraced different ethnic units and religions. Obviously, this is quite an understandable reason to avoid military service.

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<sup>212</sup> Guest, p. 145, Gökalp, p. 15

<sup>213</sup> MV. 113/161: "...Diyarbakir Vilayeti'nde Yezidiler'in bir kısmının Hamidiye Süvari Alayları'nda mukayyed buldukları..."

<sup>214</sup> *Hürriyet, Hürriyet Pazar*, 15 July 2007. This interview and travel to Viranşehir also gives the reader a significant narrative of the Yezidis in Turkey, including oral testimony for social and political issues faced by the Yezidis.

The possibility of being enforced by the state to convert also weaned the Yezidis from recruitment. Being aware of the state plan for them, the Yezidis must have suspected that recruitment would serve to train them as faithful Muslims. Cognizant of the fact that they would be faced with the state's ideological and cultural indoctrination within the framework of regular military service, the Yezidis appear to have attempted to avoid this risk by evading the duty.

But, is that only a religious objection to the Ottoman conscription? I do not think that it is appropriate. I do not mean that the religious tenets or practices were not important, but I see in that an escape from the modern institutions and state control over the everyday life, and traditionally resistance to modern politics and modern life. Being recruited and counted in the army, being used as objects of propaganda and being mobilized for war were really weird concepts for the Yezidis, and therefore it was not so easy for them, just as other communities, to accept them. As a tribal community, the Yezidis, who experienced the state control on their life in a relatively distanced manner on the basis of their own rules, resisted to obligatory military duty, as a modern phenomenon, as far as possible. This was the reason behind their willingness to join the Hamidiye regiments.

In conclusion, the recruitment problem of this community would never come to an end in the Ottoman Empire. With the advance of each new conscription code, official or *de facto* exemption of the Yezidis from the draft would be removed and they would be called up to arms, which would eventually be refused by the Yezidis at all times. Even after the collapse of the Ottoman state, the Yezidis of Mosul, who were first as the citizens of the colonial regime and then as of national Iraq, would strive to cope with compulsory military service as well. The new chapter of this story in Republican Turkey will be a fresh new and challenging topic of research.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HAMIDIAN ATTEMPT TO “TAME” THE YEZIDIS: THE IDENTITY AND CONVERSION POLICIES DURING THE REIGN OF ABDULHAMID II

The Hamidian period, characterized by a serious insistence on making the Yezidis join the army and convert to Islam, was a time which brought about remarkable changes for the relationship between the government and the Yezidi community. In addition, it saw an increase in the government's efforts to gain control over the Yezidis, which resulted in intensified the attempts to Islamize and “civilize” the community and to gain or reinforce their loyalty to the empire. The conscription problem, in an uninterrupted continuum, grew into an attempt combined with converting the Yezidis to Islam.

I evaluate the attempts to convert the Yezidis to Islam as a result of the desire to control and integrate the community into the imperial order and modern state practices, not as a result of Islamism as an ideology. The literature both on the Hamidian period in general and on the Yezidis in particular overlooks the fact of the modern state by concentrating on Islamism excessively. I argue that the reason behind the Hamidian state's efforts to convert them to Islam was that the Hamidian regime believed that the Yezidis would integrate into the imperial order by means of this method, in a much faster and more efficient. In other words, for Abdulhamid, the significance of converting the Yezidis to Islam was not recreating Islamic belief, but that was the integration of the Yezidis into the political and social order desired by the Ottoman political elites could be exercised more easily by establishing a link with a Sunnite Muslim state through the same type of identity. I can openly claim that gaining control over a tribal and heterodox community, for Sultan Abdulhamid, would be possible only after their conversion to the Sunni belief system.

In addition, the integration problem resulting from the Yezidis' religious beliefs and lifestyle made up the Yezidi-specific aspect of the conversion policies. For instance, Yezidis' refusal to join the army because of their religion is an indication of such a problem of integration. The state may have assumed that if they were Muslim, there would not be such a problem or at least a discourse regarding such a decisive resistance would not be formed. I hereby do not only argue that groups whose religion or lifestyles were not in conformity with conscription resisted against it. Just as I have mentioned in the previous chapters, modern conscription exercises were not immediately adopted by any society. It is feasible to assume it even though there are not any monographs depicting such cases in the late Ottoman Empire literature. However, there is obviously an "obstacle" pertaining to religious beliefs and customs of the Yezidis and this, as a matter of fact, always caused a great problem as we attempt to illustrate.

As Kemal Karpat has emphasized, the efforts of Sultan Abdulhamid to melt the Ottoman subjects into the pot of Muslim unity seriously affected some religious or socially marginal groups. In his narrative, Karpat touches upon the Yezidis as well; however, his exemplification is not problem-free and bears an argument lacking of serious research. We can put aside that he read the Şeyhan sub-district as 'Şihlik' or that he presented Abdulkadir Bey, president of the Advice and Persuasion Committee, as the governor of Mosul just as information errors. While in an attempt to embody his argument that Sultan Abdulhamid's efforts to unite the Muslims in his lands under a tight Ottoman unity affected marginal groups like the Yezidis, Karpat refers to the events of 1891, dealing with *Heyet-i Tefhimiye*, as an example.<sup>215</sup> For him, the reason behind this endeavor is that a group of soldiers who did not know the local language mistreated the public and thus alienated them from the government.

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<sup>215</sup> Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, p. 205

However, it is not clear in this narrative why a group of soldiers were there or whether the *Heyet-i Tefhimiye* is implied by “a group of soldiers.” Evidently documents are turned into distorted material of a narrative due to shallow reading. Moreover, according to Karpat, such attempts were fruitful and therefore the Yezidis were brought into the fold of the Sunnism. I will show that this is incorrect argument. Other than a few unique examples along with a temporary conversion of the Yezidis due to suppression, the state could never keep the Yezidis under the roof of the Muslim unity or in the fold of the Sunnism. It is not possible to observe an instance of long-term conversion in any of the Yezidi villages within the borders of Mosul, Hakkari or Mardin. In short, this policy, contrary to Karpat’s argument, was fruitless. However, it is undoubtedly the correct argument in terms of associating the Armenian Question and the policy of Islamic unity with the Yezidis. In the research stage of my thesis, I at least gained enough impressions to put forth such a claim.<sup>216</sup>

#### *Heyet-i Tefhimiye: A Commission to Convert and Conscript the Yezidis*

Considering the events that might have given rise to intensive conflicts between the government and the community, Abdulhamid decided to send an advice and persuasion commission, or *Heyet-i Tefhimiyye*, to Musul in April 1890. The commission’s task was to tell the Yezidis about Islam, advice them to accept the military recruitment, and persuade them to convert their religion to Islam.<sup>217</sup> The commission members were as follows:

President: Colonel Abdülkadir Bey

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<sup>216</sup> On the other hand, I believe that we also need a study discussing issues like eastern Anatolia, Hamidiye, missionary work, marginal groups etc. from the focal point of the Armenian question. Kieser’s work is a good example but we still need more monographs and also a general narrative that will combine them all.

<sup>217</sup> For the commission’s task and affairs, see, BOA İ. Dah. 95076 and see also BOA. Y. MTV. 50/21 10 L. 1308 (19 May 1890); and, BOA. Y. MTV. 50/51 16 Za. 1308 (23 June 1891).

Members: Mehmed Hilmi Karaağaç, Farukizade, Seyyid Mehmed Nuri, Seyyid Nureddin

From the Office of Chief Religious Authority (*Bab-ı Meşihat*) Religious Scholars (*Ulema*) Abdulhamid, and Mustafa.

The commission arrived in Şeyhan, the political and religious center of the Yezidi community, at the end of April. The first step of the commission was to gather the political and religious chiefs of the Yezidis in Baadre village. At the time the Yezidis were under leadership of Mirza Bey. The actual addressee of the commission was Mirza Bey himself indeed. They carried a message from the Sultan to the Yezidis declaring that they had originally been Muslim and urging them to return their roots.<sup>218</sup> According to Guest, who used a contemporary resource, Mirza Bey and the sheikh replied that it was not so.<sup>219</sup> Despite this reply, the commission called them to convert to Islam, which in turn they said that would help them get support from the government. Otherwise, i.e. if they did not accept the offer, they would have to pay all taxes due immediately and fulfill the responsibility of conscription. However the commission failed to persuade Mirza Bey and the Yezidi Sheikhs

It was obvious in another document that the commission was of no use and advices were not a proper and efficient way towards the Yezidis. For that reason, the government chose to make them obey compulsory conscription.<sup>220</sup> In fact, after attempts of persuasion that lasted 21 days gave no fruitful results, Abdülkadir Bey, the president of the commission, submitted a report to the Office of Chief Religious Authority (*Bab-ı Meşihat*) on 15 May 1891.<sup>221</sup> In that report he stated that problem of the Yezidi resistance could not be solved as long as the leading Yezidi figures were in the vicinity. Therefore he demanded that those

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<sup>218</sup> Guest, p. 133

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>220</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1809/105: "...Heyet tarafından icra kılınan nesaihin semeresi görülmeyib... şu hale gore bunların zecren hizmet-i askeriyeye alınmalarından başka çare olmadığı dermiyan kılınmağla..."

<sup>221</sup> Y. MTV. 50/21

whose names were provided should be sent to exile to another province.<sup>222</sup> The Chief Religious Authority forwarded this piece of information to Yıldız Palace. Upon that report, Yıldız Palace decided to exile 11 of Yezidi chiefs to Bingazi, and ordered the Ministry of Internal Affairs to follow the required proceedings. The Ministry informed both the governorship of Mosul and Bingazi sub-provinces, or *Mutasarraflık*, of the situation and ordered them to do due. The names of the Yezidis who would be exiled were Hasan Oğulları (?), Mirzaoğlu, Bedri, Hamza, Murad, Ali b. Beryem (?), Gabub Şuru (?), İbrahim b. Hazar, İlyas b. Süleyman, Ali, and Küçük Hüseyin.

It is understood from this document that these people were exiled to Bingazi.<sup>223</sup> As it is obvious from the names listed, the document reveals those people exiled were the most respected and senior members of the community. 5 of those 11 people, at that time, did not come to surrender to the barrack and it was also emphasized that it would not be so smooth and without any trouble (*dağdağsızca*) to make them come. One other point underlined in this document is that the commission did not work properly and the president of the commission had to be changed.

Meanwhile as a direct result of harsh precautions, and following an order, 18 of the Yezidi chiefs were conscripted in Musul.<sup>224</sup> In addition, upon news from Mosul to Yıldız Palace about the fact that advices were of no use (*mesalih ve nesaih işlemediği için*) and the Yezidis were still reluctant to be conscripted, the Palace submitted an order of the Sultan to Chief Religious Authority so that it could forward the order to the commission. In this

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<sup>222</sup> See the afore-mentioned document: “*Yezidi taifesinin merkezi olan Şeyhan nahiyesindeki Baadre karyesinde yirmi bir günden beri ifa-yı memuriyete mübaşeret etmişler ise de öteden beri taife-i merkumeyi ihtilal ve efsada sebep müstekil oldukları mütehakkık olan karye-i mezkur ile kura-i saire-i mütecavire ahalisinden malumu'l-esami-i eşhas orada bulundukça nesaih ve tefhimatın tesiri görülmeyeceğinden bahisle eşhas-ı merkumenin diğer bir vilayete te'bid olunmaları lüzümuna mütedair Musul'a izam buyurulan Heyet-i Tefhimiye'nin Basteke merkezinden taraf-ı acizaneme keşide etdikleri telgrafname...*”

<sup>223</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1850/65, 8 Z. 1308 (15 July 1891)

<sup>224</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1850/43, 7 Z. 1308 (14 July 1891): “*Yezidilerin ümera ve rüesasından on sekiz nefere bu kere usul ve nizamı vechle kura çekdirilerek isabet edenlerin asker edildiğine ve sair eşhas hakkında tedabire dair Musul Vilayeti makamına çekilen telgrafname leffen takdim kılınmış ol babda.*”

document highlighting that the province notified of the fact that advices did not work properly to persuade the Yezidis, it is equally striking that commission was required by Yıldız Palace not to tolerate the Yezidis (*devletce ihtiyar-ı müsamaha ise kat'ien caiz olmayacağına*). At this point, it was further demanded by the Yıldız Palace that the Yezidi chiefs (*fırka-i dalle umde-i tarikatlerinin*) would be prevented from influencing the members of the community and they would be placed among the members of the Muslim society in which they would be treated as if they were Sunnite (*ehl-i sünnet*).<sup>225</sup> It is highly remarkable that it was forcefully compelled to remind the Yezidis that they were obliged to be recruited even though they converted to Christianity or Judaism, leave aside keeping their own belief system, and this decision of the state was irrevocable (*la-tagyir*). Yıldız Palace, demanding meticulous attention and patience for the article pertaining to conscription, stressed the importance of the fact that the decision would never be changed (*ahz-ı asker maddesinin hiçbir harfi tagyir olunmayarak mevki-i icraya vaz' olunmak*).<sup>226</sup>

This order to recruit the Yezidis howsoever or whatsoever brought about a widespread act of conscripting many Yezidi males and chiefs. Although the Yezidis requested help from the American missionary, the government did not retreat and began to apply the conscription based on a drawing of lots, or “*kur'a usûlü*”. In July 1891 Mirza Bey and the headmen were called to Musul. The governor, attended by troops of the garrison, ordered them to accept the military obligation on behalf of their community. The leaders of the Yezidis did not accept, protested in vain that they could not imposed conscription upon unwilling subjects. Guest

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<sup>225</sup>Y. PRK. BŞK. 22/57, 9 Z. 1308 (16 July 1891): “*Yezidiler'e nasihat tesir etmeyeceği Musul Vilayeti'yle Heyet-i Tefhimiye riyasetinden varid olan telgrafnamelerden anlaşılmasına ve bu babda devletce ihtiyar-ı müsamaha ise kat'ien caiz olmayacağına mebni iş bu fırka-i dalle amide-i tarikatlerinin telkinatdan uzak ve efrad-ı İslamiye arasında bulundurulub kendülerine adeta ehl-i sünnet muamelesi edilmek...*”

<sup>226</sup> The above-mentioned document: “*...bu mezhebde kalsalar değil kabul-i Nasraniyet ve Yahudiyet etmiş olsalar bile asker olacaklarına ve devletin kararı la-tagyir bulunduğu dair tefhimat icrasıyla beraber ahz-ı asker maddesinin hiçbir harfi tagyir olunmayarak mevki-i icraya vaz' olunmak ve içlerinden daire-i tabyaya duhul etmiş veya etmek istidasında bulunmuş olanları var ise bunları buldukları mahaller civarındaki taburlara ve küsurları diğer taburlara yerleştirmek lazımeden olub ancak bu babda icra-yı şiddetden ise irae-i sebat ve salabetle tedabir-i mezkureye devam olunması...*”

says that, including Mirza Bey and his brother, several persons were conducted to the barracks and forced to put on the hated blue uniform.<sup>227</sup> Unrest and worried, the Yezidis in the province of Musul continued to protest the conscription although we, for the present, do not know what their reactions exactly were.

While all of this was taking place, various letters arrived at the palace, referring to Abdülkadir Bey's failure to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of his position efficiently. Among these letters, the most noteworthy ones came from the notables, religious authorities, local administrators and merchants of Mosul. For instance, in a telegram signed and sealed by the names indicated in the footnote, Abdülkadir Bey was accused of definitely failing to do his job properly and a recommendation was made that the former governor Tahir Pasha be immediately appointed back to his position.<sup>228</sup> In the folder including this telegram, we also see demands from the Assyrian Patriarch Patris and the Chaldian Bishop, respectively, in a very similar vein. A telegram by Abdülkadir Bey detailing his defense against these attacks is also included here in this folder. Abdülkadir Bey argued that those who wanted Tahir Pasha to be back to his position had important interests in the fields of the 73 villages of the Yezidi settlement.<sup>229</sup> In other words, he argued that the proponents of Tahir Pasha were influenced by the Yezidi chiefs. He also claimed that re-appointing Tahir Pasha would indefinitely postpone the solution to the problem of recruiting the Yezidis.<sup>230</sup>

A telegram sent by local administrators to the Palace reports that the president Colonel Abdulkadir Bey's behavior might lead to an uprising because of his improper actions and

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<sup>227</sup> Guest, p. 128.

<sup>228</sup> Y. MTV. 51/51, 16 Za 1308 (23 June 1891). Signatures by: "*Kadirî Şeyhi Rıhvan, Kadirî Şeyhi Mehmed Ali, Kaymakam Hüseyin, Ulemadan Ahmed, Ulemadan Mehmed, Ulemadan Yakub, Ulemadan Süleyman Faik, Ulemadan Abdürrahman, Nakşinendî Mehmed Selim, Tüccardan Abdülkadir, Hüseyin, Mehmed, Fettah ve Emin Beyler*".

<sup>229</sup> The afore-mentioned document, folio no. 6

<sup>230</sup> The afore-mentioned telegram: "*müşariün-ileyhin ibkası ise ahaliye ve der-dest icra bulunan taife-i malumenin ahz-ı asker muamelerinin tehirini mucib olacağının (...) arz ve ifadesine cesaret eylerim.*"

therefore the commission should be abolished.<sup>231</sup> However, Abdülkadir Bey reported that the local governances were misinforming the government about himself and his services and stated that the Yezidis had given 35,000 liras to the members of the Provincial Administrative Council to obtain fake military discharge certificate (*tezkere*).<sup>232</sup> Noting that 22 chiefs of the Yezidis had been conscripted on 1 July 1891, Abdulkadir argued that he have being completed very good tasks but since his work had damaged the interests of the local authorities, he have being prevented from doing his job. If he had not been discharged from his position, he claimed, he would definitely go on to do so.

After working 57 days in Mosul, Abdulkadir Bey was, nevertheless, dismissed from his position in the commission on July 1891 as there were complaints about his services and the commission was in improper attitude towards the Yezidis.<sup>233</sup> In many documents, Abdulkadir Bey is said to have not been powerful enough or to have had the capacity to persuade the Yezidis to accept conversion and military service.<sup>234</sup> I can argue that this was a result of the serious contradiction and conflict between the different blocks of local power

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<sup>231</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 52/84, 26 Z. 1308 (2 August 1891): “*Yezidilerin büsbütün meyas olmalarına sebebiyet verdiği...heyet-i tefhimiyeyi teşkil eden azalarla istişare etmeyüb kendiliğinden yapmakda ve yalnız Yezidiler rüesasına değil adeta her daireye tecavüz ve tahhakküm eylemekdedir...etvar ve harekatı bila-sebeb bir takım gavaıl ihraz edegeldiğine göre icra-yı icabı muhafaza-i maslahat mecburiyetle maaruzdur.*” Signatures by: “*Musul Vali-i Sabıkı Tahir, Naib Yusuf Sıdkı, Müftî Mehmed, Defterdar Necib, Mektubi Hasan, Azalar Halid ve Şaban*”

<sup>232</sup> BOA. Y. MTV 53/73, 17 Muharrem 1309 (23 August 1891): “*Basteke ve Şeyhan nahiyesindeki Yezidi taifesinin yeddlerinde sahte redif ve müstahfiz tezkereleri zuhur etdi ve daha pek çok edecektir. Otuz beş bin lira-i Osmani bedel-i nakdi akçesi Musul Meclis-i İdare-i Vilayet azalarıyla ahali ve muteberanın boğazlarında kaldığı tebeyyün ediliyor. Taiife-i malume bu ana kadar memuriyet-i mülkiye redif-i ümera ve zabitanına aynı bir yemeklik ittihaz etmiştir.*”

<sup>233</sup> See, BOA. DH.MKT. 1881/15, 17 Rebiu'l-Evvel 1309 (21 October 1891): “*Yezidi taifesine nasihat etmek üzere mukaddema bil-irade-i seniyye-i hazret-i şehriyari Binbaşı şevketlü Abdülkadir Efendi taht-ı riyasetinde Pasteke'ye iğram olunan Heyet-i Tefhimiyeye'nin avdetleri hakkında irade-i seniyye cenab-ı padişahi bi-mübelleğ olan tezkere-i aliyye-i üzerine heyet-i mezburenin avdet harc-rahı olan sekiz bin yirmi dört guruşun itası ile maaşlarının kat'ı zımında Musul Vilayeti'ne telgrafla işar-ı keyfiyet olunmuş olmağla ol babda.*” And see also, Y. MTV. 53/6, and DH. MKT. 1859/86.

<sup>234</sup> See for example, BOA. DH.MKT 1889/75, 12 R. 1309 (15 November 1891) including the statement “*Yezidi taifesinin izale-i cehalet ve dalaletleri ve hizmet-i mukaddese-i askeriyyeye alışdırılmaları zımında telkinat-ı müessire ifa etmek üzere izam olunan heyet reisi Binbaşı Abdulkadir Efendi'nin evsaf-ı matlubeyi haiz olmadığını...*”

After dismissal of the Colonel Abdulkadir , new commission was set up under the leadership of Hacı Mesud Bey, the Nakibüleşraf of Diyarbekir.<sup>235</sup> We understand that his figure was suggested by the province of Mosul and he was given a salary of 2500 piaster and 10 piaster traveling expenses a day.<sup>236</sup> On the other hand this commission has never gone to Şeyhan neither worked in any other Yezidi settlement.

### *Fırka-i Islahiye: An Attempt to Convert and “Tame” the Yezidis by Force*

It seems that at the beginning of the 1890s Yıldız Palace decided to find a radical solution to integrating the Yezidis into the imperial order after the two commissions failed to conscript and convert the community to Islam entirely and permanently. General Ömer Vehbi Pasha (*Erkan-ı Harbiye Mirlivası*) was entrusted by Yıldız Palace with the task of carrying out a range of reforms in the provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, which were both in a critical geography for the empire’s policies and were locations that were to be re-organized.<sup>237</sup> Ömer

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<sup>235</sup> “See, BOA. DH.MKT 1889/75, 12 R. 1309 (15 November 1891): “...Diyarbekir nakibü’l-eşraf kaim-makamı Hacı Mesud Bey’in aliyeye ve kuvve-i nutkiyesiyle elsan ve emzice-i aşaire vukufuna heyet-i tefhimiyenin maaş ve muhassatına olan dört bin yedi yüz guruşdan iki bin beşyüz guruşunun müma-ileyh Mesud Bey’e tahsisıyla reis tayini ve bin sekiz yüz guruşunun dahi mahal ulemasından lisan-ı aşaire vakıf intihab olunacak üç zata ve dört yüz guruşunun Yezidilerin emniyetlerini kazanmış ağavatdan bir münasibine itasıyla reis-i müma-ileyh maiyetinde aza sıfatıyla bulundurulmalarına...”

<sup>236</sup> For appointment and salary, see also, BOA. DH. MKT. 1902/42, 14 Ca. 1309 (16 December 1891): “...dört bin yedi yüz guruşdan iki bin beşyüz guruşu Diyarbekir nakibü’l-eşraf kaimamakam Hacı Mesud Efendi’ye tahsisıyla reis tayini ve bin sekiz yüz guruşunun lisan-ı aşaire vakıf olarak intihab edilecek üç zata ve dört yüz guruşun dahi Yezidileri’n emniyetlerini kazanmış ağavatdan münasib birine itasıyla reis-i müma-ileyhin maiyetinde aza sıfatıyla bulundurulacakları müma-ileyhin seyyar bulunacakları müddetce reise on ve azaya beşer guruş ücret itası...”

<sup>237</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1971/82, 18 Z. 1309 (14 July 1892); BOA. DH. MKT 1973/102, 24 Z 1309 (20 July 1892): “Hitta-ı Irakıyyece teşebbüs edilecek ıslahatın suver-i icraiyyesi hakkında şeref-sadr olan irade-i seniyye-i canib-i padişahi üzerine keyfiyet vilayet-i Bağdad celilelerine Basra ve Musul vilayetlerine tebliğ olunmuşdu. Islahat-ı mezkure cümlesinden olmak üzere teşekkül olunacak kuvve-i ıslahiye kumandanlığına Erkan-ı Harbiye Mirlivalarından saadetlü Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretlerinin terfian tayini...” Also see this document, BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 26/85, 27 Z 1309 (23 July 1892), stating that “Musul, Bağdad, ve Basra vilayetlerinde zirde beyan edilecek ıslahatın icrasına mütevakıf olduğu ol babda ki işaret-ı mahalliyede gösterilmiş olduğu cihetle müsaid mevsimlerde seyyar bulunarak ikinci maddede muharrer makasid-ı aliyeye tevfikan ıslahat-ı mezkureyi icra etmek için Dördüncü Ordu-yı Hümayun’dan Musul’a gönderilen dört taburla Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun’dan tayin kılınacak yüz elli süvari veya ester süvardan mürekkep bir kuvve-i ıslahiye teşkil edilecek ve led-el-hace iş bu kuvvete birkaç yayan tabur ile bir iki cebel bataryası ilave olunabilecektir”

Vehbi Pasha, called Ferik Pasha by the Yezidis, was appointed as the commander of a Reform Force, or *Fırka-i İslahiye*, (also *Fırka-i Seyyare-i Nizamiye* or *Kuvve-i İslahiye*) on 9 May 1892 and he was given the rank *Nişan-ı Osmanî* in 13 June 1892.<sup>238</sup> Along with the purpose of making reform in those provinces, the Pasha was also assigned a task of “taming” the Yezidis.

Ömer Vehbi Paşa’s administrative task, which lasted from the summer of 1892 to the end of the same year, would bring an unforgettable time for the Yezidis. The Pasha, who aimed to solve military service and conversion problems of the Yezidis by force and military attacks with the Reform Force, along with the Pasha’s son Asım Bey. These events provoked by the Reform Force are frozen in the memory of the Yezidis, always to be remembered with hatred and anger. It is possible to find out about this only through casting a glance at any piece of writing on the Yezidis. What is more, the Yezidis, who have a vast body of oral culture just like the other Iranian groups and Kurds, and by which they pass on their religion and traditions to new generations, have told about that hard time of the era and the Pasha’s cruelty through *stran*, a Kurdish literary genre, named as Ferik Pasha.<sup>239</sup>

According to the official statements, the general’s tasks were to arrange the garrison troops, collect taxes, take a census in some regions, conscript the deserters, settle some tribes in the province, and to “tame” several tribes, which was seen as trouble by the Palace. The Pasha also undertook the task of conscripting the Yezidis in the Ottoman army and convert them to Islam.<sup>240</sup> A document, for example, reveals that the main reason behind the

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<sup>238</sup> See, for the appointment, İ. DH. 100344, 11 L. 1309 (9 May 1892), and for the rank, BOA. İ. Dah. 1276/100388, 17 Za. 1309 (13 June 1892). For a short account of Reform Force and Ömer Vehbi Pasha, see, Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908*. (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 79-80; and Hut, Musul Vilayeti, pp. 121-131. Within the context of conversion policies towards the Yezidis, see, Guest, pp. 134-137, and Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, pp. 71-75.

<sup>239</sup> Both for a perfect study of the Yezidi oral tradition and the Ferik Pasha *stran*, see, Christine Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan, Richmond* (Surrey: Curzon, 2001)

<sup>240</sup> Several documents reveal the aim of both the government and the “reform force”. One of them states the phrase as follows: “*Yezidi taifesinin... İslama rücu’ları hususunda hüsn-i hizmetleri görüleceği ve rütbe ve maaş*

establishment of a reform for organized for those provinces comes from the desire to gain control over the tribes, in the words of the Palace, *islah-ı aşair*, or “reforming the tribes.”<sup>241</sup>

The Pasha was given an order consisting of eight articles by the Sublime Porte.<sup>242</sup> The order was designed to regulate objectives, responsibilities and competence of the Reform Force. These aims written in the order given to the Pasha indicate also the most essential underpinnings of the modern state. Although my aim is not to discuss the issue of the modern state, it gives us concrete facts to demonstrate the state effects on the population, and how the government constructed and reorganized the country.

According to this order, the Pasha was assigned to be present in Mosul, Baghdad and Basra as a mobile force in order to put into practice the “reforms” defined in Article 2 of the order. He was given four units from the 4<sup>th</sup> Imperial Army as well as 150 cavalries from the 6<sup>th</sup> Imperial Army in order to realize the aims set. If needed, a few units of infantrymen and mount battery (*cebel bataryası*) could also be provided.<sup>243</sup> Article 2 reveals the “reforms” to be implemented by the Reform Force led by Ömer Vehbi Pasha in the region. These reform articles present us the overall framework of the political and economic order, especially in countryside, but beyond that in the eastern provinces. These aims were to gather soldiers and

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*ile taltifleri halinde memalik-i şahanede bulunan Yezidiler'in... İslamiyet'e rücu'ları esbabını istihsal edeceklerini taahhüd ve temin eyledikleri Musul'da bulunan fırka-i islahiye kumandanı saadetli Ömer Vehbi Paşa...*” BOA. DH. MKT 2002/56, 23 S. 1310 (16 September 1892)

<sup>241</sup> See, for example, BOA. DH. MKT. 1973/102, 24 Z. 1309 (20 July 1892). It is noted in this document: “*Hittat-ı Irakiyyece islah-ı aşair esası üzerine teşekkül eden fırka-i seyyare-i nizamiye...*”

<sup>242</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 26/85, 27 Z. 1309 (23 June 1892)

<sup>243</sup> The same document: “*...Musul, Bağdad, ve Basra vilayetlerinde zirde beyan edilecek ıslahatın icrasına mütevakıf olduğu ol babda ki işaret-ı mahalliyede gösterilmiş olduğu cihetle müsaid mevsimlerde seyyar bulunarak ikinci maddede muharrer makasıd-ı aliyeye tevfikân ıslahat-ı mezkureyi icra etmek için Dördüncü Ordu-yı Hümayun'dan Musul'a gönderilen dört taburla Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun'dan tayin kılınacak yüz elli süvari veya ester süvardan mürekkeb bir kuvve-i islahiye teşkil edilecek ve led-el-hace iş bu kuvvete birkaç yayan tabur ile bir iki cebel bataryası ilave olunabilecektir.*”

numerous draft dodgers (*bakaya*), to collect taxes from tribes that had avoided paying for a long time, to take census and to sedentarize the tribes (*iskan-ı aşair*).<sup>244</sup>

It was planned to actualize these aims in Mosul in the first place yet the plan would not be heard among peoples of Baghdad and Basra provinces. Moreover, all the above-mentioned activities were to be carried out in a way that would fill the people with consternation (*satvet ve mehabet*) but without causing bloodshed.<sup>245</sup>

According to Article 3, since census and sedentarization of tribes were within the authority of the public administration, these issues were to be handled in cooperation with the officers in the province.<sup>246</sup> From this particular document, we understand there were over 18.000 draft dodgers in the province of Mosul, which had 21 reserve armies (*redif dairesi*). At this point, the Reform Force would conscript these draft dodgers after books of conscription had been prepared by the army units in action in particular regions. Those who could not join the army due to disability or death would be indicated and registered in conscription books. We also see that the government ordered to separate those soldier candidates affiliated with each other with bonds of kinship in terms of language and sect (*lisan ve mezhebe müttehid ve aralarında ülfet ve karabet mevcut olub*). We perceive that a measure was specially designed by the government for soldier candidates and deserters from

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<sup>244</sup> “Kuvve-i İslahiyyenin icra edeceği ıslahata dair olan işaret-ı mahalliyenin hülasası ordu dairesindeki külliyetli bakâyânın celb ve cem’i ve emval-i emiriye tahsili ve nüfus tahriri ve aşair iskanı ve bunlara müteallik olarak mevad-ı atiyede tafsil edilecek ahvalin tashih ve ıslahı gibi hususatın ifasıyla...”

<sup>245</sup> “... şimdilik Bağdad ve Basra halkına sezdirilmeyerek en evvel Musul vilayetinden ıslahata bed’ olunması lüzumunu mutazammın olduğundan kuvve-i ıslahiyyenin ol-vechle işe başlaması münasib ise de Musul taraflarında ıslahat-ı muharire için ahali-i İslamiye üzerine keyfe mayeşâ hareket-ı askeriye icrasıyla teb’a-i Hristiyanıye’ye karşı ahali-i merkumenin rencide edilmesi caiz olamayacağına ve ıslahat-ı mebhusenin kan dökülmeksizin satvet ve mehabet-i askeriye irasıyle (göstemesiyle) icrası mümkün olacağına nazaran ıslahat memurinin bu makasid-i muhimmeyi nisyan etmiyerek i’fa-yı vazaifile ibraz-ı hüsn-i hizmete sarf-ı mesa’i etmesi lazımdır.”

<sup>246</sup> “Üçüncü Madde: İslahat memuru refakatinde bulunan muhtelit askerin kumandanlarından başka olarak hizmet vemaalumatından istifade edebilecek maiyyet memurlarına da lüzum görülürse anları intihab ve istihdam edebileceği gibi kendisine tevdi’ olunan vezaifden emval-i emiriye tahsili ile tahrir-i nüfus ve iskan-ı aşair gibi hususat esasen cihet-i mülkiyeye aid olduğundan esna-yı seyr ü hareketinde bulunacağı mahaller memur-in-i mülkiyesinden bu işe aid hizmet ile mükellef olanları vilayetlerle bil-muhabere refakatine tayin etdirüb hususat-ı mezkureyi anlar ile icra edecektir.”

the tribes settled along the border of Iran. According to this measure, men around 30 years of age would be conscripted for a time period of two years while those in the age range 35-40 would be drafted into reserve armies, and those who were older would be given discharge certificates.<sup>247</sup>

As for taxes, the army along with the tax collectors (*rüsum azası*) in the towns of provinces would designate tax payers and assess their current tax debts and delinquent taxes, which would then be followed by the registration of the debts in tax registers. After collection of taxes, type and amount of the collection would also be recorded in tax registers which were to be submitted to the chief commander of the army so that they could be sent to the commander-in-chief.<sup>248</sup>

The census, as we understand from the articles of the order, would not be taken in all of the three provinces above-mentioned while it was planned to take censuses of population only in regions in disorder. The government obviously planned to take census in order to gain control over the areas in which it had previously failed to do so due to tribal structures and resistance to census. The Reform Force was assigned to take censuses in these areas with tribal organizations and record the census results. These results would be sent to the Conscription Office (*Ahz-ı Asker Dairesi*).<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> “Dördüncü Madde: İkinci maddede muharrer ordu dairesindeki külliyetli bakaya-yı askeriden yirmi bir redif dairesini havi olan Musul vilayeti dahilinde doksan bir tarihinden üçyüz yedi senesine kadar on sekiz bini mütevaciz bakaya olduğu mahalinden bildirilmiş bakaya-yı merkumenin kendilerini havi orduca tanzim etdireceği defterlere göre ıslahat memuru iktiza eden muayenat ve tahkikatda bulunarak bakaya-yı mevcudeyi der-dest edecek ve bunlardan fevt olanlar ile ahz-ı asker kanunname-i hümayunun kabul etmeyeceği maluliyet ve emsali kudretsizliğe düçar olanların vukuatını ol babdaki defterlerine işaret edib fakat lisan ve mezhebce müttehid ve aralarında ülfet ve karabet mevcut olub hudud civarında ikamet eden ve kısmen İran ve kısmen bizim tarafda bulunub tekalif-i askeriye ve emiriyeden dolayı İran tarafına geçerek orada mazhar müsaade olan aşairin mürurdan meni’ne hizmetle her türlü ihtimale karşı bir tedbir-i ihtiyatı olmak üzere aşair-i merkumenin bakayada kalan efradından otuz raddesinde olanlar iki sene asker edilmek ve otuz beşden kırka kadar bulunanlar redif kırkdan yukarı olanlara ihrac tezkeresi verilmek gibi bir defaya mahsus muamele-i istisnaiye ilan ederek ve bu babda tarih ilanından itibaren bir senede müracaat edeceklere tahsis eyleyecektir.”

<sup>248</sup> See article 5, BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 26/85, 27 Z. 1309

<sup>249</sup> See Article 5 in the above-mentioned document.

This was the time of an interregnum between the dismissal of the former governor of Mosul and the appointment of the new one. There was no governor in Mosul at that time and Ömer Vehbi Pasha would contact with the acting governor (*vekil-i vilayet*) Sıdkı Bey.

A telegram by the acting governor to the Ministry of Internal Affairs reports that Ömer Vehbi Pasha had arrived in Mosul on 11 June 1892.<sup>250</sup> The Pasha's first attempts were to reorganize and reinforce the garrison troops, to enforce law, reestablish order, and "to punish corrupt councilors."<sup>251</sup> The Pasha began to implement harsh measures. The bastinado, or *falaka*, which has been disused for a long time, for instance, was brought back. A few prisoners were on display in the city center with their legs in chains.<sup>252</sup> In another telegram, the Pasha defends himself and states that it was proper to use the convicts in collecting the guns of the tribes (*esliha-i emiriye*) because only those convicts know where these guns were and were also able to collect them. The Pasha tried to explain the reason to display prisoners in chains, arguing that he could ensure collection of taxes by means of harsh ways of punishment.<sup>253</sup>

In fact, although Nicolas Siouffi, the French vice-consul at Mosul, states in his report to Paris that he had never seen an official to match Ömer Pasha "in integrity and rectitude" in his career of 42 years,<sup>254</sup> all sources are in accordance with each other in terms of the Pasha's character. He is said to have been a merciless and harsh man in his manners.<sup>255</sup> Ömer Vehbi

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<sup>250</sup> BOA. Yıldız Hususi Maruzat (hereafter Y. A. HUS.) 262/50, 15 Z. 1309 (11 June 1892)

<sup>251</sup> Guest, p. 134

<sup>252</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1981/104, 9 M. 1310 (3 August 1892): "*Mahkumînden yirmi bir nefer eşkiya ve eşranın hod-be-hod sebilleri tahliye edildiği gibi kullı yevm o kabilden ikişer üçer mahkum ve mevkufun salıverilmekte ve zimmet-i emiriyesi olanlardan bazılarının pranga-bend olarak çarşı ve pazarda gezdirilüb teşhir edilmekte olduğu istihbar kılındığından...*"

<sup>253</sup> See the afore-mentioned document: "...dahası defterlerinde bulunan külliyetli mebalığın tesri'-i tahsiline medar olmak üzere de bir iki kişinin teşhiri icab-ı hal ve maslahatdan olarak az bir müddet zarfında üç bin liradan ziyade tahsilat vuk'u bulduğu gösterilmiş". See also BOA. Y. MTV. 66/39, 6 S. 1310 (30 August 1892): "...zimmet-i miriyesi olanlar hakkında bir ibret-i müessire gösterilmek maksadından ilerü geldiği..."

<sup>254</sup> Nicolas Siouffi's despatches to Paris, quoted by Guest, *ibid.*

Pasha without delay sent a message to the Yezidis in the Şeyhan area, demanding that they either accept conversion to Islam and pay taxes, or punish. In turn, as seen in the previous examples, the Yezidis gave the Pasha a negative response.

This response triggered a series of extraordinary attacks, first, on the Sincari Yezidis, and then those in Şeyhan. Ömer Vehbi Pasha managed to take the Bedouin Arab tribes and the Muslim Kurds on his side against the Yezidis as a result of a successful propaganda. He also used even some convicts for his attacks on the Yezidi villages.<sup>256</sup> At the first hand, the Pasha sent a police colonel to Sincar to undertake a violent assault. According to the archival evidence, this attack took place in the villages of Mihirkan and Bikran or Pikran.<sup>257</sup> A troop guided by Colonel Said Efendi, attacked the Yezidis at 8 o'clock in the evening of August 2, leading to a harsh fight of 5.5 hours. In response to the attack, the Yezidis were forced to withdraw to the citadel previously built in order to resist the attack with their arms.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> In a Shabak account, for example, the Pasha and his actions are narrated as follows: “In 1892, the Ottoman government sent a new governor to Mosul. This governor, Omar Wahbi Pasha, was a religious fanatic, and he decided to convert the Shabak to the sunna faith and conscript them into the army. He therefore sent both mullas and army officers into the rural areas where the Shabak lived. Alarmed, the pirs met with their people, and they decided on a plan. A delegation was chosen to go to the city of Mosul to try to dissuade the governor from carrying out his plans. The delegation that made its way to the governor's headquarters was a curious one: a score of “white beards”-old Shabak with long hair and drooping mustaches, all riding on donkeys and playing music-followed by a jeering, heckling crowd. Attracted by the din outside, Omar Pasha came to the window to inquire about its cause. He was told, “Your honor, the stupid, cowardly Shabak are here with their donkeys and music, and the people of Mosul are teasing them, saying: ‘The wali must have fallen on bad times indeed to want to conscript the miserable Shabak who have never fought a day in their lives. Doesn't he know that Shabakstan hiya mal dabka wtabla wzernayi? [the Shabak nation is good only for dancing, drumming and music making]”” Not wanting to become the laughing stock of the people, Omar Pasha then decided that the Shabak were not really worth bothering with after all, and he called a halt to his campaign of religious conversion and military recruitment in their area.” See, Amal Vinogradov, Ethnicity, Cultural Discontinuity and Power Brokers in Northern Iraq: The Case of the Shabak, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Feb., 1974), pp. 207-218.

<sup>256</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1981/104, 9 M. 1310 (3 August 1892)

<sup>257</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1983/68, 13 M. 1310 (7 August 1892); Y. MTV. 66/39; and, BOA. Y. A. HUS. 263/52, 13 M. 1310 (7 August 1892)

<sup>258</sup> Y. A. HUS. 263/52. These statements are reported in this telegram as follows: “...eşkiya güruhundan Mihirkan ve Bikran (?) (or Pikran) karyeleri ahali-i bağıyyesi Mihirkan karyesinde tecemmü' ederek bunları daire-i itaate aldirmaları için edilen her türlü mesa'i müsemmer olunamayarak nihayetü'l-emr mah-ı hal-i rumînin yirmi birinci gecesi saat sekizde Binbaşı Said Efendi beraberce oldukları halde karye-i mezkureye girilüb güruh-i eşkiya oraya vusullerini görmeleriyle derhal haneleri üzerinde bulunan çardaklarına ateş vererek asakir-i şahaneye kurşun endahına ictisar ve karyelerinin arkasındaki cibal-i şahika?da bina eylemiş olduklara tabyalara çekilmişler ise de asakir-i şahane de mukabele-i bi'l-misle bi'l-ibtidar beş buçuk saat imtidad eden muharebede...”

As a result, a telegram sent from Mosul to İstanbul reports that ten Yezidis were killed and 35 wounded. Two soldiers (corporals) from the Pasha's troop died and four were wounded.<sup>259</sup> Moreover one hundred and twenty of the Yezidi men were captured and brought to Mosul to either be imprisoned or recruited in the army. In the same way, the Pasha ordered his forces to kill every Yezidi living in the villages of the Şeyhan and even bring their heads to the city.<sup>260</sup>

On 19 August 1892, the Pasha gathered the members of the Council of the Mosul Province together and called the leaders of the Yezidis to the Governorship Office. The chief Yezidis were ordered by the Pasha to accept conversion to Islam. Guest argues that about one-fourth of the chiefs rejected this call and was beaten so harshly that one of them died from his injuries. The remaining chiefs, led by the Mirza Bey, had to obey the Pasha's repression and pronounced the words of Islamic profession of faith, *shahada*, or *şehadet* in Ottoman Turkish.<sup>261</sup> However, the Pasha misinformed that the Yezidi chiefs were converted themselves to Islam voluntarily and truly (*hüsn-i telakki ve arzu-yı vicdaniyyeleriyle şeref-i İslamiyet'e mazhar olmak niyyet-i halisasıyle*). According to the Pasha, the Yezidi sheikhs had voluntarily come to the center of Mosul and had been met by the high officials, military officers, and notables with kind reception, while playing the march of *Hamidî* (*musika takımı marş-ı Hamidî ile terennüm-saz-ı sürur olduğu halde*).<sup>262</sup> As will be indicated in the following

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<sup>259</sup> The above-mentioned document: "...beş buçuk saat imtidad eden muharebede eşkiyaların tabyaları zabt olunarak kendülerini tarumar eylemiş ve eşkiyadan on neferi telef ve otuz beş neferi mecruh oldukları ve asakir-i şahane ile zabtiyelerin iki on başı şehid ve ester-süvardan üç nefer ve seccaniye zabtiyelerinden bir nefer mecruh bulunmuş ve tafsil-i keyfiyet müşarün-ileyhe bildirilmediği işar olunmuş olmağla beray-ı malumat arz olunur"

<sup>260</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 74/33, 8 B. 1310 (26 January 1893); also, Guest, *ibid*. The author bases his information on consulate reports.

<sup>261</sup> Guest, 135

<sup>262</sup> İ. Dah. 53/S. 1310: "...Şeyhan ve Sincar'da sakin seksen karyeden ibaret Yezidi ve Şi'i taifesiyle otuz karyeden ibaret bulunan ve yine bu gibi akayid-i batılaya zahib olmuş olan şeyhler taraf-ı aciziden vaki olan tebligatı hüsn-i telakki ve arzu-yı vicdaniyyeleriyle şeref-i İslamiyet'e mazhar olmak niyyet-i halisasıyle ileri gelenleri dünkü cuma gecesi Musul'a gelmiş ve din-i mübin-i İslamiyet'in şeref-u şan ve saadetini irae etmek ve bu babdaki arzularının bir kat daha temin ve istikrarını mucib olmak üzere meşayih ve ulema tehlil ve tekbir-han

sections, the Pasha's lie would be shown by the Investigation Committee that was sent to Mosul to inspect the Pasha's affairs, which caused many complaints in the province. What was true is that the Yezidis had been imprisoned, tortured and

As understood from the archival evidence, after some of the Yezidi leaders accepted conversion by force, the other religious and civil chief of the Yezidis from Şeyhan region were brought under the pressure of the Reform Force and forced to be converted. The Pasha reported that they stated they were ready to obey and carry out all of the orders of the government. The Pasha commented that such a significant problem that had remained unresolved for a very long time had finally been brought to an end. He went on to state that the Yezidis from Sincar region would move on a similar path and convert to Islam later on.<sup>263</sup> As a result, Ömer Vehbi Pasha's attacks against the Yezidis in Sincar and Şeyhan had provoked the conversion of Mir Mirza Bey and the other Yezidi leaders, though apparently.

Succeeding at converting some of the Yezidi chiefs, thus a group of Yezidi tribes from high ranks, to Islam, Ömer Vehbi Pasha gave information to Yıldız Palace that hundreds of Yezidis had become Muslim and took a control over their areas successfully. In turn, the

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*oldukları ve bir yanda musika terennüm saz-ı hubur olduğu halde kemal-i i'tiraz ve ihtiramla resm-i istikballeri icra olduğu gibi bu gün ale's-sabah daire-i hükümete meduvven gelmiş olan bi'l-cümle erkan ve memurîn-i vilayet ve ümera ve zabitan-ı askeriyye ve eşraf-ı vücuh ve muteberan-ı memleket ve bir cemm-i gafir ahali hazır bulunduğu ve bir tabur asakir-i şahane saf-beste-i selam olarak bir taraftan musika takımı marş-ı Hamidi ile terennüm-saz-ı sürur olduğu halde müfti efendi tarafından bunlara yegan tefhim ve telkin-i din-i mübin olunarak kendüleri de kalben ve lisanen kabul etmeleri üzerine zaman ve mevkie münasib taraf-ı acizanemden bir nutk iradından sonra müfti efendi tarafından dua-yı hazret-i padişahiye mutazammın bir dua kıraat olunmasını müteakib umum tarafından padişahım çok yaşa zezeme-i meserret-efzasını isal-i kabulgah-ı rabb-i müteal eylemişlerdir. Taife-i merkume rüesa ve ilerü gelenlerinin kaffesi nezd-i acizide misafir olduklarından haklarında riayet ve levazım-i mihman-nevazi ifa olunmakta bulunduğu ve enbiya-yı zi-şanın merakid-i münevverelerinde kurbanlar zebholunarak fukaraya tevzi edildiği ve bu gün Cuma namazı bu misafirlerle beraber memleket haricinde vâki enbiya-yı zi-şandan Nebi Şit aleyhi's-selamın cami-i nur-lamiinde edası ve ol merkad-i mübarekde dahi dua-yı tezayüd-i ömr ü şevket-i cenab-ı hilafet-penahi tekrar ve tezkarı mukarrer bulunduğu arz olunur.”*

<sup>263</sup> For this telegram and statements, see BOA. Y. MTV. 65/115, 25 M. 1310 (19 August 1892): “...Şeyhan'da bulunan Yezidi taifesinin ruhani ve cismani reisleri dahi hod-be-hod gelüb arz-ı dehalet ve itaatle hükümetin her türlü evamirini infaza hazır ve müheyya buldukları gibi gidüb milletin ilerü gelenleriyle müteneffizlerini dahi getiriceklerini ifade ettiklerinden hayli zamandan berü keşakeşde kalan bu mesele-i mühimminin bu münasebetle dahi dilhah-ı aliye müvafik suretde hal ve tesviyesi ve Sincar'a Yezidileri'ne [sic] dahi la-yenkat 'i icra olunan pend ve nesaihe nazaran bunlarında yakında arz-ı dehalet ve istiman etmeleri me'mul-i kavi bulunduğu ve bu yüzden daavat-ı mefruz-i hazret-i hilafet-penahi umum ahali tarafından ez-ser-i nev yad u tizgar kılındığı arz olunur ferman.”

Pasha wanted the government to establish mosques and schools, and to appoint imams and teachers for the Yezidi settlements in Sincar and Şeyhan.<sup>264</sup> However Yıldız Palace have already aimed to institute such establishments as school and mosque, as seen in the documents dealing with *Heyet-i Tefhimiye* and then in the attempts to send a new commission headed by Hacı Mesud Bey, *Nakibu'l-Eşraf* of Diyarbekir.<sup>265</sup>

Depending on the Pasha's information, Sultan Abdulhamid ordered the local government to build mosques and schools in the regions of Yezidi settlement.<sup>266</sup> Upon this order, a special committee of ministers (*Meclis-i Mahsus-ı Vükela*) discussed the telegrams and letters from the Pasha and decided to send the local religious chief (*belde-i mufti*) in order to explain and preach about Islam to the community. It was also resolved to set up a mosque and a school and to appoint a teacher and a school servant in each of the 11 Yezidi villages separately. Furthermore, a decision was given as to appoint a religious teacher, or *müderriş*, to the Tomb of Sheikh Adi that was transformed into an Islamic school (*medrese*) after the attacks of the Reform Force.<sup>267</sup> At these schools and mosques, it was aimed to give the Muslim call to prayer and preaching continuously, and educate the Yezidi children permanently.<sup>268</sup> It is obvious that the Hamidian regime aimed to "tame" the Yezidis by means

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<sup>264</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2012/117, 28 Ra. 1310 (20 October 1892)

<sup>265</sup> "...yeniden bir heyetin teşekkülü ve bazı kurada mektebler tesisi lazımeden olub"; "...Basteke ahalisine akaid-i İslamiyeyi telkin etmek üzere memuren izam kılınan heyetin..." See for these statements, BOA. DH.MKT 1889/75, 12 R. 1309 (15 November 1891) and BOA. DH. MKT. 1902/42 14 Ca. 1309 (16 December 1891).

<sup>266</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2012/117, 28 Ra. 1310 (20 October 1892). "...Yezidiler ile farak-ı dalleye mensub ahali-i sairenin (for instance the Shabaks) tashih-i itikad etdiklerine dair Fırka-i Islahiye kumandanı Ferik saadetlü Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretleri tarafından keşide olunub manzur-ı ali buyurulan telgrafname üzerine bunların nezdine icabı kadar hevace izamı ve sakin oldukları mahalde mesacid ve mekatib inşaası hakkında şeref-sadr olan irade-i seniyye..."

<sup>267</sup> İ. Dah. 53/S-1310: "...Şeyh Adi' hazretlerinin türbe-i şerifesi ittisalindeki medresede geceli gündüzlü tahsil-ü ulum etmek üzere celbolunacak yirmi nefer talebinin de beherine şehri yüzer ve tayin olunacak muallime şehri bin gurus ma'aş tahsisi..." Also see, Nuri Paşa, p. 44

<sup>268</sup> See the aforementioned document: "ahali-i merkumenin ilerü gelenleri hükümet-i mahalliyeye müracaatla tashih-i itikad ve mezheb-i ehl-i sünnete itba' edeceklerini ifade etmeleri üzerine müftü-i belde tarafından kendülerine tefhimat ve telkinat-ı lazıme icra ve haklarında levazım-ı ihtiramıye ifâ olunacağı beyanıyla bunların sakin oldukları kurâ-yı malumeden on bir karyede bir mescid ve mekteb ve hevace ve bevab (okul hademesi) odasıyla teferruatına kar-gîr olunarak inşası..."

of education and Sunni faith. In this sense, it can be argued that two figures, school and mosque, characterizes the Hamidian regime, at least in terms of the relationship with marginal and deemed undependable population groups such as Yezidis in question.

220.000 piasters were allocated for this construction and appointment business. Eleven teachers of first level, eleven teachers of second level and eleven school servants were employed. Twenty students would be recruited and educated by a *müderris* in the Sheikh Adi Islamic School. It was planned to give a monthly salary of 1000 piasters to *müderris*, 400 piasters to teachers of the first level, 200 piasters to teachers of the second level, 100 piasters to students, and 30 piasters to the school servants. These expenses would be financed by the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education, the Governorship of Mosul, with the remaining salary of around 4000 piasters from the *Heyet-i Tefhimiye* added to it.<sup>269</sup>

In this document, the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the Governorship of Mosul to select and appoint teachers and imams who knew the Kurdish and Arabic languages in addition to the customs, habits and traditions of the community as described in the document.<sup>270</sup> However, the committee decided that it was not necessary to appoint teachers of the second level and school servants. Although the order was given and action was taken to actualize the building and appointment business, this project would never actually be put into practice. Because there were not enough Yezidis who had converted to Islam, and the community did not have the intention to allow the construction of schools.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> *ibid.* “...*daimen icra-yı va'az ve tefhimat ve eda-yı salavat ile çocuklarının talim ve terbiyesi için on bir muallim-i evvel ve on bir muallim-i sani ve onbir bevvab ile Şeyh Adi medresesinde suret-i daimede tedrisat ile meşgul olmak üzere bir müderris ve yirmi nefer talebenin bulundurulması ve bunların temin-i idareleri için müderrise şehri bin ve muallim-i evvellere dört yüz ve muallim-i sanilere ikişer yüz ve talebenin be-herine yüzer ve bevvablara otuzar guruşun cem'an şehri dokuz bin dokuz yüz otuz guruşun tahsisi ve iş bu tahsisatın bir kısmının mukaddema ahali-i merkume nezdine memur eylenmiş olan Heyet-i Tefhimiye maaşlarına karşılık...*”.

<sup>270</sup> *ibid.* : “...*tayin olunacak hevacelerin lisan-ı Kürdî ve Arabî'ye aşına ve emzice-i ahaliye vakıf zevatdan mahallince intihab ve tayin olunması...*”

<sup>271</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 74/91, 20 B. 1310 (7 February 1893)

In addition, Mirza Beg, his brother Ali Beg, and their cousins Hamza and Hüseyin Begs were conferred with the title of *Mir-i Mirâni* and *mirü'l-ümerâ* by the Palace. Also they were granted with a salary of 2000 piasters monthly by the Ottoman government.<sup>272</sup> Guest claims that, under the pressure of the Ömer Pasha, the chiefs of the Yezidis sent a letter of thanks to Sultan Abdulhamid. Even though I could not find such a document in the Ottoman archive, it could be claimed that the letter existed since it was a response, albeit not voluntarily, frequently observed between the Sultan and his subjects, especially after similar operations. In this letter they are said to have stated that they, with their entire sect, had left “the path of error and ignorance to enter the way of perfection.”<sup>273</sup>

Ali Beg, who would become the civil and religious chief of the Yezidis as a Mir after the death of Mir Mirza Beg in 1899, had refused to convert and had been imprisoned, then, exiled to the city of Kastamonu.<sup>274</sup> Ali Bey was taken to Diyarbekir before being sent to Kastamonu through Sivas. However, he was kept in Sivas, not in Kastamonu, and was coerced to reside in this city until 1898, with a certain salary, which was by no means paid.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> DH. MKT. 2002/56, 23 Safer 1310 (16 September 1892): “*Yezidi taifesinin din-i mübin-i İslama rücu'ları hususunda hüsn-i hizmetleri görüleceği ve rütbe ve maaş ile taltifleri halinde memalik-i şahanede bulunan Yezidiler'in daire-i münciye-i İslamiyet'e rücu'ları esbabını istihsal edeceklerini taahhüd ve temin eyledikleri Musul'da bulunan fırka-i islamiye kumandanı saadetlü Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretleri tarafından işar olunan taife-i merkume rüesasından Mirza Beg'e rütbe-i mir-i mirani ve biraderi Ali ve ammizadeleri Hamza ve Hüseyin Begler'e mirü'l-ümeralık rütbesi tevcihi ve her birine emval-i mahalliyeden ikişer bin guruş maaş tahsisi hususuna meclis-i mahsus-ı vükela kararıyla bil-istizan irade-i seniyye-i cenab-ı hilafet-penahi şeref-taalluk buyurularak teşrifatca icabı icra ve müşarün-ileyh telgrafla malumat ita ile beraber Maliye Nezaret-i aliyyesine de işar-ı keyfiyet kılınacağı ba-tezkere-i samiye-i sadaret-penahi izbar olunmuş olmağla...*” See also, BOA. DH. MKT. 2002/81, 22 S. 1310 (15 September 1892); BOA. DH.MKT. 2015/ 58, 5 R. 1310 (27 October 1892); and BOA. DH.MKT. 2023/94, 2 Ca. 1310 (22 November 1892)

<sup>273</sup> Guest, p. 135. The author argues that a copy of the letter was sent to an Istanbul newspaper, but not giving the name of it.

<sup>274</sup> BOA. DH.MKT. 2023/94, 2 Ca 1310 (22 November 1892) and BOA. İ. Hus. 6/1310.Ca/18, 6 Ca. 1310 (22 November 1892): “*Musul ve Bağdad ve Diyarbekir ve Van ve Bitlis ve vilayat-ı saire-i müllükânede bulunan Yezidi aşiretinin ümerasından olarak Kastamonu'da ikame edilmek üzere Musul Vilayeti'nden kuvve-i zabıt vasıtasıyla geçen gün Sivas'a vürud eden Ali Paşa Sivas Valisi Bey bendelerinin nezdini istiyerek mülâkât olunub vukuu bulan müsahibinde mezkur aşiret şimdîye kadar din-i mübin-i İslam'ın hilafında bir yol tutmuş olduklarından tashih-i itikad eylemeleri zımında canib-i hükümetden tedabir-i lazime icra kılınmış ise de müsmir olmadığından...*”

<sup>275</sup> BOA., Y. A. HUS. 267/24, 7 Ca. 1310 (27 November 1892), and BOA. DH. MKT. 6/6, 9 N. 1310 (27 March 1893)

Ali Pasha would several times appeal the Sublime Porte and the Palace to be pardoned, or at least returned to Mosul or Diyarbekir.<sup>276</sup> However, the government would reject to the request since Ali Beg was seen as a figure who can provoke the Yezidis against the government.<sup>277</sup> In addition, the salaries that were offered to the Yezidi leaders would not regularly pay. They would be also stopped several times because the Yezidi leaders did not convert in essence.<sup>278</sup> From the document indicated in the footnote, it is understood that Yıldız Palace offered the salaries in order to keep the Yezidi leaders under the control and to ensure their conversion.<sup>279</sup>

The Pasha also had plundered Sheikh Adi Temple as a place of pilgrimage at Lalish and transferred all Yezidi sacred materials into Mosul. Then, as mentioned above, he converted the Sheikh Adi Temple into an Islamic school, which functioned for 12 years. These were the materials that were removed from the Sheikh Adi Tomb at Lalish: Five bronze peacock images (Hazret-i Davud, Sheikh Şemseddin, Yezid b. Muaviye, Sheikh Adi, and Hasan el-Basri); Halil er-Rahman Kotchy, a bronze images in the shape of a ram; the bronze rod of Moses; a cast bronze snake; the Shahrur, a cast bronze nightingale; a rosary of Seyyid Ahmed el-Bedevis; a comb of el-Cüneyd of Baghdad; a wooden staff of Sheikh Abdulkadir Geylani; a bronze cup to the Prophet Süleyman's honour.<sup>280</sup> In his book, Nuri Pasha notes

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<sup>276</sup> For the request of Ali Beg in a telegram to Yıldız Palace, see, Y. MTV. 89/109, 18 B. 1311 (25 January 1894): “*Ferik Ömer Paşa'nın eser-i teşvişânesinden Sivas'da mağduren ikamete memur oldum. Cenab-ı rabü'l-alemine kâsem ederim ki Ömer Paşa'nın isnadâtı gayr-ı vakiâdir. Ve bihakk Musul'dan tahkik buyurulur ise berâet-i übudanem tahakkuk edeceğine eminim ancak Sivas'ın şiddet-i birudetinden dolayı vücud-ı übudaneme halel târi oldukdan başka Musul havalisinde kalmış olan familya-yı çakeranem perişan bir haldedir. Musul'a veya Diyarbekir'e tebdil-i mekan-ı übudanemi kemal-i nefer (?) iltica ve istirham eylerim...*”

<sup>277</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 273/25, 17 S. 1312 (20 August 1894): “*Yezidi rüesasından olub mukaddema Sivas'a teb'id ve afvı validesi tarafından istida olunan Ali Paşa'nın itlakı halinde nefsi-i Musul'da ikamet etdirilmesi münasib olacağı Musul Vilayeti'nin...telgrafnamesinde dermiyan edilmiş ise de müma-ileyhin Musul'a avdet ettiği takdirde yine Yezidi gâilesi çıkarması muhtemel olduğu cihetle Kastamonu'da oturması daha münasib olacağı...*”

<sup>278</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2114/111, 23 Ca. 1316 (9 October 1898).

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.: “*...bunlara esasen maaş tahsisi tashih-i itikad eyledikleri hakkında ita eyledikleri teminata ve rüesasından oldukları Yezidi taifesinin dahi akaid-i münciye-i İslamiyye'yi kabulleri için medar-ı teşvik olmak mülahazasına müstenid bulunmasına...şu makasid hâsıl olmayınca maaşat-ı mezkurenin itasıyla hazine-i celileye şehri sekiz bin guruş kadar...bir masraf tahmile bi't-tabii mahâl kalmayacağına nazaran...*”

<sup>280</sup> Nuri Paşa, p. 72; Guest, p. 136-7

that the materials were carried away from Mosul and removed to army headquarters in Baghdad, although he did not know where they were exactly kept.<sup>281</sup> These holy items were hidden in Baghdad and not given back to the Yezidis until 1914, when Süleyman Nazif Pasha was the governor of Mosul.

Among the targets of the Pasha's "reform troops" were Başika and Bahzani villages where there were many holy shrines that were destroyed by the Ottoman soldiers. After the raids and attempts to force the Yezidi villagers to become Muslim, using the word "Yezidi" was banned in these villages. Moreover the Yezidis were compelled to curse Satan, to participate in preaching, and to perform the Friday prayer. One observer notes, according to Guest, that the Yezidis pronounced the word "Satan" as if it was "Sultan" when they were ordered to curse Satan.<sup>282</sup> This seems like a form of weak's resistance tactics that are well-analyzed by James C. Scott.<sup>283</sup>

While Ömer Vehbi Pasha's violent actions continued at all points, a striking but understandable suggestion came up. The Yezidis sent a petition to Siouffi, which was signed by more than hundred names, including the most important Yezidis figures. In this petition, they stated that the community wanted to become Christian. The vice-consul responded to the Yezidis that "he could not accept such an ill-timed proposal". He, however, promised to help the community.<sup>284</sup> Siouffi, who had a friendly relationship with the Pasha, urged him to use more peaceful methods rather than force. He also warned the Pasha that otherwise he would inform the French government about the Pasha's violent actions and attitudes towards the Yezidi tribes.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Nuri Paşa, *ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> Guest, *ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1990.)

<sup>284</sup> Guest, p. 135-6

As will be seen, the intervention of the French and British consulates would cause the Sublime Porte to learn of the events provoked by Ömer Vehbi Pasha and caused his dismissal from this position. It would be not wrong to claim that it is clear that both the Yezidis and the Ottoman state were familiar with such interventions of the representatives of the great European States. That is, however, not to say that this intervention was the only reason for the dismissal of the Pasha. I will try to make this clear in the following sections.

### Complaints about the Pasha's Acts

The first actions of the Pasha even when he first arrived in the region were a matter of conflict and turmoil. Among these actions, these four were prominent. First was the abolition of the tithe tender in Mosul province and its towns. Second was about the use of the prisoners in collecting the guns of the tribes (*esliha-ı emiriye*) and displaying of some prisoners in chains around the city. Third was the Pasha's intention to take census of women population as well. Fourth was, as a consequence of the third, the imprisonment of several members of the Administrative Council of Mosul Province and of some notables, who were accused by the Pasha of provoking the people against himself.

The abolition of the tithe tender by the Pasha led to a reaction among tax farmers and officers. The acting governor and district treasurer (*defterdar*) immediately informed the capital of the current situation.<sup>286</sup> Upon this, a commission was established in Yıldız Palace to

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> BOA. DH. MKT 1973/102, 24 Z 1309 (20 July 1892): “*Hıta-ı Irakiyyeye ıslah-ı aşair esası üzerine teşekkül eden fırka-i seyyare-i nizamiye kumandanı Ferik Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretlerinin teşebbüs ettiği icraat cümlesinden olarak Meclis-i İdare-i Vilayet Heyeti'ni davetle vilayet aşarının umur-ı müzayede ve ihalesinde menfaat-i hazine temin edilmediğinden ve aşarın memurin ve efrad-ı askeriye maarifetiyle emaneten idaresi halinde hazine ve ahalice müstelzim-i menfaat olacağı kendüsünce tahkik edildiğinden bu yolda emaneten idare olunmak üzere vilayetin umum aşarını haiz olduğu salahiyetine binaen fesh eylediği...*” and also BOA. Y. MTV. 64/83, 23 Z. 1309 (19 July 1892): “*Hıta-ı Irakiyye ıslahatına memur Ferik saadetlü Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretlerinin vilayet aşar ihalatını fesh etdirerek umum vilayet aşarının zabitan ve efrad-ı askeriye canibinin emaneten idaresine ibtidar etmiş ve bu babda vuku bulacak masrafa mahsuben mal sanduğundan 40 bin guruş*

discuss the Pasha's action.<sup>287</sup> The commission, in an effort to investigate and question why the Pasha had acted in this way and by whom he had been given the authority to do so, held correspondence with the Pasha himself, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the local administration of Mosul.<sup>288</sup> The Pasha claimed that tenders were rigged, assuring it was certain in light of documents. According to him, tenders were in hands of notables for many years by means of contracts banned by the government. Arguing that this method of title tendering damaged the treasury, the Pasha defended himself, emphasizing that revenues of the treasury from the province of Mosul would double in this model.<sup>289</sup>

As mentioned above, how the Pasha had the authority to take such an action was a matter of serious discussion. He argued he was acting in line with the decision of the Special Council of Ministries, or *Meclis-i Hass-ı Vükela*, and took the permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Following the investigation, the Pasha's claims were recognized by the commission, which found out that he had actually taken permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the Pasha, he had taken permission from the Commander-in-chief in order to transfer the tender to officers (*zabitan*).<sup>290</sup>

Moreover, in a letter from the province it is pointed out that the local administration and tax farmers appreciated the act of abolition and the transfer of tenders to the officers.<sup>291</sup>

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*alub men'e imkan bulunamamış olduğu ve bu suretten bir takım mezahir tevellüd edeceği Musul vali vekaletinden ve defterdarlığından keşide olunan telgrafnamelerde bildirilmiş”.*

<sup>287</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 26/85, 27 Z. 1309 (23 July 1892)

<sup>288</sup> Y. MTV. 65/115

<sup>289</sup> See aforementioned document. The Pasha tells in his telegram: “*aşarın ihalesine fesad karıştırıldığı evrak-ı resmîye ile sabit olduğu gibi bunların bir kısmı devletce memnu' olan mukavele ile müteneffizlerin yedinde ve diğer bir kısmı mütegalibenin taht-ı tasarrufunda olduğundan hem hukuk-ı hazinenin muhafazası hem de bu misillü mütegalibenin yedinde esir kalan ihalenin kurtarılması aşarın emaneten idaresine va-beste görüldüğü ve aşarın bu suretle idaresi halinde bedel-i ihalenin iki misli kadar varidat ahzı mümkün olduğuba-tahkik anlaşılmasıyla bu babda sebk eden işarı üzerine meclis-i hass-ı vükela kararıyla nezaret-i müşarün-ileyden verilen emr ve mezuniyet mucibince yalnız merkez-i vilayette mülhak kazalara aid aşarın zabitan ve silah-endaz maarifetiyle ta'şir ve cibayetine ibtidar olunarak.”*

<sup>290</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1985/77, 16 M. 1310 (10 August 1892)

After examining the report from the Ministry of Finance, the commission approved the decision and stated that there were no more points to discuss about this issue.<sup>292</sup>

Despite the fact that it is clearly stated in a document that there was not a dispute or distance between the Pasha and the local government,<sup>293</sup> we can gather from various items of correspondence that there was a period of cooling off in relations between two parties, reflected in a serious tension. The afore-mentioned census issue was the most important factor that triggered the tension.

In line with the order given, the Pasha wanted to take a population census in various parts of the province. But the census gave rise to a sequence of problems. According to the documents, the Pasha took a census of the female population as well in contrast to the “traditions” and the order of the Sultan, which subsequently led to a reaction among the people. In turn, the religious leaders and sheikhs in the province went to ask the Pasha to stop this implementation. However, the Pasha ignored the reaction, which was then followed by the community’s telegram sent to İstanbul in order to inform them of the situation in the province. Upon this, the Pasha announced his decision to exclude female population from census.<sup>294</sup>

The Pasha, annoyed at the current situation, went to the Mosul Government Office and gathered the members of the council. He blamed them for provoking the community against

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<sup>291</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1985/77, 16 M. 1310 (10 August 1892).

<sup>292</sup> Y. MTV. 65/115.

<sup>293</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1988/45, 23 M. 1310 (17 August 1892). In this document, the Ministry of Internal Affairs states that the Pasha and the local governors should work in collobartion. Otherwise, required reforms will not be put into practice. As herein mentioned: “...*memurîn-i vilayetle müttefiken hüsn-i ifa-yı vazifeye i'tina eylemesi müşarün-ileyh ve kumandan-ı müşarün-ileyh [sic] ile erkan-ı vilayet beyninde vücudu hiss olunan beynünet devletce ihtiyar-ı fedakârı ile başlanmış olan islahatın tehirini mucib olacağı...*”.

<sup>294</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 1985/22, 16 M. 1310 (10 August 1892). “...*inasın dahi tahriri tavsiye olunması üzerine hususiyeti hasebiyle kadınları vaktiyle ba-irade-i seniyye-i canib-i padişahi tahrirden istisna kılınan ahali-i memleket tarafından ulema ve meşayih ve hatib ve sâdât-ı kiram mebus suretinde paşa-yı müşarün-ileyh nezdine gönderilerek istirhamda bulunduğu halde istidâ vak'aları isaf olunmamış ve en sonra ahalinin İstanbul'a müracaat için telgrafhaneye şîtab eyledikleri anlaşılınca inasın tahririnden sarf-ı nazar eylediği paşa-yı müşarün-ileyh dellal vasıtasıyla ilan etdirmiş olduğu gibi...*”

him and arrested some of the members and officials. After giving them up to the soldiers, the Pasha ordered that they were to be judged by the court and they would be replaced by newly appointed members. What is more, Ömer Vehbi Pasha went to the barracks to order the troops to get ready under arms. It is described in the document that his actions terrorized the community (*ahaliyi dehşete düşürdüğü*).<sup>295</sup>

The Ministry of Internal Affairs deplored the Pasha's act of arresting the members without interrogation and judgment, giving an order to discontinue similar actions.<sup>296</sup> Having dealt with the tithe tendering problem, the commission also discussed the census problem and subsequent events. Through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the commission asked the Pasha to explain the events, giving a reason for his action to arrest of the members. Emphasizing that his intention to take a census of the female population was under the cognizance of the local government, he argued that people had been misinformed about the census which was said to require women to show their faces and thus they had been provoked to resist against him.<sup>297</sup> He went on to explain that he had arrested the members in order to stop possible subsequent events.

As a response, the acting governor Yusuf Sıdkı, and the district treasurer Necip Bey, argued that the Pasha was definitely at fault as he had arrested the members. Moreover, they also claimed that he had arranged the census without notifying the local government. In the official report signed and submitted by the commission, we see that the Pasha had been

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<sup>295</sup> See the afore-mentioned document: "...meclis-i idare-i vilayeti cem' etdirerek ahaliyi bu yolda iğfalatda buldukları ser-destesiyle meclis-i mezkur azasından muharrerü'l-esami zevatı ve daha bazı memurini habs ve ihtilatdan men' ve askere tevdi' ederek diğerleriyle taht-ı muhakemeye alınmalarını ve yerine diğerlerinin tayinini dahi makam-ı vilayete ba-tezkere ihtar ve işar eyleyerek daire-i hükümete avdet eylediği ve kışlaya vardığında bir tabur askerlere silah altında hazır olmasını emr etmesi dahi ahaliyi dehşete düşürdüğü beyan ve işar olunmuşdur".

<sup>296</sup> ibid. "bila-isticvab ve hakim tevkifi dahi mugayyer-i kanun ve kaide olduğuna ve mezkur telgrafların suretleri leffen takdim kılındığına nazaran muamelat-ı mebhus-ı ahnanın devamı muvafik-ı hal ve maslahat görülemez".

<sup>297</sup> Y. MTV. 65/115: "...sektedar etmek üzere güya taife-i nisanın muayene-i şemali dahi dahil-i tahrir olduğu ilan ile ahaliyi ayaklandırmaya cür'et etmelerinden nâşi...".

ordered to include only male adults in the census. He was also reminded of the fact that he had to cooperate with the local government during the census.<sup>298</sup>

On the other hand, the Pasha had complaints about the officials in the province, and argued that some of the notables and officials were using their influence and power arbitrarily. For him, he had succeeded in fulfilling significant duties in the region, especially in disciplining and “taming” the Yezidis, Shabaks and Shiites, yet he was surrounded by those who wanted to stop him from doing his job.<sup>299</sup> The Pasha was highly affronted by the argument that his services would benefit the Christian subjects, and the Armenians in particular. He, in response, declared that his services did not please the Christian subjects, but on the contrary irritated them. He further emphasized that there were three Christians and a Jewish among those arrested.<sup>300</sup> It is striking that Christians were mentioned not as being subjects but as foreigners or even enemies in all of these statements.<sup>301</sup>

In the exchange of correspondence, the Pasha also talked about his reforms and activities in the region. He argued that he had collected delinquent taxes amounting to 30,000 piasters. As for the Yezidis issue, the Pasha also declared he had collected their guns and tax debts. He clearly stated that he had taken census of the Yezidi population, including the female population. In addition, the Pasha further claimed to have succeeded in converting the

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<sup>298</sup> The afore-mentioned document.

<sup>299</sup> BOA. Y. A. HUS. 263/107, 25 M. 1310 (19 August 1892): “...bir kaç asırdan berü tebdil-i mezheb ile bir takım itikadat-ı batılaya malik olmuş olan Yezidi ve Şebek taifeleriyle Şiilerin ıslah-ı hal ve itikadları uğurunda malen ve bedenen çalıştığı ordu-yı hümayun ve vilayetin muamelat-ı ha'in-ane ve denaet-kârâneleri bir bir maddeten meydana çıkarıldığı...”

<sup>300</sup> See the afore-mentioned document: “...hele yukarıda arz olunan mevkufeler içinde üç Hıristiyan ile bir Musevi olub bu da ecnebileri hoşnud değil bil-akis dil-gir edecek ahvalden bulunduğu halde mücerred acizlerini leke-dar etmek fikr-i fesadıyla Musul'da bulunan iki kişiden ibaret ecnebileri intisabıyla müftehir bulduğum Allah-ı millet-i İslamiye'ye tercih ile bunların hoşnudiyetlerinin istihsaline çalışmak gibi bir denaetin acizlerine isnadı Ordu-yı Hümayun ile vilayetin asar-ı tahikat ve ilkaatı olub...”

<sup>301</sup> As indicated above, the Armenians are the direct addressees of such a discourse. The statement “*Ermenilerin maksad ve menfaatine muvafık*” in a different document clearly pinpoints the case. For this statement, see Y. PRK. BŞK. 27/46

Yezidis, Shabaks and Shites to Islam (*hidayetleri istihsal eylediği*),<sup>302</sup> highlighting that the chiefs of banditries, actually referring to the Yezidis and tribes that could not be taken under control, who had previously resisted to obey orders even with use of army force were now ready to respect the government (*evvelce bir taburla celbi kabul olamayan rüesa-yı eşkiya bir haber üzerine gelmekte*). However, he failed to give details as to the number and location of the people who had been converted to Islam.

In addition, he argued that he had set up a troop of cavalries and infantries from the Yezidis. According to his statement, this troop was composed of 300 conscripts who were regularly trained under arms. What is more, among his arguments were that Kurds and the chiefs of tribes from Cezire to Baghdad had been taken under control, taxes and arms had been collected from these groups, a significant section of the tribes was localized, and that there were no longer any issues of security.<sup>303</sup>

However, the Pasha's reports and defense could not hinder Yıldız Palace from attempting to investigate the events and issues that existed in the province. The complaints about the Pasha's activities accelerated the efforts of the Palace to investigate the issues and control the Pasha. Some of the notables and religious leaders of the province told the Sultan about the Pasha's affairs, events, troubles, and persecutions.<sup>304</sup> Apart from the reports and complaints of the officials in Mosul, the British and French consuls as well as several figures very close to the Yezidis, such as Hürmüz (Hormuzd) Rassam, Alpheus Andrus, and Oswald H. Parry, informed their diplomatic or political relations about the Pasha and his son's harsh measures and violent actions. This information flow would give way to a rise in curiosity about the Pasha's affairs and to the diplomatic intervention of the British Embassy in İstanbul.

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<sup>302</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 66/39, 6 S. 1310 (30 August 1892)

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> For example, see, BOA. Y. MTV. 70/150, 25 R. 1310 (16 November 1892). Telegram sent from Cizre by the notables of Mosul. See also, Y. MTV. 66/39. Telegram sent from Mardin by the Assyrian Patriarch.

Hürmüz Rassam, for example, who had received a report from Andrus dealing with the events in Mosul, alerted the British Foreign Office in September 1892 of Ömer Vehbi Pasha's excessive power.<sup>305</sup>

Even though the Pasha was not discharged of his position, the palace became suspicious of his way of fulfilling duties and responsibilities. For that reason, having examined the commission reports, the Sultan ordered his bureaucrats to select and appoint two officials in order to investigate and inspect the Pasha's actions in the region.<sup>306</sup> Upon this request, Yıldız Palace first asked the Commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Imperial Army, Recep Pasha, to inspect the events and claims,<sup>307</sup> but later on a commission of three very important figures was set up and sent to the province of Mosul. This commission consisted of Cevat Şakir Pasha, Kamil Pasha and Sadık Bey.<sup>308</sup>

However, we observe that among the complaints about the Pasha, there is no mention so far about the suppression of the Yezidis, military operations, massacres or conversion to Islam by force. As mentioned above, four critical issues opened the way for the palace's attempt to institute an inquiry about the Pasha. In fact, as it will be analyzed just below, new conflicts, new informative messages to İstanbul as well as oppression and cruelty towards the Yezidis would appear on the Palace agenda, causing a demand to try the Pasha due to his actions. Before dealing with this part of my discussion, I would first like to touch upon the new conflicts, new instances of oppression of the Yezidis, and subsequent rebellion.

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<sup>305</sup> Guest, p. 138

<sup>306</sup> Y. PRK. BŞK. 27/46: "...paşa-yı müşarün-ileyhin bir takım münasebetsizlikleri işdilmekte olub bununla beraber rüesa-yı İslam'a gadır ve taaddi edilmesinin ma'nen Ermeniler'e hizmet demek olacağından meşhuda-ı vakıalarının arz ve işar edecekleri netaice göre icabına bakılmak üzere müşarün-ileyhin ne yolda hareket ve memur olduğu ıslahat vazifesini nasıl ifa etmekte olduğunu güzelce teftiş ve tahkik için Musul'a li-eclü'l-izam teftiş-i askerî komisyon-ı alisi azasından münasib iki zatın bil-intihab isimlerinin arz-ı atabe-i ulya kılınması".

<sup>307</sup> Y. MTV. 66/36

<sup>308</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2029/84, 20 Ca 1310 (10 December 1892)

## Violent Attacks and Combat in Sincar: “Running onto the Hill”

Because of the Reform Force’s oppression and violent attacks, the Yezidis in Sincar went up to the highest hills of the Mount Sincar and revolted. Various groups within the community from areas such as Diyarbekir, Mardin and Zor, which harbored a significant amount of the Yezidi population, came to Sincar in order to support the revolt. We are exactly talking about a complete popular resistance here. In other words, I am definitely not interpreting this action as a rebellion due to a misinterpretation of the tendency to name any act of disobedience or chaos a revolution or rebellion within the framework of Ottoman terminology in archival documents. On the contrary, it is an uprising in terms of its causes, form, media and effects. The reason was completely the harsh and aggressive approach taken towards the Yezidi community by Vehbi Pasha, who was appointed to the region as a direct result of the state’s Yezidi policy. By all means, practices arising as a consequence of the Pasha’s initiative and personal attempts triggered the uprising.

However, it can be found out about the absolute existence of an official state policy that was initiated especially after 1885 and became graver through the use of various tools, creating an imminent threat to the Yezidis. In the Hamidian era, the Yezidis, as the objects of state policy, strongly reacted against the destructive state policy against them along with the attempt to keep order in the region by enforcing the community to obey. Remember the events after 1885, when the Yezidi tribes, especially in Sincar and Şeyhan, were not even a day long way off from threats of conscription, taxation and conversion, experiencing a constant state of anxiety.

According to a telegram in cipher, dated 19 November 1892, sent by Ömer Pasha to the Commander-in-chief, the Yezidis from Midyat, Cizre, Nusaybin districts of Diyarbekir province as well as Zor district joined the armed Yezidi community in Sincar. The Pasha

especially noted that the Yezidis had been provoked by the French consulate in Mosul, but failed to give further information on this issue. The Pasha stated that Mirliva Mehmet Pasha had been sent to Sincar and that the Ottoman army would fire back if they were attacked by the Yezidis.<sup>309</sup> The Commander-in-chief, depending on the afore-mentioned telegram, notified the Sultan of the event. The Sultan ordered that the group should be dispersed. The Commander-in-chief also asked to be informed of the number of soldiers in the battalions in Sincar, as well as status and conditions of the Yezidis.<sup>310</sup>

In line with the information from the province of Mosul and the 6<sup>th</sup> Imperial Army, the General Staff (Erkan-ı Harbiye-i Umumiye) held a meeting and prepared an official report to send a troop of soldiers in order to stop the rebellion in Sincar. In the official report submitted to the Commander-in-chief, the existing situation and events were assessed with respect to the correspondence from the province of Mosul and the Commander of 6<sup>th</sup> Imperial Army.<sup>311</sup> In accordance with this report, the Yezidis were reported to have gathered with the Yezidi groups from Diyarbekir and Zor, and rebelled (*ilan-ı isyan*). In the report, it was stated that the Yezidis had killed the passengers and burnt the corpses. Since the Yezidis ignored every kind of warning and advice, as it was argued, the province of Mosul and the Reform Force demanded a supplementary military force to the region. A troop of soldiers was sent to the region upon this demand. It was reported that, in the first place, the military force tried to settle the problem without bloodshed.<sup>312</sup> As seen in the above-mentioned telegram sent by Ömer Vehbi Pasha, it was reported that Mirliva Mehmed Pasha, in person, had gone to the region.

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<sup>309</sup> Y. PRK. ASK. 86/134, 28 R. 1310 (19 November 1892).

<sup>310</sup> The afore-mentioned document.

<sup>311</sup> Y. MTV. 71/53, 8 Ca. 1310 (28 November 1892)

<sup>312</sup> The afore-mentioned document. “*kan dökülmeksizin üslub-ı hakimâne ile tesviye-i maslahata çalışılması...*”

In the report, the correspondences pertaining to the issue was followed by a telegram which informs us of the fact that Ömer Vehbi Pasha organized an attack on the Yezidis in Sincar on 21 November 1892. We do not know the exact number of Yezidi victims killed on the stated date. A telegram informs us that two Ottoman soldiers died and one soldier was wounded. After that, a troop was set off from Mosul to Sincar. It was reported that, in addition to this troop, four battalions of infantries and 200 soldiers from other corps were present on duty in Sincar. Taking all the data given above into account, it is possible to assume that Sincar was blockaded by Ottoman soldiers. Despite cold numerical expressions in these documents, it is not difficult to imagine that there was an extraordinary situation in Sincar.

As we know from the telegram sent by the Pasha, in the rebellion that started at the beginning of November and the following conflicts, the rebelling Yezidis had appropriated more than 15,000 properties and animals of villagers in 13 villages around Mount Sincar. The Pasha also argued that the Yezidis had cut off and plundered a caravan traveling from Aleppo to Mosul, and had killed a few passengers. As reported, the Yezidis had totally ignored the orders and warnings of the Pasha and the provincial administrators. In the conflict that arose on the stated date, four Ottoman soldiers had died and seventeen soldiers had been wounded. It was also reported that more than hundred uprising Yezidis were killed and they fled away from the peak of Mount Sincar with a high number of wounded members. However, as we will thoroughly evaluate later, the afore-mentioned act of appropriation and plundering was fictionalized by the Pasha. On the contrary, all these actions were conducted by the Pasha's men, and the properties and animals plundered actually belonged to the Yezidis.<sup>313</sup>

The Yezidis and similar communities which organized themselves in tribes and lived in the peaks of high mountains, tried to benefit from the geographical advantages of the region in which they settled in when they were faced with conflicts, attacks or organized

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<sup>313</sup> These details were presented in the telegram, dated 18 November 1892, sent by the Pasha to the Commander in chief. For this telegram, see the afore-mentioned document.

plundering. What is more, the regions of their settlement serve as a harbourage in case of military operations and state interferences. In this sense, the Pasha, who was totally aware of the rebelling Yezidis' geographical advantage, stated that the Yezidi communities had to be drawn back to the skirts of the mountain in order to stop the rebellion and avoid potential rebellions. In addition, he also reported there was a great need for more extensive military power, explaining that it was not possible to control the area and stop arrivals, and departures or escapes if the mountain was not to be completely besieged. It appears that the Pasha was planning an extensive and long-term operation, and as a soldier, he had reduced the issue solely to a problem of security. He demanded that a mobilization campaign (*nefir-i âmm*) be accordingly initiated, and thus proposed the Commander-in-chief and the Sultan give the required directions.<sup>314</sup> The Pasha almost seems to have attempted to conquer the region again and set up a civil war-like regime there.

In the official report, it is mentioned that Sultan Abdulhamid, who followed up all the events, expressed his will to the Commander-in-chief, declaring the need to handle the issue without bloodshed. Arguing that the retreat of the soldiers would spoil the Yezidis, the Commander-in-chief requested reinforcements be sent to the region. In response, Sultan Albulhamid ordered to charge the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Commander with the duty of putting down the rebellion and controlling the actions of the Yezidis because Ömer Vehbi Pasha was exercising excessive power and his actions could not be inspected.<sup>315</sup> Following the meeting held and correspondence with the Sultan, the Commander-in-chief suggested that the four troops in Sincar were enough and there was no need for precautions such as a mobilization campaign, which was not politically permissible and would damage the dignity of soldiers.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., it is noted in the report of the Commander in chief: "...Ömer Paşa'nın hareketi dahi ifrat ve tefritden kurtarılamamakda olmasına mebni şu işin altıncı ordu-yı hümayun müşiri paşa hazretlerinin yedd-i nezaret ve icraatına tevdi kılınması icab-ı hal ve maslahatına muvafık görülmekte bulunduğundan...".

Therefore, Ömer Pasha was ordered to give up the mobilization campaign, or *nefir-i âmm*, and make the rebels obey (*tarik-i itaat*) with the military force at hand. At the end of the official report, it was stated that the 6<sup>th</sup> Army was given the responsibility to take them under control.

Below I will talk in detail about the Investigation Committee (*Heyet-i Tahkikiye*), which was sent to Mosul in order to investigate the doubtful actions of Ömer Vehbi Pasha against whom frequent complaints were lodged by many circles to Yıldız Palace. Before moving on to this subject matter, it would definitely be useful to look at the data collected by the committee in the inquiry for November 1892 events and conflicts, which resulted in a Yezidi rebellion. Data gathered by the committee at the end of inquiry and inspection are critically important in understanding the reason for the conflict, the conflict time, and its consequences along with the effects of attack on the Yezidis and the gist of the matter.

It is true that before the committee arrived in the region, three telegrams, dated December 3, 4 and 10, had already been sent by the governor of Mosul, other senior administrators, and respected people of the province in order to tell about conflicts between the Yezidis and soldiers, and shed light on the core of the problem. As reported in the telegrams of the highly respected figures of the province, Ömer Vehbi Pasha frequently acted against the instructions given to him and did, or attempted to do, whatever he wanted.<sup>317</sup> The Pasha needed to have an official document of permission as to have the right to conduct a military operation. According to Osman Pasha, the governor of Mosul, Ömer Vehbi Pasha took, by force, the document needed to conduct a military operation to the Mount Sincar in order to bring the Yezidis under control. Based on the permission document signed under use

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<sup>316</sup> “...*nefir-i âmm tertibi gibi siyaseten gayr-i caiz ve vakar u haysiyet-i askeriyeyi münhall bir tedbirin ittihazına da hacet görülemeyeceği...*”.

<sup>317</sup> See for these telegrams and their introduction to the Yıldız Palace, BOA. Y. EE. 87/73, 21 Ca. 1310 (11 December 1892). Some of the signatures on these telegrams are as follows: *Aza Yunus, Mektubi Tefvik, Müftü Mehmed, Vekil-i defterdar Osman, Naib-i Musul Yusuf Sıdkı, Musul Valisi Osman, Aza Davud, Aza Fethullah, Aza Süleyman, Aza Mehmed, Aza Abdalbaki, Aza Hasan.*

of force, the military operation was conducted and it was led by Ömer Vehbi Pasha's son, Asım Bey. As stated in the telegram, in this operation, Asım Bey and the Ottoman troops killed around 500 Yezidis. The number 500, commonly given as the number of victimized Yezidis in the accounts even on the popular websites related to the Yezidi experience during events of 1892 provoked by Ömer Vehbi Pasha, is thus reaffirmed in the Ottoman archival documents.<sup>318</sup> Moreover, it is also stated in the document that some women and children were burnt to death while the properties and sheep of villagers in seven or eight villages were plundered.<sup>319</sup>

In accordance with statements in this document, after the large-scale massacre, the Yezidis left their village and fled to the Mount Sincar. Asım Bey followed the fleeing Yezidis. Many people were killed; their properties plundered; and sheep lost. It was the heavy burden on the Yezidi side in that struggle. According to the governor and other local administrators, the act of plundering and the bloody attacks on the Yezidis led to their escape and settlement on the mountains. Despite the Pasha having been told to comfort and relieve the tension there, he chose instead to send troops of to Mount Sincar. All in all, there were losses on both sides yet the heaviest burden was on the Yezidi side with the deaths of many people. It is also true that the Ottoman army lost some soldiers. It is quite easy to imagine on what scale the struggle went on around Mount Sincar despite the cold way of expression in the documents. The local governors who were aware of the seriousness and brutality of the events, about which I tried to describe in a cold language, stepped in to calm down the Pasha and the Yezidis so that conflicts would come to an end. Hacı Emin Efendi, the Mayor of Mosul, went to Mount Sincar and had a meeting with the Yezidis in an attempt to make them stop their

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<sup>318</sup> See the first telegram, dated 21 Teşrin-i sani 1308 (4 December 1892), in the afore-mentioned document.

<sup>319</sup> See the same telegram: “...bir takım nisa ve çoluk-çocuğun ihrak-ı bi'n-nar olmasına sebep olması ve oralardan can kurtarmış olanlardan yedi sekiz karye ahalisinin emval ve mevaşisini yağma etdirmesinden dolayı...”

uprising. We also learn from another document that Hacı Emin Efendi went to the region twice and was paid a travel allowance for this purpose.<sup>320</sup>

While all mediation efforts were in place to stop the conflicts, the Pasha, all of a sudden, attacked the Yezidis. Once again the Mayor was there as a mediator, sending deeds of advice (*nasihatname*) to the Yezidis and promising them that their lives, property and chastity would not be harmed. The Yezidis gave him a positive response and agreed to come down from the Mount Sincar. It is reported in the document that the Yezidis gave up their decision of coming back all of a sudden for unknown reason. The Pasha's response was really harsh. A regiment composed of cavalries was directed to the region. It appears that the Pasha always considered the issue a problem of security and thus chose to solve it via military force. The governors of the province expressed that they were fully cognizant of the matter, and they strived to persuade the Pasha to stop his actions. In addition, the administrators sent a committee of advice set from the members of the Administrative Council to the Yezidis.

The fact that Ömer Pasha had sent a battalion to Sincar without the legitimate permission of legal and political authorities in the province was reaffirmed in a letter written by Commander-in-chief Mehmed Rıza Pasha to the Palace.<sup>321</sup> Corresponding with the commanders in the region, Rıza Pasha stated that Ömer Vehbi Pasha had been warned and asked not to act without the orders and permission of the Sultan. Moreover, the Pasha had also been ordered not to conduct any actions such as mobilization campaign (*nefir-i âm*). However, Rıza Pasha highlighted in his letters, despite all warnings and orders, large-scale

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<sup>320</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 110/11, 29 M. 1311 (12 August 1893) “*Vilayet-i behiyyeleri Belediye Reisi Hacı Emin Efendi'nin iskan-ı aşair ve Yezidi taifesine icra-yı nesaih için iki defa Sincar'a azimet ve avdet etmiş olması cihetiyle kat' eylediği mesafe için riyasetine mahsus bin guruş maaşının bir mislünün zamm ve i'tası...ve müma-ileyhin avdet ve azimetinde kat' etdiği mesafenin yüz yirmi beş saatden ibaret olduğu anlaşılmasına binaen müma-ileyhe i'tası icab eden bin iki yüz elli guruş harc-rahın vilayet-i behiyyelerinin dahil-i müvazene olan harc-rah tertibinden tesviye ve i'tası...*”

<sup>321</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 72/28, 20 Ca 1310 (10 December 1892)

fighters had been experienced in Sincar.<sup>322</sup> The Yezidis felt insecure, alarmed and kept their defense ready.

### Ömer Vehbi Pasha's Dismissal and the Investigation Commission

In a short period, the Sultan and government had learnt about all events in Mosul through different channels such as official letters, telegrams, petitions, and consulate reports. As mentioned above, the Pasha's actions arousing concern, complaints from the region and the Pasha's controversial statements were what triggered the Sultan's concern, leading him to learn about what exactly was happening in Mosul. Due to these factors, the Sultan had already attempted to send a few officers in the province to make investigation in the region. However, since he came to understand the situation was much more serious than he had thought, he decided to commission a committee made up of senior bureaucrats.<sup>323</sup> This committee brought together General Şakir Pasha, Kamil Pasha and Sadık Bey. The committee members set off for Mosul in the second week of December.

However, before the committee members arrived in the region, the Pasha and his son were dismissed from their position. In addition, the Pasha was ordered to remain in Mosul until the commission members arrived in the province so that he could be interrogated by the commission.<sup>324</sup> Mirliya Mehmed Pasha was provisionally (*vekaleten*) appointed in place of the Pasha. However, it was decided that Tevfik Pasha, who was in Mosul on duty to chair the

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> DH. MKT. 2029/84

<sup>324</sup> İ. Hus. 6/1310.Ca/65, 18 Ca. 1310 (8 December 1892) : “*Musul cihetinde bulunan fırka-i islahiye kumandanı Ömer Vehbi Paşa'nın işaret-i mahalliyeden anlaşılın muamelat-ı gayr-ı merziyyesinden dolayı kendüsüyle mahdumunun hemen azlleri ile icraat ve hareket-ı vakıaları tatil etdirilerek buradan gönderilecek heyet-i tahkikiyenin Musul'a muvasalatına kadar orada beklemelerinin paşa-yı müşarün-ileyhe işarı zikr olunan heyet-i tahkikiyenin hemen yarın yola çıkarılması...*”

trial judging Ahmed Bey, the General of 35<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Battalion, was a better nominee to be appointed to the position.<sup>325</sup>

It seems, however, that in practice no one was appointed in place of Ömer Vehbi Pasha for the presidency and the Reform Force, regarded as a very significant project by Abdulhamid, came to an end *de facto* even before it was put into operation in the other provinces, Basra and Baghdad. What is more, most of the reforms planned to be implemented by the agency of this force in Mosul had not been achieved yet.

As soon as the commission arrived in Mosul, they started to investigate the case. From the final version of the investigation report submitted as a result of the investigation process, we understand that the commission had examined all letters, telegrams and similar type of correspondence from local governors in the province, administrative council members, army commanders, and well-respected people of the province including sheikhs and patriarchs. In the context of complaints lodged to Yıldız Palace about Ömer Pasha and his actions, there was no mention of the Yezidi issue but this time one of the most crucial articles in the investigation report was exactly about it.

As mentioned above, the information submitted to the Sultan and the Sublime Port from local governors and well-respected people of the province set a priority for investigating the event in Sincar and bringing it to a close. Owing to urgency of the case, the commission members took a step and set to work by investigating the case with a determination to solve it. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Internal Affairs asked the governors in Mosul to re-establish the Yezidis' security and prevent potential conflicts. It was also ordered that a sub-investigation commission be set.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 72/40, 22 Ca 1310 (12 December 1892)

<sup>326</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2033/46, 1 C. 1310 (21 December 1892), from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Prime Ministry : “*aşair-i Yezidiye ve sairinin iade-i emniyetlerini istizam edecek esbabın acil bir dereceye kadar istihsal edilebilmesi...[and]...gerek Sincar ve gerek Şeyhan nahiyelerine merkez-i vilayetden birer heyet-i teminiye ve tahkikiyenin gönderilmesine...*” .

Yıldız Palace notified that Sadık Bey and a soldier from the high officers, before all else, would be fit for the presidency of the commission. In accordance with the Yıldız Palace's proposition, the province of Mosul took immediate action in order to set a commission of a chairman and five members. Derviş and Şakir Pasha demanded that three of the members be chosen from senior commanders (*ümera-yı askeriye*) and two of them from ministerial officers in the province. Before all else, Ferik Tevfik Pasha or Mirliva Nazif Pasha was accordingly figured as the chairman. However, considering the fact that these figures were at odds with Ömer Vehbi Pasha, it was decided that Sadık Bey or Mirliva Kamil from the investigation committee or, more importantly, someone else from the senior commanders who would definitely not act against Ömer Pasha should be selected.<sup>327</sup> Derviş and Şakir also emphasized the significance of this inquiry, calling for further action.

Meanwhile, in the course of letter exchanges, the committee members notified Yıldız Palace that Osman Pasha, the new governor of Mosul, and Ömer Vehbi Pasha had formed strong cliques, engaging in activities against each other. As a consequence, Başkatib and Yaver-i Ekrem jointly informed the Sultan that Ömer Vehbi Pasha needed to depart for Erzincan, the headquarters of the 4th Army, to which he was attached, and someone needed to be appointed to replace the governor of Mosul vicariously. In addition, these two most authorized bureaucrats in Yıldız Palace reported, according to information from the committee members, that the governor was an incapable administrator and could never be in command of events in Mosul while submitting the question of the Pasha's dismissal and appointment to the Sultan for decision.<sup>328</sup> It is clear that Mosul was a bustling province across the board. But it emerges that after a short while it was agreed to have Ömer Vehbi Pasha present in Mosul and to postpone the proxy appointment until after inquiry.

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<sup>327</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 29/21, 1 B. 1310 (19 January 1893) and Y. PRK. BŞK. 29/25, 3 B. 1310 (21 January 1893)

<sup>328</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 74/11, 3 B. 1310 (21 January 1893) and, Y. PRK. BŞK. 29/25

What came next while the committee members were in preparation to send off a commission to Sincar in order to inquire into events was atrocious. A letter sent by the committee members to the Yıldız Palace reported that a group of twenty people among the well-respected members of the Yezidi community had come to the center of Mosul on January 24, 1893 with seven dead bodies of beheaded Yezidis. According to the Yezidi leaders' claim, those people had been slain by Ömer Pasha's son Akif Bey\* and Reşid Efendi, the former administrator of Şeyhan sub-district. The Yezidis, who had been subjected to traumatic experiences for several years and were exposed to massacres, showed the dead bodies and asked for justice from the province administrators.<sup>329</sup> The committee members notified both the Yezidis and Yıldız Palace of the fact that they would inquire into the case within the shortest time and administer justice. In addition, they highlighted their disapproval for such villainous deeds, calling the province to attention in order to ensure non-recurrence.

Derviş and Şakir Pasha submitted this letter to the Sultan. Due to the seriousness of the case, it was specified that army officers and soldiers had to be interrogated in order to identify those involved and therefore the members of the investigation committee were assigned. To this end, a commission was to be set up under the chairmanship of a committee member.<sup>330</sup> However the existing commission set out to investigate the case as well.

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\* In some documents Asım Bey is cited as Akif. When we take into account the fact that only a son of Ömer Vehbi Pasha was on duty in the region that was the same as his place of duty, we can reason that there are not two different individuals being discussed.

<sup>329</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 74/33, 8 B. 1310 (26 January 1893): "*Bugün Şeyhan ahâlisinden yirmi kadar Yezidi nezd-i acizanemize gelerek beraber getürdikleri yedi reis maktu'u ile bunların Ömer Pasa'nın mahdumu Akif ve Şeyhan Müdiri sabık Reşid Efendi tarafından nakl edildiğini iddia ile taleb-i mu'adelet-i seniyye eylemeleri üzerine veli nimet bi-minnetimiz hazretlerinin âmâli hümayunları kaffe-i teb'a-i şehriyarilerinin mazhar-ı adâlet olmaları suretinde olduğundan hükümet-i seniyyece bi't-tahkik icra-yı hakaniyet edileceği ifadesiyle tarafımızdan iade kılındıkları ve derûn-ı memleketde bu gibi şeylerin vukû' bulması yâr ü agyâra karşı pek çirkin olacağından tekerrürünün men'i vilâyete ihtar eylediği ma'rûzdur.*"; See also, BOA. Y. PRK. MYD. 12/31, 7 B. 1310 (25 January 1893)

<sup>330</sup> Y. MTV. 74/33: "*Bu babda vuku'undan şikayet olunan ahval ve muamelat gayr-i marziyeden dolayı yegan yegan isticvabları lazım gelen zabitan ve efrad-ı askeriyenin emr ü isticvablarını icra etmek üzere heyet-i mezkure azasından birinin riyaseti tahtında bir komisyon teşkiline...*"

Three days later, a letter from committee members Kamil, Sadık and Şakir Pasha, reporting that Akif Bey and Şeyhan administrator Reşid Efendi were suspects, asked about the course action to be taken.<sup>331</sup> Unfortunately the documents do not provide us with an answer, but it appears that the required proceedings to be initiated against the Pasha and his son were being planned by Yıldız Palace once more evidence had been collected from the committee members, shedding light on the events. The results of the investigation process along with the report would be awaited. Punishments or possible trials would also be accordingly clarified. I will deal with those in forthcoming parts.

The investigation process was completed in a short time period. Ömer Vehbi Pasha and his son were the ones responsible for what happened. The Pasha had tyrannized over the subjects in military operations conducted in Sincar and Şeyhan while his son had employed the military forces on his own account, causing the deaths of hundreds of Yezidis as well as plundering of their property. In addition, the committee members agreed that the Mosul governor Osman Paşa's negligence had played a role in the course of events.<sup>332</sup> In a telegram from the province of Mosul to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it was stated that deforced or sold properties and animals of Sincar and Şeyhan Yezidis presumably counted up to 22,250 piasters. It was also reported that 36,318 piasters of that amount had been spent by Asım Bey while the rest had been spent on private payments to the soldiers in that region (*senevat-ı mahsuse olarak cihet-i askeriyye sarf etdirilmiş*).<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 74/36, 9 B. 1310 (27 January 1893): "...devam eden tahkikatımızdan Ömer Paşa'nın mahdumu mülazım Akif Bey'le Şeyhan Nahiyesi müdiri sabık Reşid Efendi'nin Şeyhan ve Sincar taraflarında vuku bulan cinayetde maznuniyetleri anlaşılacak olduğundan haklarında olacak muamele istizan olunur ferman."

<sup>332</sup> See, BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 88/36, 22 B. 1310 (9 February 1893)

<sup>333</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 2050/103, 21 B. 1310 (8 February 1893): "...Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretleriyle mahdumunun icra-yı hareketları .... Şeyhan ve Sincar cihetlerindeki aşair-i Yezidiye'den gasb ve fîruht olunan emval ve mevaşiyenin mikdarı tahminen ikiyüz yirmi bin ikiyüz elli guruşdan ibaret olub bundan otuz altıbin üçyüz on sekiz guruşu paşa-yı müşariün-ileyh mahdumunun sarfiyatı olduğu gibi küsuru da oralarda tahaşşüd eden cünud-ı cenab-ı mülükanedden senevat-ı mahsuse olarak cihet-i askeriyye sarf etdirilmiş..."

In fact the responsibility of the Pasha and his son in Sincar events had already been thoroughly explained to Yıldız Palace by the Mosul governor, other civil servants of the province along with the notables. In the course of correspondence, letters clearly revealed that the Pasha had obtained by force the official document (*mazbata*) giving the way to a military operation and had used military forces on his own account. He was said to have excessively brutalized the Yezidi tribes, fueled conflicts and not agree to solve problems via peaceful ways or advice yet stopped those who attempted to do otherwise. What is more, his son Asım Bey had declared himself authorized to do anything, even to give sentences of death by using the soldiers under his command despite the fact that he was only holding the rank of lieutenant. Finally, he was reported to have seized numerous animals and properties of the Yezidis during the events in Sincar, leading to complete the impoverishment of the tribe. Yıldız Palace, reluctant to fully rely on the statements of the province governor and other civil servants, then came to realize that the committee, which was sent off to make investigation, affirmed previously given information.<sup>334</sup>

While all these proceedings of research and investigation were taking place, the Pasha, who thankfully welcomed that a committee was investigating his deeds,<sup>335</sup> sent telegrams of a defensive nature to the palace and the Commander-in-chief. In one of them he declared that the complaints lodged by the governor, commanders and other civil servants as well as claims against him were groundless. He claimed that the Sixth Army Commander was envious of his positive and favorable deeds and provoked certain segments of people against him. According to the Pasha, the governor of Mosul had been abused while those who had wanted to present the truth had been threatened and thus they had given up.<sup>336</sup> In the telegrams that followed, he

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<sup>334</sup> Y. MTV. 76/136, 24 N. 1310 (11 April 1893)

<sup>335</sup> For Pasha's thanks to the Palace (to Yaver-i Ekrem) see, BOA. Y. MTV. 73/56, 7 C. 1310 (27 December 1892)

insisted that his reputation had been blackened, and sooner or the truth would emerge. However, we observe that he did not base his claim of his reputation having been blackened or that things had not happened in the way told on not event a single piece of concrete evidence. As a matter of fact, during the research, I observe that no detailed or defensive type answer by the Pasha while being kept in Mosul was found.

Meanwhile, the investigation committee uncovered one of the biggest lies of the Pasha. It will, at the same time, clearly summarize the suppression and brutal treatment by the Pasha of the Yezidi community from the very first days after his arrival in the province. I have previously mentioned that shortly after the Pasha took office, he brought the Yezidi leaders by force to the center of the province and put pressure on them to convert to Islam, and consequently some of the Yezidi leaders had to accept the command to convert. Other than the fact that the Yezidis were persecuted, this happy news conveyed to Yıldız Palace was a complete fiction. So to say, the Pasha had almost written a fairy tale. On top, this piece of news gave the palace an occasion to put the province, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance into action in order to effectuate actions, which were in a way a code to understand Hamidian politics, such as building mosques and schools, or appointing imams and teachers in places where the Yezidis resided.

Let us listen to the story from the investigation committee to ascertain whether the Yezidis had converted or not. In a coded telegram sent by the committee on February 5, 1893, as a result of the investigation made in accordance with the related article on the Yezidis of the directive given, it is reported that no one from the Yezidi community had rectified faith (“*tashih-i itikad*”) and it is clearly understood that they insisted on their “heresy”.<sup>337</sup> The

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<sup>336</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 73/8, 2 C. 1310 (22 December 1892). See also, BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 28/96, 7 C. 1310 (27 December 1892)

<sup>337</sup> See, Y. MTV. 74/36, 18 B. 1310 (5 February 1893) It is noted, in the words of the commission members: “*Talimat-ı seniyyenin Yezidiler’e müteallik maddesi hakkında edilen tahkikat neticesinde Yezidiler’den hiç bir ferdin tashih-i itikad etmediği ve el-haletü’ hazihi dalâletletlerinde musırr buldukları anlaşıldı.*”

Yezidi leaders were then invited to the Mosul Government Office on August 7, 1893 and they received a showy welcome (*suret-i mutantanada istikbal*). Conversion was offered to the Yezidis in the speech delivered, but they immediately refused it. However, according to the statements of the committee members, the Yezidis had been beaten and defamed before the meeting, which brought injury of six or seven of them. The Yezidis who did not accept conversion despite all were detained in the government office for eight days. Although the Yezidis refused the offer at once, the Sultan and upper authorities were, on the very same day, notified by Ömer Vehbi Pasha that religious inculcation had been provided for notables of the Yezidi community, and as a result, all the leaders in the group had totally converted to Islam on their own account (*telkin-i din edilerek lisanen ve külliyen tashih-i itikad etdikleri*). The committee members characterized this notification of the upper authorities as in total contravention of the truth, and declared that the Pasha had told a lie to the Sultan and Yıldız Palace.<sup>338</sup> However, at the end, after such a large scale suppression and detainment, as a way to escape from pressure and suppression, a group of Yezidi leaders, including Mirza, Hamza and Bedii, announced that they had converted in a timid language. In fact, it was entirely a token act as they had not really accepted to conversion to Sunnite Islam.

The Yezidis, resisting actual conversion, subsequently had to face serious suppression and murders. In accordance with investigation results of the committee members, it was clearly understood that Ömer Vehbi Pasha had exercised all sorts of oppression and tortures in the Yezidi villages in order to make them convert to Islam, and at the same time, acted against the Sultan.<sup>339</sup> In addition, in this letter, the committee declared that the statement regarding the event, in which children and women had been burnt to death while hiding themselves

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<sup>338</sup> See afore-mentioned document, noting: “*Bina-en-aleyh Ömer Paşa'nın o gün makamât-ı âliyyeye keşide eylediği telgrafnamelerinde bu Yezidiler'e umum muvacehesinde yegan yegan telkin-i din edilerek lisanen ve külliyen tashih-i itikad etdikleri fikrası külliyen mugayir-i hakikat bulunmuşdur.*”

<sup>339</sup> Ibid: “*Diğer taraftan Yezidi kurasında tashih-i itikad kasdıyla envai tazyikat ve işkence ve şedid ve ebniye tahribi gibi rıza-yı âliye mugayir bir çok hareketin vukuu tahakkuk eyleyüb...*”

behind bushes, was not completely confirmed. However, in the following report, it would be stated that that operation had also been conducted by the Pasha's soldiers. And finally, Sadık Bey, Kamil Pasha and Şakir Pasha then enounced that public peace and security were ensured in Sincar and Şeyhan, and the events were called off.

Having submitted this telegram to the Sultan, Şakir Pasha and Derviş Pasha, declared on February 7, 1893 that messages sent by Ömer Vehbi Pasha to themselves and the Sultan were untrue and delusive.<sup>340</sup> It is not hard to imagine that Abdulhamid, who wished for an order after his own heart to be set up in the region and who expected the Yezidis to accept conversion in any way, thus showing loyalty to the empire and the Sultan himself, was deeply disappointed at the news. Moreover, one of the Pashas in whom he had put his trust had reached a deadlock and made things worse, opening a way for the Yezidis to go beyond control and totally loose trust in the state.

I term this situation “administrative crisis” in the eastern provinces. While aiming to carry out the projects in his mind, the Sultan once again came to understand that things were not the same as seen from Yıldız Palace. As a part of this crisis, the sub-staff who were supposed to carry out those projects and set an imperial order in the country, now had gone out of the control, were muddling things up. I do not take those sub-staff as the reason for the crisis. This particular region hosted tens of committees, reform forces, commanders and bureaucrats sent to the eastern provinces based on an idea that the projects could only be solved through radical interventions, and it was exactly their powers that were believed to be capable of carrying out the reforms, but then it turned out to be that the crisis resulted from their powers muddling things up. To put it in a nutshell, since the Sultan did not believe that advice would not work in this case, then he sent off a powerful figure to the region in order to

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<sup>340</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 74/91, 20 B. 1310 (7 February 1893)

solve this military problem. However, this capable figure that the Sultan believed to be necessary deepened the problem precisely on account of this power.

The most favorite bureaucrats of Abdulhamid, who were following the developments through the news coming from the committee one after another, examined an official report prepared by a private council (*Meclis-i Mahsus-ı Vükela*) that was established by the bureaucrats in Sublime Porte and closely followed up the investigation process of the committee. Before this official report was prepared, the committee members had submitted to the Prime Ministry a long letter summarizing the investigation conducted. In this letter as well, it was indicated that Ömer Vehbi Pasha had performed unacceptable deeds from the moment he went to Mosul. The reason underlying the Yezidis' loss of confidence in the state and revolt against it was emphasized was the Pasha's attitude towards them, framed into a subject of fierce state policies due to their religious identity and place in the political order. What is more, it was declared in the official report that Ömer Vehbi Pasha had failed to meet expectations and his actions had caused discontent. In response, Şakir Pasha and Derviş Pasha, who believed that such an assessment of the case was to make light of the situation (*tahfif olunmak*), stated that above all Ömer Vehbi, acting against the Sultan's will, had shed the blood of a group of people among his subjects, seized their properties, and trampled the state law and order. In addition, they also expressed the necessity of trying him since he had deceived them and the Sultan (*hilaf-ı hakikat maruzat ile merkez-i saltanatın iğfali*).<sup>341</sup>

Therefore, it was decided after the investigation period to bring the Pasha and his son back to İstanbul instead of sending him on duty to the 4<sup>th</sup> Army in Erzincan. Babıali was charged with the task of establishing the court that would try Ömer Vehbi Paşa, and bring him back to İstanbul. On the same day Yıldız Palace notified the Investigation Committee members that their duty was finished and they were called back by the Sultan to İstanbul.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> For the official report and Derviş and Şakir Pashas' submission, see, Y. MTV. 76/136

The committee set off from Mosul to İstanbul in early April. Before submitting the final version of their report, the members sent important telegrams and correspondence including the investigation articles to the afore-mentioned private council, established in Sublime Porte. These are the letters and reports, most of which we have quoted above. There is a remarkable telegram all among those documents. According to that telegram, the committee members had taken certain sacred items belonging to the Yezidis, such as the Peacock Angel, which had forcibly been captured by Ömer Vehbi from the Shrine of Şeyh Adi, and then registered these sacred items, which signified a deeper meaning that is larger than life, in a book with the help of a commission.<sup>343</sup> These items were not to be immediately delivered to the Yezidis but in 1914, only after 22 years, in addition to re-opening of the Şeyh Adi Shrine for Yezidis' religious exercises and prayers. The scope and extent of how the Ottoman policies affected the lives of the Yezidis is crystal clear. At this juncture, we ought to think once again what the Yezidis experienced considering the picture of our modern times when millions of Muslims get angry at a humiliating caricature of their prophet, or when their anger is mobilized. The sacred places that stood as place of worship and pilgrimage for them were shattered and turned into Islamic school, and all the sacred items there were seized by a commander. It was obviously very traumatic for the Yezidis, whether strong or not in faith.

After an investigation period of approximately three months, the committee returned to İstanbul and submitted their comprehensive report to the Sultan. The report, composed of sixteen large pages, included eight articles on all of affairs of the Pasha, which were the cancellation of tithe tinder (*aşar maddesi*), the release of prisoners (*tahliye-i mahbusîn*), the population census of Mosul (*Musul tahrir-i nüfusu*), the question of the Yezidi (*Yezidi meselesi*), the drafting of the deserters, tax collection, military operations, and display of

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Y. PRK. BŞK. 30/27, 24 N. 1310 (11 April 1893) For this letter, see the folio dated to 6 Kanun-ı sani 308 (18 January 1893)

people in chains (*Bakaya-yı askeriye ve bakaya-yı emiriye ve harb ve teşhir*), the investigation of the Governor and District Treasurer (*Vali ve Defterdar-ı Vilayet hakkındaki tahkikat*), and finally, the conclusion (*hâtime*).<sup>344</sup> The article on the Yezidis consists of eight pages, making half of the report. This explicitly indicates the importance of the question. The report, within which even the list of quoted telegrams, correspondence and documents amounted to nine pages, thoroughly reveals the experiences of the Yezidis at the same time. It is beside the point to open a discussion about the same experiences or events. However it should be noted here that it is another way to understand the policies, conflicts, resistance practices, and realities related to a nineteenth century Ottoman province in the East through the tribulations of the Yezidis of Sincar and Şeyhan.

Except for the issue of the cancellation of tithes, in regards to all of the other, the Pasha was said to be lawless, falsifier, and oppressive, and therefore he was to be judged in a court.<sup>345</sup> Many people must have happily welcomed the departure of Ömer Vehbi Pasha from Mosul, who was called back to İstanbul in late March and was to be put on trial there. By all manner of means, the Yezidis were the ones to feel the happiest. However, feeling at ease a bit, they were still not totally carefree or fearless. Moreover, even before they could overcome the whiplash of the events caused by the Pasha, they were to be faced with a series of military operations upon rumors that they would take revenge on the Muslims. This would at the same time give rise to the mobilization of the Yezidis once again. In the next chapter, I will discuss the developments in the summer and fall of 1893.

### One More Pasha for the “Untamed” Yezidis: Once Again to the Sincar Hills

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<sup>344</sup> See, for the report, BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 29/72, 20 Ş. 1310 (9 March 1893) The Report is dated to 24 Şaban 1310 (13 March 1893)

<sup>345</sup> BOA, İ.Hus. 22, 6 S. 1311 (19 August 1893)

In the middle June of 1893, two field officers named Halil and Ömer from the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Mosul informed Yıldız Palace in a telegram that the people in Sincar had revolted against the reform activities.<sup>346</sup> Upon delivery of the news, the Commander-in-chief asked the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Commander in Baghdad about the accuracy of the information. In response, the Commander declared that there were rumors that the Yezidis were intending to take revenge on the Muslims thereabouts (*ahz-ı sâr*) but the provincial and military authorities stepped in and appeased the resident community. It was further reported that there were no more major problems in law and order of the region, and therefore the telegram from the two field officers was void.<sup>347</sup> But it would emerge only after a while that there was an atmosphere of activity and briskness in Sincar region yet İstanbul was not entirely informed of all developments.

As a matter of fact, a few days later at the beginning of July, it was learnt that soldiers were sent to Sincar upon the rumours that the Yezidis from the Mosul province were in preparation to attack at Muslim villages around after they got in the crop. We learn the details of the news and what had happened in the region from the official report prepared by the general staff authorities depending on information submitted to them.<sup>348</sup> According to this report, the Yezidis were expecting to receive compensation from the government for properties and livestock stolen or plundered as a result of “reform” activities conducted when Ömer Vehbi Pasha was on duty. In fact, we learn from Guest’s study that the Shammar Araps took back their livestock that had been given to the Yezidis temporarily so that they could maintain their lives.<sup>349</sup> This refusal had caused the Yezidis not to pay back taxes. They seemed, therefore, to have looked for a way to survive. Moreover, as we learn from the

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<sup>346</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 91/18, 16 Za. 1310 (1 June 1893)

<sup>347</sup> Ibid. “*Sincar’daki Yezidi taifisinin o havalideki İslamlardan ahz-ı sâr niyetinde buldukları evvelce istihbar olunmuş ise de gerek taraf-ı vilayetden ve gerek cihet-i askeriyeden icra olunan nesaih üzerine taife-i mezkurenin...niyat-ı şekavetkaranelerinden feragat eyledikleri...*”

<sup>348</sup> For this official report, see, BOA. Y. MTV. 79/101, 18 Z. 1310 (3 July 1893)

<sup>349</sup> Guest, p. 140

official report, during the events in Sincar, an Ottoman sergeant named Said had stolen a good few mares and animals that belonged to the Yezidis.

In addition to receiving compensation for the goods, the Yezidis were going in quest of them. Though taken into custody by soldiers for a while, this sergeant affiliated to the 12<sup>th</sup> Division Commandership was set free despite applications by the province dozens of times. Once he was released, Sergeant Said, together with a group of bandits, attacked the Yezidi villages and terrorized them.<sup>350</sup> Consequently, the Yezidis rose in revolt once again by reason of being under threat and in order to find a solution for survival. It was stated in the report that though there was not a question of security, three battalions of soldiers were sent to the Sincar. However, by taking into account the possibility of inadequate number of soldiers, the Commander-in-chief Rıza Pasha, who submitted the official report to Yıldız Palace, asked for the Sultan's approval to send reinforcement troops, composed of two hundred cavaliers, three battalions and two mount cannons, to the region under the command of Bekir Pasha.<sup>351</sup> Thus the Yezidis, after a while, would meet one more new Pasha.

In a letter sent on July 3, 1893 by the local governor of Sincar to the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Commander Receb Pasha and to the Commander-in-chief successively, the urgency of soldier transfer was highlighted once again.<sup>352</sup> According to the information from the local governor, having fought against an Arab tribe, namely Şammar, around the village of Suhoka (?), the Yezidis were making preparations to assault the barracks and the government office on Wednesday night. It was also underscored that consequently it would make a scene since the barrack and the government office were located at a low base and due to a shortage of soldiers. Therefore, the necessity to send soldiers to the region was repeated.<sup>353</sup> According to

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<sup>350</sup> Y. MTV. 79/101

<sup>351</sup> See the afore-mentioned document,

<sup>352</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 79/140, 22 Z. 1310 (7 July 1893)

the news, having submitted to the Sultan for approval the proposition of sending a group of reinforcement troops, the number of which had previously been designated, to Sincar, the Commander-in-chief, who was aware of the urgency of situation presented the news about new developments to the Sultan on July 7 in order to get a reply.<sup>354</sup>

From a telegram sent from the Mosul province on July 11 and delivered to the Prime Ministry the day after, we understand that, as a result of the Sultan's decision, three battalions and a sufficient supply of cavalries, led by Bekir Pasha, arrived in Sincar the very same day.<sup>355</sup> The troops founded a sort of military base in the center of Sincar during July and August. There is no indication that any sort of military operation was conducted against the Yezidis residing in mountain villages affiliated to the Sincar district. However, we understand that the region was blockaded under the command of Bekir Pasha and the Yezidi tribes were overseen by means of those military forces. From a letter written by the Commander-in-chief to the Sultan in late August, we gather that there were several committees of advice sent off to the Yezidis.<sup>356</sup> In accordance with the information flowing from the region, the Commander-in-chief, having submitted the official report prepared by a private council, reported that the unruliness and disobedience of the Yezidis had not stopped, and what is more, their supporters from Diyarbekir and Aleppo had gathered in the region.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid: “*Fi 21 Haziran 309 tarikli olub şimdi Sincar kaim-makamlığından alınan tahriratda Yezidiler'in Sincar Dağı'nın müntehası olan Suhoka (?) karyesi cihetinde Mir ve sair urban ile çarpışdıkları ve iş bu çehar-şenbe gecesinde kışla ve hükümet konağına tasallut edecekleri ve oradaki cümud-ı şahanenin azlığı ve kışla ve hükümet konağının engin mahalde bulunmasıyla müdafaa kabiliyeti olmadığına mebni fenalık vukubulacağı cihetle bunların selameti ve asayişin idamesi için üç tabur askerin sevki mahalli işarı üzerine defaatle taraf-ı sami-i müşirilerine arz olunmuş...*”

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> BOA. Y.A. HUS. 277/123, 27 Z. 1310 (12 July 1893): “*Şeref-sâdır olan emr ü ferman-ı hümayun hazret-i padişahi hük-m-i âlisine tevfiken Yezidilerin ıslah-ı ahvali zımında Bekir Paşa'nın üç tabur asâkir-i şahane ve lüzumu kadar süvari ile Sincar'a azimet eylemiş olduğuna dair Musul vilayetinin telgrafnamesi...*”

<sup>356</sup> BOA. Y. A. RES. 66/34, 25 S. 1311 (7 September 1893), folio 2, from Commander in chief to Yıldız Palace. The letter of Commander in chief is dated to 15 Safer 1311 (28 August 1893). The official report of the council can also be found in this file. See for this report folio 1, date 25 Muharrem 1311 (8 August 1893).

According to the official report prepared, for the council of a cabinet nature the Yezidis could in no wise be tamed or disciplined, and therefore two more battalions should be sent off from Mosul to Sincar in order to take measures against them. Emphasizing that not only military measures were taken but also an advice committee composed of the Diyarbekir Mufti, imams on duty in the region and people who knew the language of the tribe was also sent to the Yezidis, the council argued that sending those two battalions to the region would be suitable for reaching a solution to the problem.

The Commander-in-chief, having submitted the council's official report to the Sultan, stated that if the Yezidis could not be disciplined and the problem could not be solved, it would eventually give rise to destructive results. He declared that he was awaiting the decision regarding his demand to send reinforcement troops. He also did not fail to claim that the group would, otherwise, be spoilt.<sup>358</sup> This argument is related both to the concern that arose about the fact that the Yezidi tribes could by no means be disciplined, and to the authority question that would emerge as a result of Yezidi attacks at nearby villages and roads, posing a threat to security.

However, the Commander-in-chief and Bekir Pasha did not receive the answer they expected from the Sultan. Bekir Pasha, though, would acquire the reinforcement troops he looked for in a different way. From a ciphered telegram sent by the former governor of Mosul Osman Pasha to the Palace, we gather that Bekir Pasha collected men from several tribes around Sincar, and then launched a military operation on October 7, 1893, without informing the province authorities, against the Yezidis.<sup>359</sup> Bekir Pasha and the armed tribesmen from

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid: “Sincar’daki Yezidiler’in nesaih-i haseneyi telakki etmemekde ve haklarındaki lütf-ı celil-i cenab-baniyi takdir etmiyerek serkeşliklerinde ısrar ve devam ve her gün kuvvetlerini tezyid ve Diyarbekir ve Haleb dahilindeki hem-cins ve hem-mezheblerini davet ve etrafa icra-yı müfrite kadar cür’et göstermekde olduklarından ve irâkda bu kavmin kader ve itibarı olmadığı halde bu suretle şımarması o havalide su’i-tesir hasıl edeceği gibi vakit geçdikçe mazarrat ve muhaziri tezayid eyleyeceğinden...”

<sup>358</sup> Ibid, folio 2

Arabic tribes firstly made an attack on the Yezidi village of Bikran but were defeated with several losses and had to withdraw from the village. After such a defeat, these forces entered Mendekan, another important Yezidi village, and forcibly captured 5000 camels, as is written in the document, and around 150 sheep from the villagers, making their way into Beled district.<sup>360</sup> In addition, the governor noted that the previous year Ömer Vehbi Pasha and that year Bekir Pasha impaired the soldiers' credit. However, differing from Ömer Vehbi, Bekir Pasha had not gone to the region on the grounds of exceptional reasons such as conversion, collection soldiers or taxation.

Once Yıldız Palace received the news, he wrote a telegram to the 4th Army and asked the Commander whether he knew about what was going on in the region. The 4<sup>th</sup> Army Commander Zeki Pasha conveyed to the palace a piece of information about the fact that it was going to take a long time to learn about the true story/inside of the story since the tribe had retreated into the desert and there were no telegraph lines in the region.<sup>361</sup> But he also noted that detectives were sent from Mosul to Sincar in an attempt to make an investigation.

The main question which the palace was trying to find an answer to was why there was a need to make an attack and a mobilization campaign was taken as a course, one that would not be accepted by the Sultan. The Sultan and his advisors were intending to find out whether the event resulted from a false action of the commanders. Moreover, it was also

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<sup>359</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 95/13, 6 R. 1311 (17 October 1893). The telegram in this file is dated to 29 Eylül 1309 (11 October 1893) See also, BOA. DH. MKT. 152/6, 7 R. 1311 (18 October 1893)

<sup>360</sup> “*Dünkü gün arz edildiği vechle enfas-ı kudsiyet-i âyat-ı hazret-i hilafet-penahi ile Sincar Cebeli'yle sair mahallerde Yezidiler'e evvelce edilen nesaih ve tedabir-i hakimane ile her kimi ikna ve gaileye hacet kalmamış iken vilayete malumat vermeksizin Mirliva Bekir Paşa'nın Sincar Cebeli'ne icra eylediği hareket-ı askeriyesinde geçen Cuma ertesi günü Bikran Karyesi'ne hücumla nefir-i ammdan ve cihet-i askeriyeden bir mikdar telefat vererek civarda bulunan Mendekan Karyesi ahalisinin beş bin deve ve yüz elli kadar mevaşi ve hayvanat-ı sairelerini alub beş saat mesafede hükümet merkezi olan Beledi Karyesi'ne [sic] rücuat etmiş olduğu...*”

<sup>361</sup> Abdulhamid government had been spending time on laying lines of telegram around Sincar. It was then a compulsory task due to delicate conditions of the region and Sultan Abdulhamid's wish to establish close control over all regions under his rule. But the project would not be carried out at once. See for these plans, BOA. DH. MKT. 1998/34, 14 S. 1310 (7 September 1892); BOA. DH. MKT. 2006/21, 6 Ra. 1310 (28 September 1892); BOA. DH. MKT. 2210/138, 5 S. 1317 (15 June 1899); BOA. DH. MKT. 2210/149, 5 S. 1317 (15 June 1899)

underlined in the exchange of correspondence that a military operation should not have been launched without the Sultan's consent. News arriving after a while confirmed that the operation had been conducted with the men collected from tribes and the successive defeat.<sup>362</sup> Hereupon Yıldız Palace sent a directive to the 6<sup>th</sup> Army to try Bekir Pasha but, as for now, we do not know the results of the trial.

In his book, Guest summarizes the events of that time as follows a commander called Bekir Pasha set off for Sincar with a few battalions in July and conflicts were renewed in October. Attempting to display the developments inside the tribe as far as possible, Guest says that Sofuk Agha, the Yezidi leader in Sincar, negotiated with the government and the conflicts came to a close.<sup>363</sup> In fact, we detect from a few other documents that things seemed to have quieted down and there were no newer conflicts, thus leading to retreat of the troops that had been sent. The same documents, though, also stated that a number of soldiers were kept in Sincar in order to prevent attempts of attack or revolts.<sup>364</sup> In January 1894 a soldier transfer to Sincar was to be put on the agenda and some itinerant soldiers from the province of Mosul were to be sent away to the region.<sup>365</sup> However, we understand that these did not culminate in a conflict or fight. As a result, the struggle came to an end in Sincar, but it is highly difficult to say that peace dominated there. Still, determination of military operations and conflicts that took place for almost 2.5 years brought forth an easing of tension. In addition, there is no doubt that the Yezidis were pleased that Ömer Vehbi Pasha was being tried and the governor Osman Pasha was dismissed from his position. On the other hand, Abdulhamid and his advisors, from then on cognizant of the fact that the idea of solving such problems with the

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<sup>362</sup> Y. PRK. ASK. 95/13

<sup>363</sup> Guest, p. 140

<sup>364</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 86/117, 29 R. 1311 (9 November 1893); BOA. Y. MTV. 88/87, 9 C. 1311 (18 November 1893)); BOA, Cavit Baysun Evrakı (hereafter HSD. CB) 3/18, 3 B. 1311 (10 January 1894)

<sup>365</sup> See, BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 34/82, 18 B. 1311 (25 January 1894)

help of powerful commanders caused more extensive disorder and unrest, must have been disappointed in their aim to Sunnitize them and enforce obedience.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

From 1894 onwards it was a relatively calmer but nevertheless an uneasy period for the Yezidis, who had hitherto rebelled a number of times following the military operations conducted as the culmination of the previous violent attacks, forceful conversion threats, and a series of massacres by Ömer Vehbi Paşa and *Fırka-i Islahiye*. Even though the military operations and massacres had somewhat subsided, the increasing desire of Abdulhamid's administration to promote Sunnism among the society, as well as the problems associated with conscription were still prevalent. Although the Yezidis had managed to overcome the threat of extinction, the Yezidi society was going to pass forward to the future generations the miseries endured during the previous years. As noted in the introduction of the section dealing with the Reform Force, this period is remembered by the Yezidis with sorrow and hatred. Thus the Yezidis at the end of the century found themselves at the center of such devastating events and their lingering traumatic consequences.

It is possible to claim that in this period Abdulhamid's regime followed a less than systematic and institutional policy towards the Yezidi community. It is in fact possible to observe the nineteenth-century transformation of the Ottoman polity and state-society relations by comparing the treatment of the Ottoman officials who participated in the repression of the Yezidis in different time periods. For instance, while the central administration found nothing appalling in the killing of 500 Yezidis during the early 1800s, towards the end of the century various repressive policies against the Yezidis led to a number of investigations, court cases, and dismissals from office. Despite this transformation, however, the determination of the state not to recognize the Yezidis as non-Muslims, as well

as their subjection to compulsory conscription were the determining factors in the relations between the Yezidi community and the state until the end of the Ottoman Empire.

Gülsoy argues that the Ottoman state aimed to make the Yezidis content and to improve their relations with the state between the years 1893-1909.<sup>366</sup> This proposition is not easy to endorse. I will try to show below that in this period the Yezidis were safe only from the military troops that had previously been released upon them and from forceful conversion attempts. It is true that the return of some of their sacred belongings in 1904 along with the reopening of the Şeyh Adi Shrine for worship and visits was a notable sign of goodwill on the part of the state. On the other hand, military conscription remained a central problem. This does not mean that the Yezidis were therefore forced to convert. Nevertheless, the examples It will be cited below will show that the Hamidian regime never really gave up on the issue of the conversion of the Yezidis and actually used educational activities to achieve this purpose. Moreover not only did the Ottoman government refrain from the official recognition of the Yezidis, but with an official decree issued in 1906 it also made it compulsory for the Yezidis to be registered as Muslims on their official identification certificates as a condition for being recognized as the citizens of the Empire. In this sense, since this period effectively summarizes the themes covered in this thesis, it could be read as a section presenting the concluding points of it.

### The Conversion Issue

It seems that the events that took place in the period between the arrival of the *Heyet-i Tefhimiye* in the region until the military operations of Bekir Paşa (1891-1894) demonstrated the seriousness of the problem to the government, prompting the design of a new approach. It

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<sup>366</sup> Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Yezidileri*, p. 154

was for this purpose that Yıldız Palace asked Mosul to prepare a report detailing Yezidis' religion, culture, traditions, and socio-economic conditions.<sup>367</sup> Furthermore a special commission had been prepared to deal with this project. Not only does the considerably long report prepared by the commission contain extremely important and interesting information about the Yezidis, but it also enables us to trace the commission's suggestions for reform.<sup>368</sup>

In the second part of the report it is conceded by the commission that it would not be easy to “correct the Yezidis’ beliefs.” According to the authors, the Yezidis’ faith was exceedingly strong due to their fanaticism and ignorance. Besides, the Yezidis are emphatically devoted to their religious leaders. Although they did not wish to have a special status under the Empire or adopt a foreign identity such as Christian, the Yezidis apparently harbored “sinister” thoughts such as seeking protection when they were pressurized to change their faith.<sup>369</sup> The authors argue that the reform of the Yezidis was contingent on their conversion and hence elimination of ‘their ignorance’. This was expected to produce results in a period of 20-30 years. Hence, it was not possible to solve this problem solely through military measures which could eventually result in the extinction of the entire race, which itself was not commensurate with the just ideals of the state.

Thus the Ottoman power holders gradually realized that it was not possible to forcefully convert the Yezidis. Moreover, after realizing that the Yezidis were not sending their children to the schools set up in accordance with misinformation from Ömer Vehbi Paşa, the Ottoman government tried to direct resources elsewhere.<sup>370</sup> These reports and events must have caught the attention of Yıldız Palace. In fact we do not come across any forced

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<sup>367</sup> For an example of such reports, see, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 723/4, 9 Z. 1311(13 June 1894)

<sup>368</sup> BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 98/102, 1311 (1894)

<sup>369</sup> Ibid: “...şiddet-i taasub ve cehaletleri saikasıyla diyanetleri için pek mahrane ittihad ederler ve diyanetlerince reis tanıdıkları zevata her vecihle itaat ve inkıyadları son mertebede muhkemdir. Bunların bir hususat-ı idare veya başka tabi 'yet fikirleri kat'en olmayıp taasublarının muhafazasıçün me..... kaldıklarında himayet ve istihsal gibi efkâr-ı fasideden dahi hali olmadıklarına bir vecihle emniyet edilemez.”

<sup>370</sup> See, DH. MKT. 2160/54, 3 N. 1316 (15 January 1899)

conversion attempts directed against the Yezidis after 1894. Nevertheless, in the minds of Ottoman ruler elites the Yezidis remained as a “heretic” group whose “aberrant or incorrect beliefs” have to be corrected. Their Sunnizing remained at the forefront of the Ottoman elites’ concerns.

### Issue of Conscription

Military conscription remained as a crucial issue for both the Yezidis and the state, which began including the Yezidis living in Mosul and other regions to the conscription draws as early as 1894. It is telling that the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Colonel Ahmed Tevfik Efendi had been promoted to the position of Lieutenant Colonel of the Eight Battalion after successfully maneuvering to include the Yezidis in the draw.<sup>371</sup> Nevertheless, having been subjected to the draw does not necessarily imply that the Yezidis attended their stations in the army, although it certainly does display the determination of the Hamidian regime. When we consider the fact that the Yezidis did not join the army as late as 1902 it would be safe to assume that they did not become members of the standing or reserve troops.<sup>372</sup> I will elaborate on this issue further below.

Another archival document shows that the Yezidis were subjected to conscription from 1894 onwards.<sup>373</sup> This has two meanings: first, the Yezidis were at one point not subject to the conscription efforts of the state, and second, this was no longer regarded as being feasible and the Yezidis were then conscripted into the army. However, at least those Yezidis living near Van and Mosul provinces were not going to easily accept this regulation. The

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<sup>371</sup> BOA. Y. MTV. 100/13, 13 M. 1312 (17 July 1894)

<sup>372</sup> BOA. DH. MKT. 484/74, 12 M. 1320 (21 April 1902)

<sup>373</sup> BOA. Dahiliye Nezareti, Tesri-i Muamelat ve Islahat Komisyonu (hereafter DH. TMIK. S.) 36/77, 5 Z. 1319 (15 March 1902)

document we discussed above states that no Yezidis from the three hundred households registered in the Van province were conscripted in the army. We know this also from the time of their petition to enlist in the Hamidiye troops. However this time around five Yezidis were caught with the interference of the Commission for Operative Reforms (*Tesri-i Islahat ve Muemelat Komisyonu*) commission for being recruited into the army. The Yezidis, however, protested as their goods and livestock were already sequestered, which meant that they had paid for their military service. Furthermore they made clear that should the conscription efforts continue, they would abandon their lands (*terk-i me'vâ*).<sup>374</sup>

The Yezidis were as determined as the state. Therefore the commission members working under the Ministry of Interior ask what sort of a treatment they should adopt against the Yezidis. The commission also does not fail to provide information about the characteristics of the Yezidis. Accordingly, they are Iranian 'deviant' group and have bad habits such as taking refuge in the devil. However, the interesting thing about the report is that it argues that the Yezidis believed themselves to be Muslims.<sup>375</sup> This should be a consequence of the repressive policies of the state imposed upon the group. It seems that the identity politics of the regime must have forced them to declare themselves to be Muslims, for they were not as populous and strong as their co-religionists in Sincar and Şeyhan. In such circumstances if they were to be included in the Hamidiye regiments it would now be possible to send officers among them, and they would be brought closer to Islam through the appointment of imams. Moreover, demanding the military payment-in-lieu (*bedel-i askeri*) would be tantamount to classifying them as non-Muslims, hence it would be better to incorporate them into the Hamidiye regiments.<sup>376</sup> Although the outcome is somewhat vague, it is striking to note that this problem remained at the center of the Yezidi-state relations.

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<sup>374</sup> The above-mentioned document.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

The fact that a similar method was put into practice in Mosul during the same months suggests the implementation of a conscious and pre-determined policy. Yezidis in Mosul were unable to fulfill their military duties and pay their taxes because of their “savagery” and “ignorance,” not to mention the strong influence of their leaders.<sup>377</sup> However, in April 1902 state officers in charge of military draws and medical exams went to the Şeyhan district to carry out the draws they also included in this process the important Yezidi leaders.<sup>378</sup> Moreover, they were reminded of the grace and greatness of the Sultan. It is as if the Yezidis were shown that the divorce from the earlier method of forceful deportation to the barracks in favor of peaceful enlistment was the manifestation of the Sultan's grace.

However we do not know for certain whether the Yezidis who were numbered in this inspection actually attended the military or not. At the very least, however, we know that M. Nuri Pasha, governor of Mosul at that time, says that the Yezidis were by no means recruited with a very few exceptions.<sup>379</sup> In addition, although the details are hard to discover, the Yezidi population living in Diyarbakır and Bitlis provinces were partly enlisted in the army.<sup>380</sup> Moreover, as I noted earlier the convert Hüseyin Kanco and his tribe along with a few other tribes joined the Hamidiye troops and fulfilled their military duties. Also, we can find out in Guest's extraordinary study of the Yezidis that those Yezidis living in and around Aleppo, especially in Cebel-i Seman, held on to their religious beliefs and identity, even if this meant they had to pay back for this toleration by agreeing to be recruited into the army. Often they were sent to the garrison in Yemen from where they never returned.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> DH. MKT. 484/74

<sup>378</sup> Ibid: “*taife-i mezburenin buldukları Şeyhan nahiyesi merkezine izâm kılınan ahz-ı asker heyeti marifetiyle erbab-ı esnanın muayeneleri icra ve numero keşidesi muamelatı ifa olunduğuna...*”

<sup>379</sup> Nuri Paşa, p. 40-41

<sup>380</sup> MV. 113/161

## The Fate of the Confiscated Holy Place

The Ottoman government succeeded in persuading the community to allow the Muslim dervishes to live and receive education at the temple at Lalish. Dervishes soon set up a seminary in the region.<sup>382</sup> The Special Commission sent to the region following the skirmishes between Bekir Pasha's forces and the Yezidis were going to refuse to give back to the latter the keys to the shrine even in times of relative peace.<sup>383</sup> Even though the Muslim dervishes stayed in this place until 1914, the keys of the beloved shrine of the Yezidis were to be given back by Mustafa Nuri Pasha, the governor of Mosul at the time who was known for his interest in the Yezidis and who actually carried out the most important study done on the Yezidis.<sup>384</sup> Nevertheless, the Yezidis would have to wait until 1914 for retrieving the most important of the sacred objects that were confiscated during the *Fırka-i Islahiye* period. Süleyman Nazif Pasha, who several times offered the government to recognize the Yezidis as a separate *millet*, gave them back to the Yezidi chief with a ceremony.<sup>385</sup>

## Question of Identity

The status problem of the Yezidis would go on during this period. The following interesting example may help us better understand: a report sent from the Reform Commission (*tesri'-i muamelat ve ıslahat komisyonu*) working under the Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry

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<sup>381</sup> Guest, p. 140. Also, for a short account of the Yezidis in Cebel-i Sem'an, see, Gertrude L. Bell, *The Desert and the Sown* (London: William Heinemann, 1907) (Reprinted by Virago in 1985) pp. 279-296

<sup>382</sup> Guest, p. 141

<sup>383</sup> HSD. CB 3/18

<sup>384</sup> Guest, p. 144

<sup>385</sup> See, BOA. Dahiliye Nezareti, Siyasi Kısım (DH. SYS.) 9/117, 1332 (1914). See also, Gülsoy, p. 159

shows that in the Rıdvan district of the province of Bitlis the non-Muslim population outnumbers the Muslims. Although the circumstances therefore required the district director and two members to be non-Muslims and the vice-director and one member to be Muslims, apparently due to a mix-up the exactly opposite adjustment had been done.<sup>386</sup> The investigatory commission had then returned the register back to the Ministry of Interior, after which the Prime Ministry asked for the correction of this mistake on 11 May of 1899. However, instead of the expected readjustment, a new investigation revealed that there were 1,871 Muslims and 1,536 non-Muslims living in the district of Rıdvan. The mix-up was the result of the classification of the Yezidis as non-Muslims rather than as Muslims. The commission therefore recommended the Prime Ministry that there was no longer any basis for making a readjustment to the existing arrangements.<sup>387</sup>

Actually one should be suspicious about the allegations of “inaccuracy.” It seems that the Yezidis wanted to be registered, as they always did, as non-Muslims and due to “pensiveness” their demands were not rejected by local authorities. It is for this reason that the non-Muslim population outnumbered the Muslims in the original count. Once more the Ottoman state treated the Yezidis as Muslims, just as it had done to various other groups that were not recognized as millets. The Hamidian state continues to regard the Yezidis from within the frame of its own identity politics. The count and election entanglement observed in this mid-level district is a clear example. After so many bloody and devastating turn of events, the state was adamant about not perceiving the Yezidis on their own terms.

Hence in 1906 the General Population Examination and Operations Commission (*Nüfus-ı Umumiye Tedkik ve Muamelat Komisyonu*) recommended to keeping an open ear to

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<sup>386</sup> BOA. DH. TMIK. S. 30/51, 23 S. 1318 (22 June 1900)

<sup>387</sup> The above-mentioned document: “...*Yezidi taifesi nüfusunun sehven gayr-i Müslim nüfusu meyanında gösterilmiş olmasından ilerü geldiği ve şu halde nahiye-i mezbure heyet-i müntehibesince tashihat icrasına hacet kalmadığı[nın] bildirildiğinin tesri’-i muamelat ve ıslahat komisyonunun ifadesiyle arz ve beyanına ibtidar kılındı...*”

the Yezidi demands. It was recommended that the identification certificates of Yezidis of the Islam religion to note “*Yezidi-yi Müslim/Muslim Yezidi*” and Yezidis not professing Islam to display “*Yezidi-yi gayr-i Müslim/non-Muslim Yezidi*.”<sup>388</sup> Nevertheless, the Council of Ministers (*Meclis-i Vükela*) rejected the proposal on the grounds that the Yezidis, despite having been registered as merely “Yezidis” in the old registers, were in reality Muslims and obligated to serve in the army.<sup>389</sup> According to the Council of Ministers this group was essentially Muslim and considering them as non-Muslims due to their “evil belief” (*sû-i akidelerinden dolayı*) regarding faith would not be the correct path to follow.<sup>390</sup> Thus the council decided that they should be registered as Muslims and had their identification certificates classify them as such. Moreover, it is hinted that if the Yezidis were to object to this regulation they were to be reminded that without their identification certificates several official undertakings would not be able to be carry out.<sup>391</sup> It is also stipulated that the Yezidis were subject to the regulations regarding compulsory conscription.

### Some Concluding Remarks

As a result, this paper has attempted to study the state-Yezidi community relations in the late Ottoman period by focusing on some particular issues such as the question of status,

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<sup>388</sup> MV. 113/161: “*Yezidiler’in tezkere-i Osmaniye’lerinde mezheb hanesine yalnız Müslim yazılmayub bunlardan Müslim olanlarına verilecek tezkerelerde Yezidi-yi Müslim ve gayr-i Müslim bulunalarına Yezidi-yi gayr-i Müslim yazılması Nüfus-ı Umumiye Tedkik [ve] Muamelat Komisyonu’nun tebliğ olunan mazbatasında gösterilmesi üzerine Yezidi sakin olan vilayetlerle bu babda cereyan eden muhabereden bahisle bazı ifadeyi havi Dahiliye Nezareti’nden varid olan 3 C. sene 324 tarihli tezkere kiraat olundu*”

<sup>389</sup> As can be seen, a Council of Ministers made a decision on “the real” identity of a community. See the above mentioned document: “*bunların eski kayıtlarında mezheb hanesinde Yezidi muharrer ise de kendileri esasen Müslim ve İslam isimleriyle müsemma olmalarıyla...*” That is just a practice of “identity engineering.”

<sup>390</sup> Ibid: “*...bu taife esasen İslam oldukları halde sû-i akidelerinden dolayı bir kısmına gayr-i Müslim nazarıyla bakılması ve sicil-i nüfus kaydıyla resmîyete konulması caiz ve mahzurdan salim olamayacağından...*”

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.: “*...bunların İslam olarak sicil-i nüfusa idhal ve tezkere-i Osmaniye’lerinin âna göre imla ve ita edilmesi ve şayed içlerinde İslam namıyla verilecek tezakiri kabulden imtina’ edecek bulunur ise anların istihsal-i muvafakatlerine bakılmayub İslam olarak kayıtları icra ile tezkere-i Osmaniye iraeisi icab edecek hususatda işlerinin tezkere-i Osmaniye ibrazına ta’lik olunması...*”

conscription, and conversion. In this connection, it aimed to indicate that the Yezidi example, in various aspects, illustrates how a heterodox, Kurdish and tribal community was dominated by strong internal dynamics. It is true that the Ottoman perception of the Yezidi identity and conscription and conversion policies in the late Ottoman period determined the social and economic realities of the Yezidi tribes.

Within the context of the modern regime of power, the thesis sought to examine the increasing interest of the Ottoman government in dominating the Yezidi tribes. As I have sought to demonstrate above, by the late 1830s the Ottoman government demanded more and permanent tax from the community, sought to access to the Yezidi settlement, and take control by means of new governmental apparatus. Although this process undoubtedly influenced the Yezidi tribes, it was obvious that there were limits to the state intervention in controlling and penetrating the community.

Here to sum up, it is possible to put forward several claims. First, the question of status of the Yezidis within the Ottoman political and social classification has always remained an issue and it has influenced the policies and discourses reciprocally. Having marginalized the Yezidi community, the Ottoman rulers and elites regarded them as “heretic” and “savage” and did not recognize them a separate *millet*, but as Muslim. Such a perception of Yezidis and the fact that they were treated as Muslim triggered the issue of conscription and conversion policies during the Hamidian period.

Second, the Yezidis have never submitted themselves to be conscripted, never accepting to be closely controlled by the state. It was aimed to demonstrate that the Yezidis’ resistance to the conscription should not be related to only religious tenets and practices because it has also represented the resistance to military service itself as a modern project.

Third, this thesis was an attempt to study the Hamidian policies towards the Yezidi community. Within a broader context, linking the Hamidian attempts to make the Yezidis

obedient, educated, “civilized”, dependable, and integrated to the imperial order, with the strategies for hegemony and eastern policy, I sought to examine in Chapter 4 the question of identity, conversion policies, and efforts of “taming” the Yezidis by means of military attacks in the Hamidian era. However, despite all insistence and efforts of Yıldız Palace, a conclusion to the problem of conscription and conversion did not emerge. Even though the Ottoman authorities took a various number of people from the Yezidi community to the barracks or converted them to Islam by force in different time periods, the Hamidian regime never succeeded in conscripting or converting the community that sought to overcome such attempts with different instruments, discourses, and practices. In this sense, this study sought to demonstrate the tendencies, expectations, and policies accompanied with the limits of the state power.

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-Mektubi Kalemî  
-Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdaresi  
-Islahat  
-Emniyet-i Umumiye

Sadaret  
-Müteferrik Belgeler  
-Umum Vilayat Evrakı  
-Meclis-i Vala Evrakı  
-Nezaret ve Devair

Hatt-ı Hümayun

Yıldız Tasnifi  
-Yıldız Adliye ve Mezahib Nezareti  
Maruzatı

Hariciye  
-Mektubi Kalemî  
-Tercüme Odası

-Yıldız Esas Evrakı  
-Yıldız Hususi Maruzat  
-Yıldız Maarif Nezareti Maruzatı  
-Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat  
-Yıldız Parakende Askeri Maruzat  
-Yıldız Parakende Başkitabet  
-Yıldız Parakende Sadaret Maruzat  
-Yıldız Parakende Umum Vilayetler  
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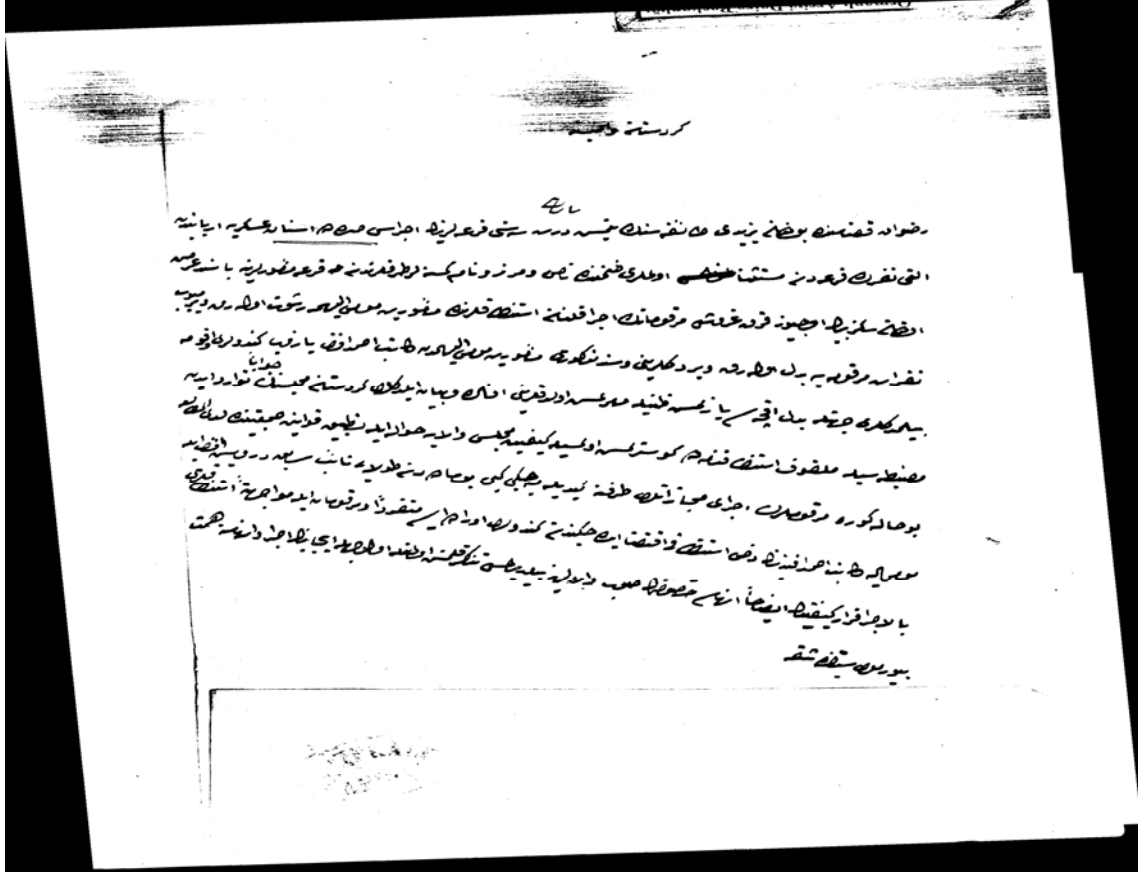
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## APPENDIXES

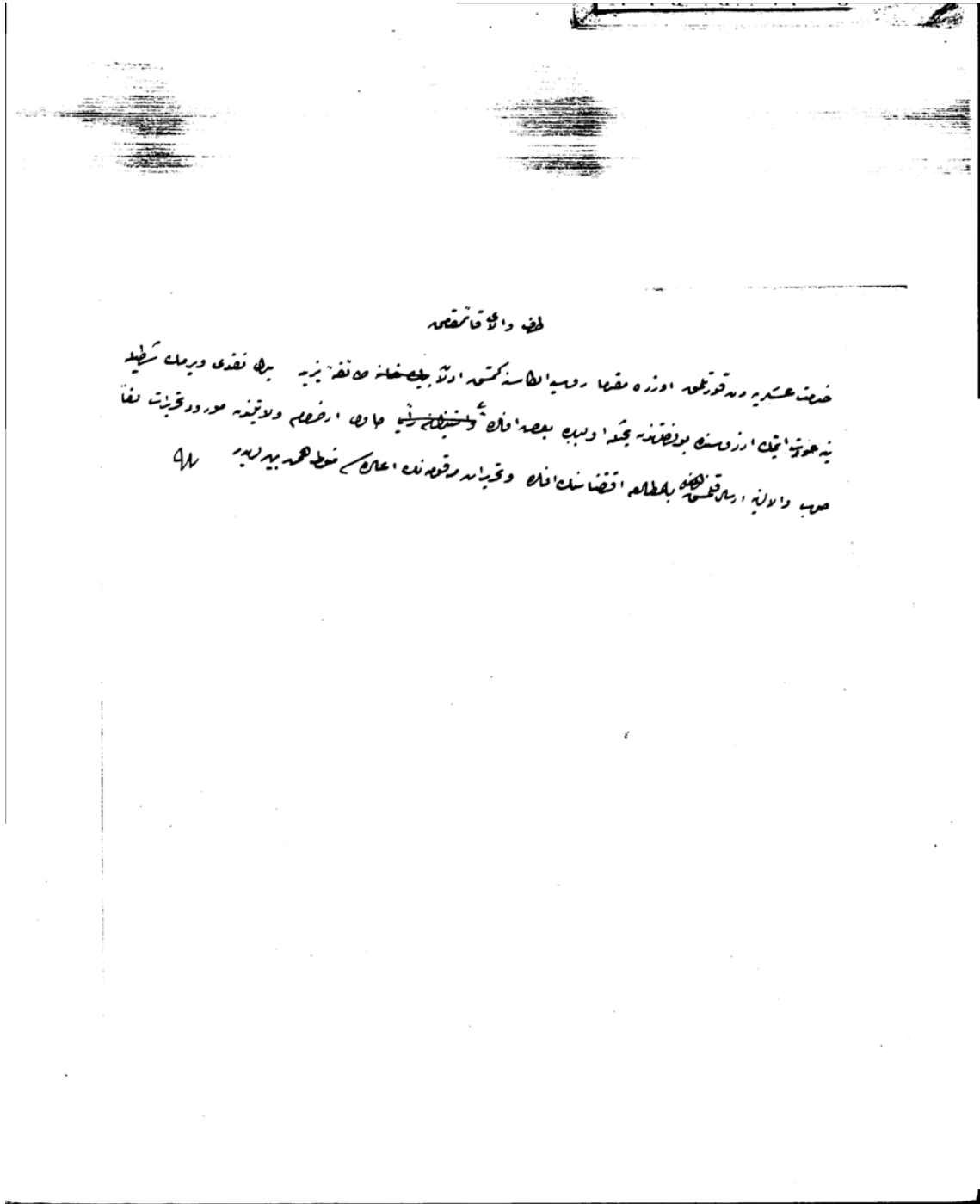
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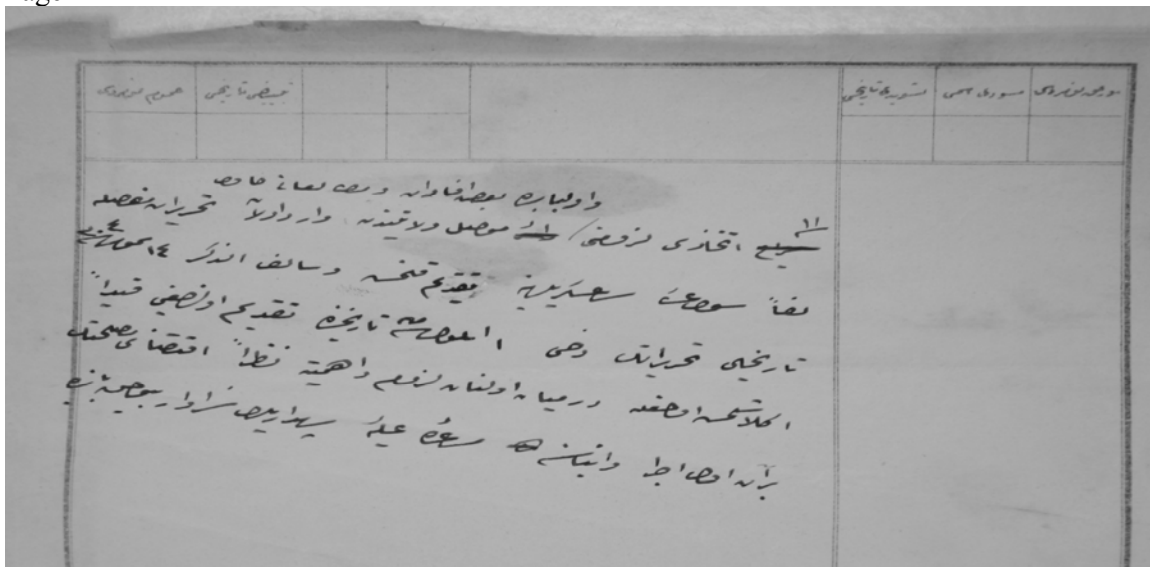
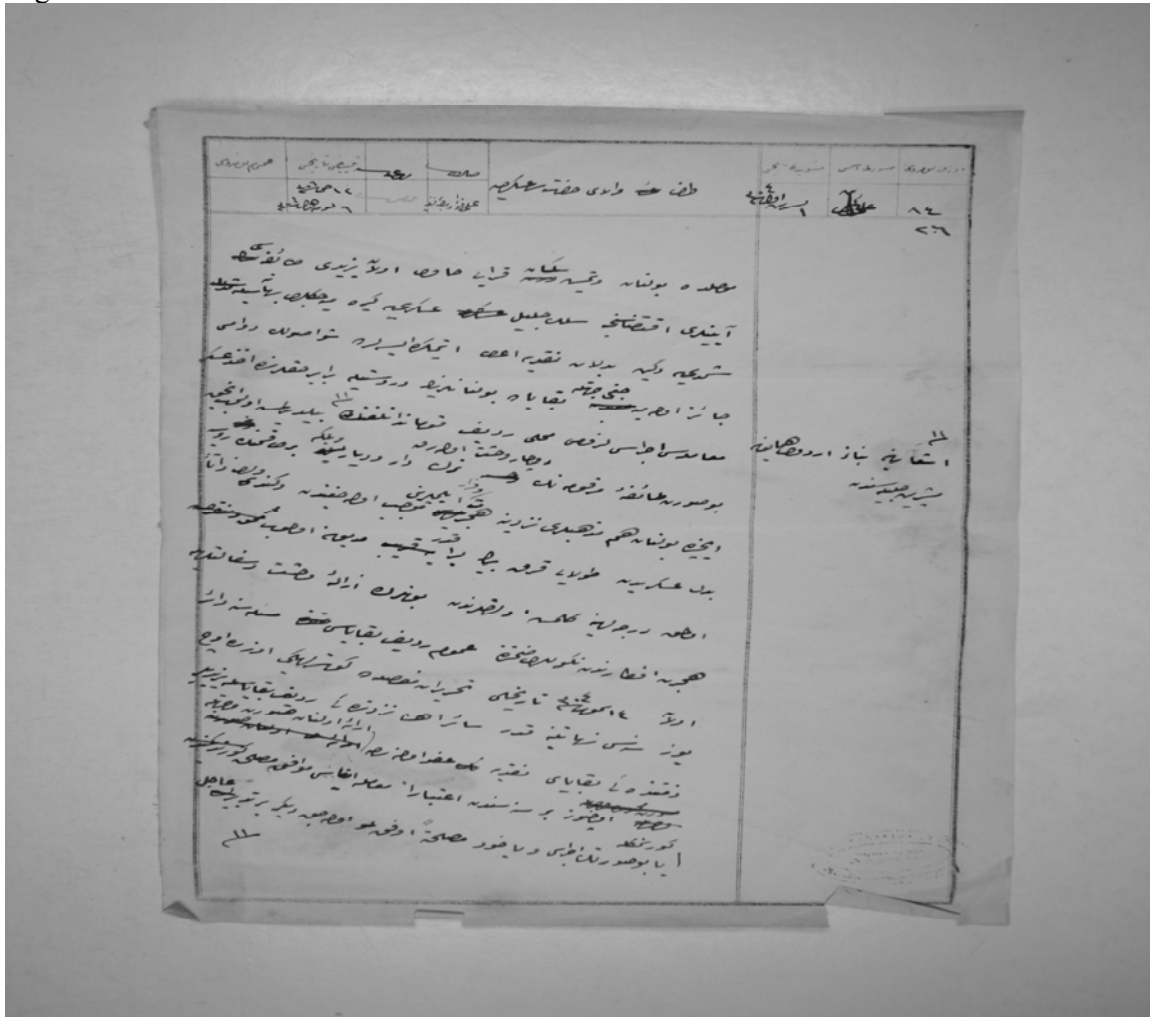
#### Kürdistan Valisi'ne

Rıdvan Kazası'nda bulunan Yezidi taifesinin yetmiş dört senesi kur'alarının icrası sıradaki esnan-ı askeriye erbabından altı neferinin kur'adan müstesna olmaları zımında Nahi ve Merzo nam kimesneler tarafından kur'a memurlarına ba-sened arz olunan sekiz bin üç yüz kırk guruş merkumenin icra kılınan istintaklarında memurîn-i müma-ileyhe rüşvet olarak virülüb neferat-ı merkumeye bedel olarak virdiklerini ve sened-i mezkuru memurîn-i müma-ileyhümadan katib Ahmed Efendi yazub kendüleri okuma bilmedikleri cihetle bedel akçesi yazılmış zannıyla mühürlemiş olduklarını ifade ve beyan eyledikleri Kürdistan Meclisi'nin cevaben tevarüd eden mazbatasıyla melfuf istintaknamede gösterilmiş olmasıyla keyfiyet Meclis-i V âlâ'ya havale ile natıka-karain-i cemiyyetinde led-el-mütalaa bu hale göre merkumelerin icra-yı mecazlatları tarafına gidileceği gibi bu maddeden dolayı Taib Serik Derosin (?) ile müma-ileyh katib Ahmed Efendi'nin dahi istintakı iktiza edeceğinden kendileri orada ise münferiden ve merkumat ile muvacehete istintakları bi'l-icra karar keyfiyetinin izahen inhası hususatının savb-ı vâlâlarına bildirilmesi tezakkür kılınmış olmağla ol-vechile icabının icra ve inhasına himmet buyurulması şükka.



Taraf-ı Vala-yı Kaim-makamî

Hizmet-i askeriyeden kurtulmak üzere mukaddema Rusya elkasına [ülkesine] gitmiş olan taife-i Yezid bedel-i nakdî vermek şartıyla yine avdet etmek arzusunda bulduklarından bahisle ol babda bazı ifadeyi havi Erzurum Vilayeti'nden mevrud tahrirat leffen savb-ı valalarına irsal kılınmış olmağla ba-mütalaa iktizasının ifade ve tahrirat-ı merkume iadesi menut-ı himmet-i behiyyeleridir.



## Taraf-ı Vâlâ-yı Hazret-i Seraskerî'ye

12 Safer [1]306

6 Teşrin-i evvel [1]304

Musul'da bulunan ve yetmiş seksan kurayı havi olan Yezidi taifesi ayinleri iktizasınca silk-i celil-i askeriye giremeyecekleri bahanesiyle şimdiye değin bedelat-ı nakdîye ifâ etmekte iseler de şu usûlun devamı olamayacağı cihetle bakaya bulunanların der-destiyle beraber haklarında ahz-ı asker muamelesi icrası lüzumu mahallî redif komutanlığına bildirilmiş olub ancak bu suret-i taife-i merkumenin düçar u vahşet olarak terk-i dar u diyar bir takımının Rusya içinde bulunan hem-mezhepleri nezdine hicret eylemeleri mucib olacağından ve kendileri zaten bedel-i askeriye dolaylı kırk bin lira kadar medyun olub mahv olmak derecelerine gelmiş olduklarından bunların izale-i vahşet ve sefaletleriyle hicret efkârından tekvilleri zımında umum redif bakayasına muamelesine dair olan 14 Temmuz sene 304 tarihli tahrirat-ı mufassılada gösterildiği üzere üç yüz senesi nihayetine kadar sair ahali nezdindeki redif bakayasıyla Yezidiler zimmetindeki bakaya-yı nakdîye ahz olunarak irade olunan suret-i vechle üç yüz bir senesinden itibaren muamele ifâsı muvafık-ı maslahat görünmekle ya bu suretin icrası veyahud maslahaten ufak olacak diğer bir tedbir-i acil ittihazı lüzumunu ve ol babda bazı ifadat ve mütaalatı havi Musul Vilayeti'nden varid olan tahrirat-ı mufassıla leffen su-i ali-yi Seraskerîlerine takdim kılınmış ve salifü'z-zikr 14 Temmuz sene 304 tarihli tahriratın dahi 1 Eylül tarihinde takdim olunacağı kayden anlaşılmiş olmağla dermiyan olunan lüzum ve ehemmiyete nazaran iktiza-yı maslahat bir an evvel icra ve inbâsına müsaade-i aliyye-i sipeh-darileri sezaver buyrulmak babında.



اداره نهدری	سورده کس	شماره نامه	نوع سند	تاریخ	موضوع
۷۷۰	صحت	۱۴		۱۲	تعمیرات
<p>                     این سند در خصوص معوقات مجلس مخصوص و کاره ادعا المطالع رافعا طائفه مشرفه حقه                      بر معام استثنای اجلاس جائز اولی مقدم برابر سواد سلیت محدودی در شیخ اولی جقم و حله در                      راضیه بر نامه بریدی طائفه حقه خدمت قانونگذار هیئت احکامه توضیحات و توضیحات                      ایدوی در ولایت ساریارده جویا انما تقرانام دره سبانه اولی نظر طائفه بر بیره                      مصلحه بر نامه حقد در حق قانونگذار کشورک تمنه جریان لایح که جنسه طائفه ساریارده                      استعاره نیز تقوید و اورا در مشرفه نظر بر فرضا بر این معا اعاده ایلیه اجتهاد بر موجب قرار                      ایضای مقتضایه همین سبب است                 </p>					

*Document 1:*

Bab-1 Ali  
Meclis-i Mahsus

Fi 7 Ca sene [1]306 tarihlü zabıtname suretidir.

Yezidi taifesi simdiye kadar kur'aları isabet edenler için an-ı cemaate bedel-i nakdî itâ etmek olup badema ahz-ı asker kanun-name-i hümayun hükmüne tevfikân bedel-i nakdî vermiş olsalar bile beş mâh bi'z-zat hizmet-i askeriye de bulunmaları lazım gelerek halbuki hizmet-i fi'liyye-i askeriye hilaf-ı ayinleri idüğünden ve mahallî redif kumandanlığınca taife-i merkume haklarında hükm-i kanunun tamamen icrası talep olunmakta olması hasebiyle rihlete başladıklarından bahisle üç yüz senesine kadar bakayada bulunan ahalinin ve bu meyanda Yezidilerin afvı ahali-i saire ile beraber bunların dahi teskin-i melce'ini mucib olacağı gibi üç yüz bir senesinden itibaren ahali-i saire misüllü ahz-ı asker muamelesine muvafakat etmeleri memûl olduğuna dair vilayet-i müşarün-ileyhadan alınan muharrerat üzerine taraf-ı Seraskerîye'ye gönderilen tezkire takımıyla kırâat olundu. Serasker-i müşarün-ileyhin hülâsa-i cevabı zikr olunan kanun-name-i hümayun tarih-i Teşrin-i Evvel isimlerine kur'a isabetle bakayada bulunan efradın suret-i istihdamları meclis-i askeriyece der-dest-i tezkire olduğuna Yezidi taifesinin sene-i sabıka kur'a bakayası hakkında verilecek karara göre muamele olunacağı bedihî ise de ahz-ı asker kanun hükmünce bedel-i nakdî vermek isteyenlerin mutlaka nizamiye taburlarında beş mah bi'z-zat hizmet-i askeriye de bulunması lazımeden olup bunlar hakkında bir muamele-i istisnaiyye gösterilmesi dahi caiz olamayacağına binaen ol-babda icrası iktiza eden muamelenin istifsarından ibaret olup vakı'an taife-i merkume hakkında bir muamele-i istisnayan icrası caiz olmamakla beraber sû-i sirayet mahzurını dahi müntiç olacağına ve Haleb Vilayeti dahilinde bulunan Yezidi taifesi hakkında ahz-ı asker kanun-name-i hümayun ahkamına tevfik muamele olunmakta idüğü dahi Haleb Vilayeti'nden cevaben alınub mezkur tezkire ile birleştirilen telgrafnameden müsteban olmasına nazaran taife-i mezbureden Musul'da bulunanları hakkında dahi kanunname-i mezkurun tamamen cereyanı lazım geleceğinin cevaben taraf-ı askeriye işarına karar verildi.

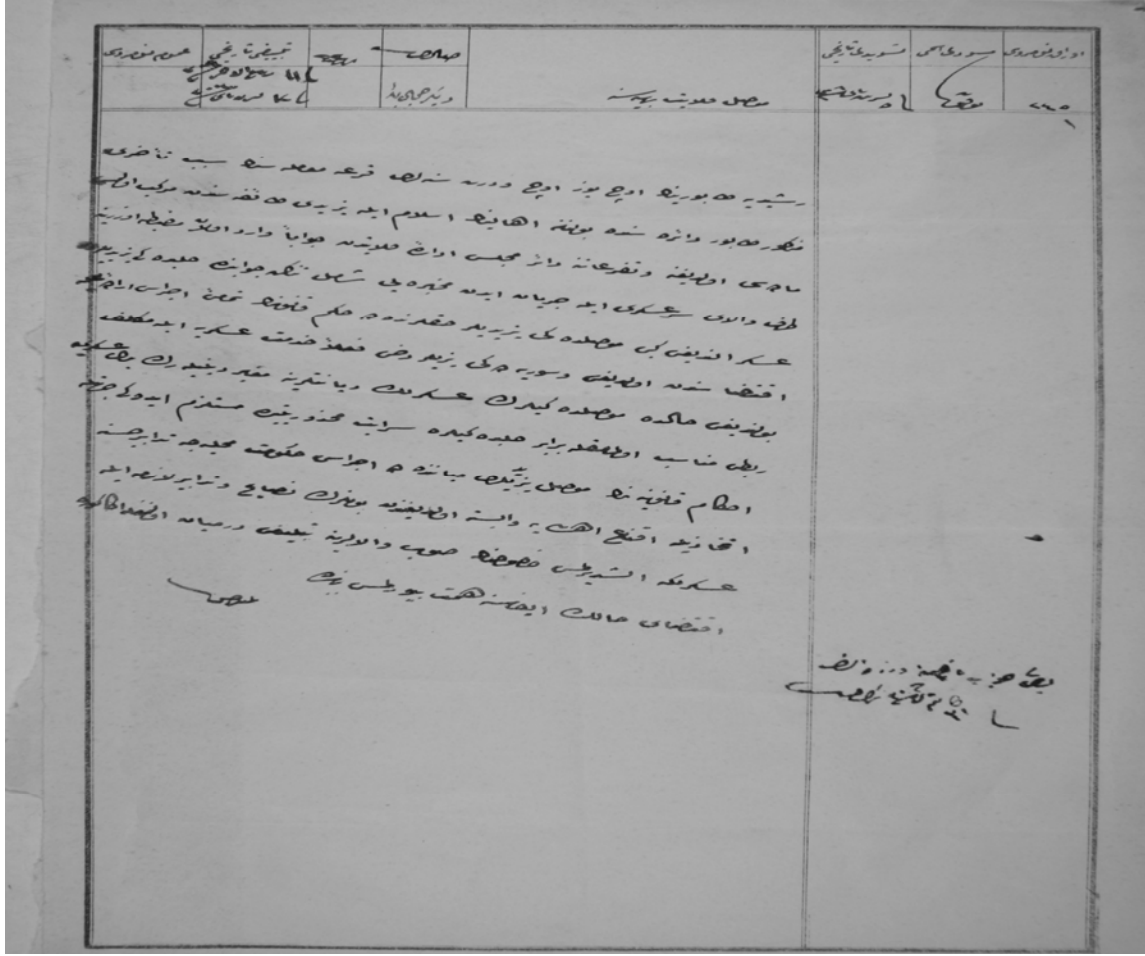
Aslına mutabıkdır  
Amedî Divan-ı Hümayun

*Document 2:*

Evrak numerosu: 772  
Tarih: 4 Kanun-ı sâni sene [1]304

Taraf-ı sâmi-i Seraskerî'ye

İş bu tezkire-i ser-askerîleriyle melfûfatı Meclis-i Mahsus-ı Vükela'da led-el-mütalaa-ı vakıa taife-i merkume hakkında bir muamele-i istisnaiyye icrası caiz olmamakla beraber sû-i sirayet-i mahzurını dahi müntiç olacağına ve Haleb vilayeti dahilinde bulunan Yezidi taifesi hakkında ahz-ı asker kanunname-i hümayunu ahkamına tevfik muamele olunmakta idüğü dahi vilayet-i müşarün-ileyhadan cevaben alınan telgrafnameden müsteban olmasına nazaran taife-i mezbureden Musul'da bulunanlar haklarında dahi kanunname-i mezkurun tamamen cereyanı lazım geleceğinden taraf-ı sami-i ser-askeriyelerine işarı tezekkür kılınmış ve evrak-ı merkume mezkur telgraf-name ile maan iade edilmiş olmağla ber-muceb karar ifâ-yı muktezasına himmet buyurulması babında.



Musul Vilayet-i Behiyyesine

Evrak numarası: 245

Tarih: 11 Rebiü'l-ahir sene [1]308

Reşidiye Taburu'nun üçyüz üç ve dört senesi kura muamelesinin sebab-i tehiri mezkur tabur dairesinde bulunan ahaliyat-ı İslam ile Yezidi tairesinden mürekkeb olması maddesi olduğuna ve teferruatının Meclis-i İdare-i Vilayet'den cevaben varid olan mazbata üzerine taraf-ı valayı Seraskerî ile cereyan eden muhabereyi şamil tezkere cevabında Haleb'deki Yezidiler hakkında da hükm-i kanun tamam-i icrası irade-i aliyye iktizasından olduğu ve Suriye'deki Yezidiler'in dahi fiilen hıdmet-i askeriye ile mükellef olduğu halde Musul'dakilerin askerlik diyanetlerine mugayyer denilerek bedel-i askerîye rabtı münasib olmamakla beraber Haleb'dekilere sirayet mahzuriyeti de müstelzim idiği cihetle ahkam-ı kanuniyenin Musul Yezidileri meyanında icra-yı hükümet-i mahalliyece tedabir-i hasene ittihaziyla ikna-i ahaliye va-beste olduktan bunların nesaih ve tedabir-i lazımiye ile askerliğe alışdırılması hususunda savb-ı valalarına tebliği dermiyan olunmağla âna göre iktiza-yı halin ifâsına himmet buyurulması babında.

Signature

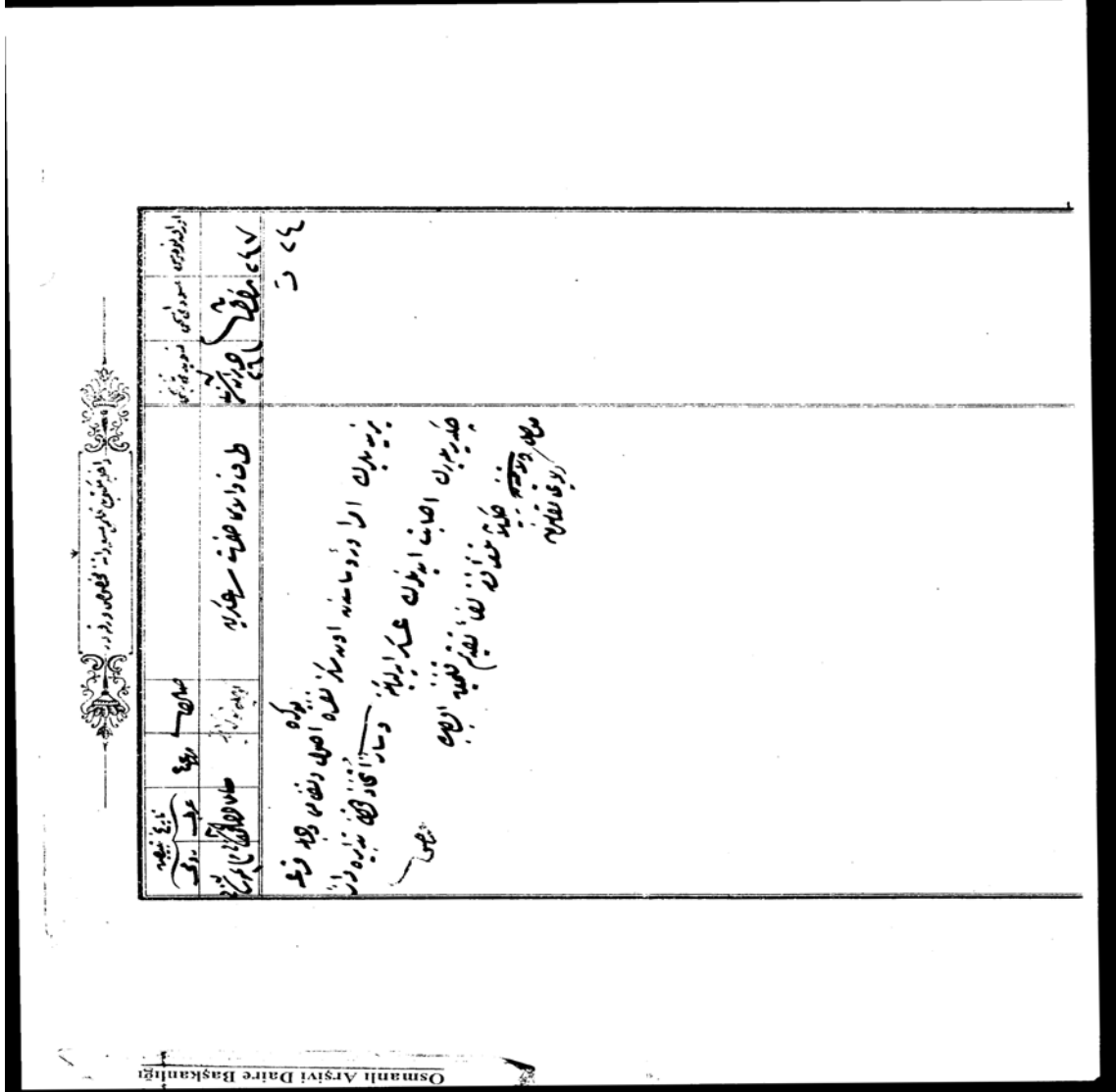


یزدیدی طائفه سکک مرکزی اولاد شیخان ناحیه سکک باعدره قریه سنده یکری کوندری ایضای یوزینه  
مباشرت ایتمه لایسده اوتدونه بری طائفه مرقوم بری اضلال اوفساده سبب متعل اول قلمی حق  
اولاد قریه نیکورس ایله قراراس کره متجاوره ایلیس سنه معلوم الاسامی اشخاص اوداوه بولنده قلم  
نصایح و تفریحاتک یانیر کور ایله سیکینتر جمله اشخاص مرقوم سکک دیگر بولایته تبعید اولغدی لوزینه  
مداثر موصله اعزام یوز یلاتر هیئت تفریحاتک باسککه کونتر طرف جانیر کوشیده ایله کلری فریض  
منظور شکست نشور حضرت خلافتینا هر یوز بولون اوز نه لفا تقدیم قلمغده مندر حایره مقننه هر نه مسود لار و فریض  
شرف شیخ و مسود یوز یوز ایله منطوق منتهی اوز نه حرکت اولغور اقدم  
سید احمد  
سید احمد  
سید احمد

Bab-1 Fetva  
Daire-i Meşihat

Yezidi taifesinin merkezi olan Şeyhan nahiyesindeki Baadre karyesinde yirmi bir günden beri ifâ-yı memuriyete mübaşeret etmişler ise de öteden beri taife-i merkumeyi ihtilal ve efsada sebep müstakil oldukları mütehakkik olan karye-i mezkur ile kura-i saire-i mütejavire ahalisinden malumu'l-esami eşhas orada bulundukça nesaih ve tefhimatın tesiri görülmeyeceğinden bahisle eşhas-ı merkumenin diğer bir vilayete te'bid olunmaları lüzümuna mütedair Musul'a izam buyurulan Heyet-i Tefhimiye'nin Başika merkezinden taraf-ı acizaneme keşide etdikleri telgrafname manzur-ı şevket-nüşur-ı hazret-i hilafet-penahileri buyurulmak üzere leffen takdim kılınmağla münderecatı hakkında ise ne suretle emr ü ferman-ı hümayun şeref sünuh u südur buyuruluyor ise mantuk-ı münifi üzere hareket olunur efendim.

Fi 2 Şevval sene 1308 ve fi 7 Mayıs sene 1307  
Şeyhü'l-İslam  
Ömer Lütfi



Taraf-ı Vâlâ-yı Hazret-i Seraskerî'ye

Evrak numerosu: 247

Fi 7 Zi'l-hicce sene [1]308 ve 1 Temmuz sene [1]307

Yezidilerin ümera ve rüesasından on sekiz nefere bu kere usul ve nizamı vechle kura çekdirilerek isabet edenlerin asker edildiğine ve sair eşhas hakkında tedabire dair Musul Vilayeti makamına çekilen telgrafname leffen takdim kılınmış ol babda.





Mabeyn-i Hümayun Cenab-ı Mülukane-i Başkitabet-i celilesine

Başika ve Şeyhan nahiyesindeki Yezidi taifesinin yeddlerinde sahte redif ve müstahfız tezkereleri zuhur etdi ve daha pek çok edecektir. Otuz beş bin lira-i Osmani bedel-i nakdî akçesi Musul Meclis-i İdare-i Vilayet azalarıyla ahali ve muteberanın boğazlarında kaldığı tebeyyün ediliyor. Taife-i malume bu ana kadar memuriyet-i mülkiye redif-i ümera ve zabitanına aynî bir yemeklik ittihaz etmiştir. Yezidilerin birinci defası olarak 19 Haziran 307 tarihinde rüesalarından yirmi iki neferlik kur'asını keşide etmişdim. Neferat-ı merkume elyevm Musul'da aramsaz nizamiye kırkyedinci alayın birinci taburunda ifâ-yı hıdmet eylemekdedirler. Yezidilerin seksen pare karyelerini mukavele-i rehine suretiyle taht-ı tasarruflarında olan idare-i vilayet azalarıyla sair bu gibi bir takım zevatların ittifaklarıyla bu muvafakatlığımı hüsn eden devletin nan u lağmetinin (?) kadarını bilmeyen vali-i sabık saadetlü Tahir Paşa hazretleri ve Musul redif-i livası saadetlü Hakkı Paşa'nın hakk-ı acizanemde makam-ı sadaret penahi hilafın vaki işa'retleri üzerine makam-ı müşarün-ileyhden fi 11 Temmuz sene 307 tarihinde vilayete gelen emir telgrafı üzerine işar-ı ahere kadar işden el çekdirildim ise de memuriyetimin lağvına ve yahud bendelerinin işden el çekdirilmesine dair iki aydan berü ne irade-i seniyye şeref-taalluk buyurulmuş ve ne de bir makamatdan emr aldım. Vuk'u-u hali telgrafla arz etmeyi istedim ise telgrafımın resmen keşide edilmemesi için vali-i müşarün-ileyh telgraf müdirine emr verildiği müdir-i müma-ileyhin ifadesiyle telgraflarımın bir gün sonra gerüye iade edilmesinden anlaşılmışdı. Müşarün-ileyhümanın hakkındaki işarları ise salifü'l-arz maruzatımı meydan-ı hakikate vasıl edeceğim. Bendeniz hasıl etmeleriyle ilerüde haklarında mes'uliyete dai olacağı muhataralarından ilerü gelerek bu gibi muameleye mütecasir zevatların ilkaiyetle mündericesi hiç bir vakitte merhamet kabul ve müteceviz buyurulmayacağından mağduriyetime karşı hakk-ı çakeranemde sezavar buyurulacak irade-isabetade-i daverilerinin intizarında bulunduğumun ifadesi maruzunda ve her halde emr ü ferman hazret-i men lehü'l-emrindir.

Fi 11 Ağustos sene [1]307

Başika  
Heyet-i Tefhimiye Reisi  
Binbaşı Abdülkadir



## Musul Vilayet-i behiyyesine

Fi 12 Rebiu'l-Ahir sene [1]309/  
3 Teşrin-i sani sene [1]307

Yezidi taifesinin izale-i cehalet ve dalâletleri ve hıdmet-i mukaddese-i askeriyyeye alışdırılmaları zımnında telkinat-ı müessire ifâ etmek üzere izam olunan heyet reisi Binbaşı Abdulkadir Efendi'nin evsaf-ı matlubeyi haiz olmadığını ve heyet-i mezkure azasından Abdulhamid ve Mustafa Şevket ve Kol Ağası Hilmi efendilerin kuvve-i aliyye ve dirayetlerine diyecek yok ise de mümaileyh Abdulkadir Efendi'nin muamele-i şedidesinin tesiriyle bunların taife-i merkumenin nefretini celb eylediği cihetle heyet-i mezburenin Dersaadet'e celbiyle yeniden bir heyetin teşekkülü ve bazı kurada mektebler tesisi lazımeden olub Diyarbekr Nakibü'l-eşraf Kaim-makamı Hacı Mesud Bey'in aliyye ve kuvve-i nutkiyesiyle elsan ve imzica-i aşaire vukufuna heyet-i tefhimiyenin maaş ve muhassatına olan dört bin yedi yüz guruşdan iki bin beşyüz guruşunun müma-ileyh Mesud Bey'e tahsisiyle reis tayini ve bin sekiz yüz guruşunun dahi mahal ulemasından lisan-ı aşaire vakıf intihab olunacak üç zata ve dört yüz guruşunun Yezidilerin emniyetlerini kazanmış ağavatdan bir münasibine itasıyla reis-i müma-ileyh maiyetinde aza sıfatıyla bulundurulmalarına ve müma-ileyhümanın seyyar bulunacakları müddetce mesarif-i zaidelerine mukabil reis-i müma-ileyhe yevmi on ve azaya beşer guruş ücret verilerek istihdamının favaid-i azimeyi müstelzim olacağı taraf-ı vâlâlarından cevaben alınan tahriratda dermiyan olmasına ve bi'l-istizan irade-i seniyye-i cenab-ı padişahi dahi ol-merkezde müteallik ve şeref-südur buyurularak taraf-ı vâlâyı, fetva-penahi ve Seraskerî ile Maliye Nezareti'ne malumat verilmiş olduğu ba-tezkere-i sâmiye emr ü izbar buyurulmuş olmağla ber-muceb-i irade-i seniyye icra-yı icabına himmet buyurulması babında.

Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı

بندر کلات داری  
باش کلات داری

صورت

مکاتیبی غیر تابع اور دربره ۸ ساله اولیا سرتیبه قدسک الحیاہ و تقوسدی نورانیہ زینتوں بولن تشکیل ایضاً لکھنؤ عساکری  
سک جمیلہ قبولہ استقامتہ قیام امید کوی بانیہ بزر محفہ استیلاہ معلابا محنتی دروکار دوری کھاپوری مشین طغنه و اردو لایا  
یادگار شاگردی قولیہ ۱۰ مارچ تا ۱۵ مارچ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
مکاتیب جوازہ سالہ زبوری عساکری سکا ارضی مناسب لکھنؤ کی علامت برقمہ دہن مبارک اولیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
عسکریہ آئینہ اولیہ و تقوسدی دہن عساکری ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
سرتیبه آئینہ اولیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
قولیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
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نزد الام و فرسٹ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
تجدہ بودہ اردو اہمال کوسر سرتیبه عدت غازیسی مکاتیب اولیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
عومہ خدمت عسکریہ مکاتیبہ بولن خدمت قیامت کلمہ اولیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
ادھم سرتیبه العسکریہ اولیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
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در مامک سرتیبه ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
پوشدر

زاتاً قوم اسلام دہ شمشیر لکھنؤی حاکمہ اندر خدمت انہم دہہ بالحدی مفضیلتہ لکھنؤی مصلحت حال خدمتہ  
دو خطہ استریم و دہا طویل دوشہ بر سوال مددہ حال خدمتہ بر عمل سیاست تجویز بر عملہ لوزہ حالہ اولیہ  
استعارہ دہہ کدوازمہ اولیہ تکلیفہ قوت عمویہ نقطہ نقطہ ناس اولیہ سیک محفودہ سرتیبه اولیہ مصلحت  
کہہ نایفہ قولیہ خدمتہ بر کومیت و محفودہ عساکری سکا او خلیلہ عساکر دوشہ خدمتہ کا قانونہ نادر کھاپوری مکاتیب  
توفیقاً و تقویہ بالظہر سرتیبه مکاتیبہ عسکریہ اللہ العزیز کی فائزہ مصلحتی در ضمیمہ اولیہ وارڈیہ ۱۸۹۱ عیسوی  
تکلیفہ سرتیبه اولیہ قومہ لکھنؤی انہما کھنؤی بانہوسر سرتیبه تعدادہ و تاجر صورتیہ عومہ جمیلہ ندرک ایرک  
۷۴۴ / 139/15



Suret

Hakkari sancağına tâbi ondört karyede sakin olup şimdiye kadar asker alınmayan ve nüfusları tahrir olunmayan Yezidiler'in bu kere teşkil edilmiş olan asâkir-i Hamidiye silk-i celilesine kabulleri istidasına kıyam eyledikleri beyaniyle bunlar hakkında istizan-ı muameleyi muhtevi Dördüncü Ordu-yı Hümayunları Müşiriyeti tarafından varid olup Yaver-i Ekrem Şakir Paşa kullarının fi 5 Mart sene [18]92 tarihli arizasıyla arz-ı atebe-i ulyaları kılınmış olan şifrelü telgrafname üzerine gerek Hakkari'de ve gerek Musul civarında sakin Yezidi taifesini asakir-i hamidiye sülkuna idhali münasib olunmayacağı gibi hallerine bırakmak dahi caiz olmayacağından yavaş yavaş hıdmet-i askeriyeye alışdırılmış olmak ve nüfusları dahi ale't-tedric yazılmak ve vakt-i hazırda mevasım-ı münasebe talim etdirilüb esna-yı muharebede asakir-i redif gibi istihdam edilmek üzere taife-i merkumenin hizmet-i askeriyeleri hakkında bir tedbir düşünülerek hakipa-yı hümayunlarına arzı

Tarik-i dalaletde puyan olan bu taifenin Hamidiye alayları teşkili bahsinde bu derecelerde inhimak göstermelerinin illet-i gaibesini Musul Vilayeti'nde kendülerinden asker ahz olunmak üzere edilen teşebbüsât-ı ciddiye hasebiyle umumun hizmet-i askeriyeye mükellefiyetinde bulunacaklarını kanaat gelmiş olmasından münbahis olub asker edinen efradın esas-ı itikadları zaten evhen-i min beytü'l-ankebut olmasıyla efrad-ı Müslime arasında bis-suhule kabul-i İslamiyet etmeleri ve bu suretle bu mezheb-i batıl tarafdarlarının tedenni eylemesi tabii bulunduğu binaen mezheb-i riyasetinde bulunan söz sahiblerinin hükümsüz ve taifesiz kalmalarını intac edeceğinden bu hale meydan verilmemek ve yine kendü içlerinde ve birlikde bulundurulmak üzere ayrıca alay teşkili arzusuna düşmüş ve aşırı derecelerde inhimak göstermekde bulunmuşlardır

Zaten farak-ı İslamiyeden müteşâib oldukları halde anlarla adavet etmek din-i batılları mükteziyatından olan bir halkın hal-i dalaletinde ve vatandaşlarıyla daha doğrusu devletle ber-minval maruz-ı hal adavetinde birağılması siyaseten tecviz buyurulmamak lazıme-i halden olmasıyla istidaaları vechle kendülerinden alay teşkilinde kuvve-i umumiye nazar-ı noktasından beis olması bile siyasi mahzurdan salim olamayacağı meydandadır. Gerçi te'lif-i kulubları zımında bir küçük ve mahdud kesiminin asakir-i Hamidiye silkine idhaliyle asakir-i merkume hakkındaki kanunname-i hümayun ahkâmına tevfikten küsurunun bit-tabii sızıltısızca mükellefiyet-i askeriyeye altına alınması gibi faide mütaalası dercii evvel varid ise de ayruca alay teşkilinde meşhud olan fevk-alade inhimaklarına bakılırsa yekdiğere taavün ve tenasür suretiyle umumunun hayvan tedarik ederek bu silke idhal olunmaları talebinde bulunmaları ağleb-i ihtimalatdan bulunduğu ve halin vuku'unda bila-sebeb bir takımını kabul ve diğer takımını red etmek mecburiyeti misüllü bir gaile karşusunda bulunmak tabii ve zaruri görüldüğünden nazariyat cihetiyle faydeli görünen bu suretin icraatında mucibi müşkilat olabileceği dahi varid-i hatırdır.

Tafsilat-ı maruzaya binaen bunların Hamidiye Alayları'na kabul ve idhalleri çendan münasib olmayacağı gibi bunlara mahsus ayru bir sınıf-ı harb teşkilinde asakir-i şahaneleri meyanında piyade ve süvari ve topçu sınıflarından herbirinde ayru nizamlara tâbi bir takım nevi'iler peyda olarak sünufin tenevvününü müstelzim olabilmesi mehaziri dahi şayan-ı teemmül görünüyor.

Bina-berin gerek Musul ve Hakkari cihetlerinde bulunan Yezidiler ve gerek Dersim ve sair ol havalide sakin Kızıldaşlar'ın ayruca Hamidiye alayı tertibatına kabul olunmayub irade-i hikmet-ade-i mülükaneleri hükm-i celili vechile bidayet-i emrde vahşet ve bedavetlerini idareye salih-i tasavvur ve tasmim olacak bir suret-i tedbiriyeye tevfikân bunların yavaş yavaş ve fakat katiyen ahz-ı asker mükellefiyetine alışdırılmaları icab-ı maslahatına göre lazım ve la-büd görünür.

Müşiriyet-i müşartün-ileyhümanın suret-i mahlulesi merbut telgrafnamesinde beyan olunduğu üzere Hakkari cihetinde bulunan Yezidi taifesinin Elbak redif taburu meyanına idhali suhuletle müyesser olacağı gibi Dersim Kızıldaşları'nın efrad-ı Müslime ile ihtilat ve imtizaclarında kesb-i salah ettikleri cihetle bunları da siyasi ve askeri islahat-ı adilane ve mürüvvetkarane ile te'lif ve teennisi ederek ahz-ı asker muamelatına alışdırılmaktan başka eslem-i tarik bir yol olmadığı gösterilmiş ve Musul tarafındaki Yezidilerin de geçenlerde hahna-hah bir kaç nefer alınarak taburlara verilip mukaddematına başlanmış olmasıyla bunların ahz-ı asker mükellefiyetine idhalleri imkanı olması anlaşılmakta bulunmuştur.

Mahallin ihtiyacatına ve her bir taifenin efkâr ve adatına tabi olacağı der-kâr olmağla bu noktalara dair mahallinden alınacak malumat ve tafsilata bina olunmadıkça bunlar hakkında ittihazı lazım gelen suver-i tedriciyye dair tamamıyla arz-ı mütaala mümkün değil ise de herhalde mahz-ı hikmet olan ferman-ı isabet-beyan-ı hümayunları vechile taife-i mezkurenin redif ciheti ehemiyetli tutmak yani tertib-i evvel olarak cüzzi efrad alınıp tertib-i sanisi ziyade bırakılmak ve tertib-i sani efradı rediflerle beraber her ne memleketleri hâricinde bir ay müddet ta'lîme da'vet olunup hitâmında hemân mahallerine i'âde kılınmak ve memleketlerinin isti'dâdına göre piyâdeliğe müstaid olanlarında piyâde sınıfın ve süvâriliğe istidâdı olanlarında süvari sınıfına tefriki hakkında bir kâide ittihazıyla bu kâide kendülerine tefhîm edilmek gibi bir tedbîr ile askerlikden vahsetlerinin bi't-tedric izâlesi ve hususıyla Dersim sancağı dahilinde bazı mekâtib tesisi ve mekâtib-i şâkirdânın bazı inâyâta mazhar idilmekle tesvikleri yolunda tedâbir ile anların dahi şimdiden kuvve-i umûmiye ve ilerüde bi't-tedric bi'l-külliyeye askerliğe alışdırılmaları imkansız olmamak vârid-i hâtır fâtir-i çâkerânemiz olmuş ve olmakda bulunmuş ise de bu bâbda her ne güne ferman buyurulur ise isabet-i anda olacağı der-kâr bulunmuş olmağla ol-babda ve katibe-i ahvalde emr ü ferman hazreti veliyyü'l-emr efendimizindir.

Fî 23 Mart sene [18]92

Mukabele olunmuştur.

Kulları Mehmed Cevad

Abd-i Memlûkileri Süreyya

Kulları Kazım

Ma'îyyet-i seniyye-i mülukâneleri Erkan-ı Harbiye Feriki kulları Mehmed Şakir

Yâver-i Ekrem kulları Şakir





Bab-1 Ali  
Daire-i Sadaret-i Uzmâ  
Mektubî Kalemi

Birinci Madde: Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun'un ikmâl-i nevakısıyla bir hal-i intizam ve faaliyete iktiranı ordu-yı hümayun mezkur dairesinin teşkil eden Musul, Bağdad, ve Basra vilayetlerinde zirde beyan edilecek ıslahatın icrasına mütevakıf olduğu ol babda ki işaret-ı mahalliyede gösterilmiş olduğu cihetle müsaid mevsimlerde seyyar bulunarak ikinci maddede muharrer makasid-ı aliyeye tevfikân ıslahat-ı mezkureyi icra etmek için Dördüncü Ordu-yı Hümayun'dan Musul'a gönderilen dört taburla Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun'dan tayin kılınacak yüz elli süvari veya ester süvardan mürekkep bir kuvve-i ıslahiye teşkil edilecek ve led-el-hace iş bu kuvvete birkaç yayan tabur ile bir iki cebel bataryası ilave olunabilecektir

İkinci Madde: Kuvve-i Islahiyenin icra edeceği ıslahata dair olan işaret-ı mahalliyenin hülasası ordu dairesindeki külliyetli bakâyânın celb ve cem'i ve emval-i emiriye tahsili ve nüfus tahriri ve aşair iskanı ve bunlara müteallik olarak mevad-ı atiyede tafsil edilecek ahvalin tashih ve ıslahı gibi hususatın ifasıyla şimdilik Bağdad ve Basra halkına sezdirilmeyerek en evvel Musul vilayetinden ıslahata bed' olunması lüzumunu mutazammın olduğundan kuvve-i ıslahiyenin ol-vechle işe başlaması münasib ise de Musul taraflarında ıslahat-ı muharire için ahali-i İslamiye üzerine keyfe mayeşâ hareket-ı askeriye icrasıyla teb'a-i Hristiyanıye'ye karşı ahali-i merkumenin rencide edilmesi caiz olamayacağına ve ıslahat-ı mebhusenin kan dökülmeksizin satvet ve mehabet-i askeriye iraesiyile icrası mümkün olacağına nazaran ıslahat memurînin bu makasid-ı muhimmeyi nişyan etmiyerek i'fa-yı vazaiifle ibraz-ı hüsn-i hizmete sarf-ı mesa'i etmesi lazımdır.

Üçüncü Madde: İslahat memuru refakatinde bulunan muhtelit askerın kumandanlarından başka olarak hizmet ve malumatından istifade edebilecek maiyyet memurlarına da lüzum görülürse anları intihab ve istihdam edebileceği gibi kendisine tevdi' olunan vezaifden emval-i emiriye tahsili ile tahrir-i nüfus ve iskan-ı aşair gibi hususat esasen cihet-i mülkiyeye aid olduğundan esna-yı seyr ü hareketinde bulunacağı mahaller memurîn-i mülkiyesinden bu işe aid hıdmat ile mükellef olanları vilayetlerle bil-muhabere refakatine tayin etdirüb hususat-ı mezkureyi anlar ile icra edecekdir.

Dördüncü Madde: İkinci maddede muharrer ordu dairesindeki külliyetli bakaya-yı askerîden yirmi bir redif dairesini havi olan Musul vilayeti dahilinde doksan bir tarihindən üçyüz yedi senesine kadar on sekiz bini müteceviz bakaya olduğu mahalinden bildirilmiş bakaya-yı merkumenin kendilerini havi orduca tanzim etdireceği defterlere göre ıslahat memuru iktiza eden muayenat ve tahkikatda bulunarak bakaya-yı mevcudeyi der-dest edecek ve bunlardan fevt olanlar ile ahz-ı asker kanunname-i hümayunun kabul etmeyeceği maluliyet ve emsali kudretsizliğe düşer olanların vukuatını ol babdaki defterlerine işaret edib fakat lisan ve mezhebce müttehid ve aralarında ülfet ve karabet mevcut olub hudud civarında ikamet eden ve kısmen İran ve kısmen bizim tarafda bulunub tekalif-i askeriye ve emiriyeden dolayı İran tarafına geçerek orada mazhar müsaade olan aşairin mürurdan meni'ne hıdmetle her türlü ihtimale karşı bir tedbir-i ihtiyatı olmak üzere aşair-i merkumenin bakayada kalan efradından sinnleri otuz raddesinde olanlar iki sene asker edilmek ve otuz beşden kırka kadar bulunanlar redif kırkdan yukarı olanlara ihrac tezkeresi verilmek gibi bir defaya mahsus muamele-i istisnaiye ilan ederek ve bu babda tarih ilanından itibaren bir senede müracaat edeceklere tahsis eyleyecektir.

Beşinci Madde: İkinci maddede muharrer emval-i emiriye tahsili bahsine gelince bunun için dahi Kuvve-i Islahiye hangi vilayet dahilinde bulunur ise ıslahat memuru o vilayeti teşkil eden kazalarla mezkur kazalara merbut olarak rüsum azasıyla mükellef aşair üzerinde ne gibi emval-i emiriye olduğunu ve bakaya ise kangı senelere aid bulunduğunu ve sair tafsilat-ı icabiyelerini havi vilayetlerden tayin olunan memurîn-i mülkiyenin ibraz edeceği defterler üzerine emval ve bakaya-yı mezkurenin tahsiline müsraatla beraber vukubulan tahsilatın nev'i ve mekadirine dair refakatindeki memurîn-i mülkiye ve askeriye ile müştereken ordu-yı hümayun müşiriyetine ba-mazbata beyan-ı malumat edecek ve atabe-i ulya-yı cenab-ı padişahiye arz olunmak üzere mazbata-i mezkurenin diğer bir nüshasını dahi doğrıca makam-ı Seraskeri'ye gönderecektir. Ancak emval-i matlubeden bi't-tahkik makrun-ı adalet olmıyanlar zuhur eylediği ve hususen hane virgüsüyle mükellef olan bir takım aşairin efrad-ı nüfusu mirur-ı zaman ile tezayid veya tenakıs edeceğine ve bazı haneler halkı münkazi olmuş veya mahal-i ahire nakl eylemiş olacağına nazaran bunların meratib-i kadimelerinin halen tesbit edildikleri karye ve aşiretlerinden alınmak gibi muadelet-i seniyye hilafında vuku'a getürülmek halâs bulunduğu halde vilayetlerle muhabere edecek karar-gir olacak surete ve ihtilaf zuhurunda bi'l-istizan alacağı emre göre icra-yı muamele ile tashih-i ahval edecektir.

Altıncı Madde: İkinci maddede muharrer tahrir-i nüfusdan maksad vilayet-i selasenin yeniden tahrir-i nüfusu gibi bir meşguliyetle iştilgal olmadığından Kuvve-i Islahiye memuru hangi vilayet dahilinde bulunursa o vilayetin havi olduğu sancak ve kaza ile nevahisi dahilinde meskun oldukları halde tekalif-i askeri haricinde kalan ve tahriri müşevveş olan mahaller bulunub bulunmadığı tahkik ile ahali-i mektume ve nüfus-ı gayr-i muharrir bulduğu halde refakatindeki memurîn-i âidesi vasıtasıyla usûlüne tevfikân tahrir ve muayene ile defterlerini tanzim ve tashih ederek ve senelerine göre sınıflara tefriki ve numero keşidesi muamelatını icra eyleyerek bunları münasibi olan ahz-ı asker dairesine rabt ve ilhak edecektir.

Yedinci Madde: İkinci maddede muharrer aşair iskanından maksad dahi gezilen vilayet-i selase dahilinde bulunan aşairin ihdas-ı gavail edecek cebr ve şiddetler iraeisiyle satvet-i askeriyenin devamı müddetince muvakkaten iskanı olmayub aşair-i merkumeden iskana zaten müstemid olanların hal-i seyyaride bulunmalarına badi olan esbabın tahkiki ile bunların hal-i bedaveti ihtiyarları hükümetden tevhişden ve yersizlikden ve şeyhlerine teb'iyetden veya diğer bir kuvvetli aşiretin taht-ı hüküm ve nüfuzunda bulunmalarından dolayı ânlarla edilmesi zaruri olan mümaşat gibi ahvalden ve sairden ilerü gelmekde ise bunlara teminat itası ve vesait-i iskana istihzarı ile merkumenin tavnin ve iskanı olduğu cihetle ıslahat memuru bu husus hakkında da refakatindeki memurîn-i mülkiye ile müzakerat-ı lazımede bulunarak takrir eden surete göre ânlarla ifâ-yı vezaif edecek ve ıslahatı mevzu-i bahis olan üç vilayet dahilindeki aşairin ünvan ve esamisiyle maişet ve cvelan-gâhlarına ve nüfus ve mevaşilerinin mekadirine ve ne gibi esliha-i taarruziyye ve nâriyye ile müsella olub kangı meşaihin idaresine olduğına ve sair bilinmesi lazım olan malumata dair elde mazbut ve mukayyed bir defter olmadığından memur-ı müşarün-ileyh hazretleri oldukça hakikate muvafık böyle bir defter tanzim ve irsaline dahi gayret edecektir.

Sekizinci Madde: Yekdiğerine tasallutla hudud civarında hemişe teşviş ihdasdan hâli olmayan ve bir dereceye kadar hükümete karşı etvar-ı serkeşanede bulunan Musul Vilayeti dahilindeki Peşder ve Şivegil gibi aşairin daire-i inkiyada idhali ve o cihetlerin istikbalini temin ile ba'dema firar ve fenalık vukubulmamasına ve bakaya kalmamasına medar-ı mahz olabilecek ıslahatın icrası dahi ıslahat memurının ifâ edeceği vezaif dahilindedir.





*Document 1:*

Mahall-i irsali: Musul  
Numero:3541

### Huzur-ı sami-i Sadaret-penahiye

Cenab-ı Rabb-ı mennan şehriyar-i kesirü'l-âsâr ve tac-dar-ı diyanet-şi'ar veli-nimet-i bi-minnetimiz padişahımız efendimiz hazretlerinin envar-ı re'fet ve adalet-i şahanelerini ilahiri'z-zaman mefarik-i ibadda lem'a feşan buyursun. Measir ve muvaffakiyat-ı celile-i hüsrevaneleri asar-ı bahiresinden olmak üzere nice asırlardan berü tarik-i dalaletle salik olmakdan naşi diyanetlerine hale'l-tari olan ve istihsal-i hidayetleri zımnında müteaddid heyetler tarafından pek çok teşebbüsata müracaat olunmuşsa da muvaffakiyyet hasıl olmayan Şeyhan ve Sincar'da sakin seksen karyeden ibaret Yezidi ve Şi'i taifesiyle otuz karyeden ibaret bulunan ve yine bu gibi akayid-i batılaya zahib olmuş olan şeyhler taraf-ı aciziden vaki olan tebligatı hüsn-i telakki ve arzu-yı vicdaniyyeleriyle şeref-i İslamiyet'e mazhar olmak niyyet-i halisasıyle ileri gelenleri dünkü cuma gecesi Musul'a gelmiş ve din-i mübin-i İslamiyet'in şeref-u şan ve saadetini irae etmek ve bu babdaki arzularının bir kat daha temin ve istikrarını mucib olmak üzere meşayih ve ulema tehlil ve tekbir-han oldukları ve bir yanda musika terennüm saz-ı hubur olduğu halde kemal-i i'tizaz ve ihtiramla resm-i istikballeri icra olduğu gibi bu gün ale's-sabah daire-i hükümete meduvven gelmiş olan bi'l-cümle erkan ve memur-ı vilayet ve ümera ve zabitan-ı askeriyye ve eşraf-ı vücuh ve muteberan-ı memleket ve bir cemm-i gafir ahali hazır bulunduğu ve bir tabur asakir-i şahane saf-beste-i selam olarak bir tarafdandan musika takımı marş-ı Hamidi ile terennüm-saz-ı sürur olduğu halde müfti efendi tarafından bunlara yegan tefhim ve telkin-i din-i mübin olunarak kendüleri de kalben ve lisanen kabul etmeleri üzerine zaman ve mevkie münasib taraf-ı acizanemden bir nutk iradından sonra müfti efendi tarafından dua-yı hazret-i padişahiyi mutazammın bir dua kıraat olunmasını müteakib umum tarafından padişahım çok yaşa zemzeme-i meserret-efzasını isal-i kabulgah-ı rabb-i müteal eylemişlerdir. Taife-i merkume rüesa ve ilerü gelenlerinin kaffesi nezd-i acizide misafir olduklarından haklarında riayet ve levazım-i mihman-nevazi ifa olunmakta bulunduğu ve enbiya-yı zi-şanın merakıd-i münevverelerinde kurbanlar zebholunarak fukaraya tevzi edildiği ve bu gün Cuma namazı bu misafirlerle beraber memleket haricinde vâki enbiya-yı zi-şandan Nebi Şit aleyhi's-selamın cami-i nur-lamiinde edası ve ol merkad-i mübarekde dahi dua-yı tezayüd-i ömr ü şevket-i cenab-ı hilafet-penahi tekrar ve tezkarı mukarrer bulunduğu arz olunur.

Fi 7 ağustos sene [1]308

Kuvve-i Islahiyye Kumandanı  
Ferik Ömer Vehbi

*Document 2:*

Musul Vilayeti  
Mektubi Kalemî  
Aded: 64

Huzur-ı ali-i hazret-i Sadaret-i uzmaya

Din-i mübin-i İslam-ı kabule müheyya buldukları Fırka-i Islahiyye Kumandanı Ferik Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretleri tarafından çekilüb manzur-ı ali buyrulan telgrafnamede işar olunan Yezidiler'in nezdine icabı kadar huce izamı ve sakin oldukları mahalde cami ve mekatib inşası mukteza-yı irade-i seniyye-i hilafet-penahiden omağla bunların ihtidası kat'iyen tebeyyün eylediği halde oralarda mesacid ve mekatib inşası için keyfiyyetin bi'l-etraf müzakeresiyle ba-mazbata arz ve inhazı şeref-varid olan 5 Ağusto sene 308 tarihli telgrafname-i sami-i Sadaret-penahilerinde irade ve ferman buyurulmuşdur. Kumandan-ı müşarün-ileyh hazır olduğu halde meclis-i acizanemizce cereyan eden müzakere neticesinde kabul-i İslamiyet'le mesud ve müşerref Yezidi taifesiyile Musul'un canib-i şarkisinde ahalisi fırak-ı dalleden bulunan ve kezalik din-i mübin-i İslam'ı kabul eden Şebek karyelerinden yek diğerine kurbiyyet ve münasebet-i mevkiyyeleri mesacid ve metakib inşasına elverişli olan ve mevkileri tayin kılınan on bir karyede birer havli ve içinde biri mescid ve diğeri mekteb ve üçüncüsü hoca ve bevtabın ikametine mahsus kebir üç oda ile bir sağır oda ve bir abdesthaneden ibaret olmak üzere on bir da'irenin kargir olarak yirmişer binden iki yüz yirmi bin gurus masrafla inşası ve daimi surette bulunub onlara karşı lisan-ı münasib ve üslub-ı hakimane ile icar-yı vaaz u nesaih ve eda-yı salat-ı hamse ile etfallerinin talim ve terbiyesi için on bir muallim-i evvel ve ol mikdar muallim-i sani ve on bir nefer de bevtab ve Şeyh Adi hazretlerinin mefdun olduğu mahalde bulunan medresede dahi suret-i da'imede icra-yı tedris-i ulum-ı aliyye ile meşgul bulunmak üzere haysiyetli bir müderris ve yirmi nefer talebenin bulundurulması ve bunların temin-i idareleri zımında müderrise, şehriye bin ve mu'allim-i evvellere dörder ve muallim-i sani hocalara ikişer ve talebelere yüzer ve bevtablara otuzar gurus maaşlar tahsis ve tayin olunacak haceler lisan-ı Kürdî ve Arabî'ye aşına ve dekaik-i siyasiyyeye dâna ve hakaik-i diniyyeye vakıf ve mizac ve tavır ve mişvarlarıyla malumat-ı mahalliyyeye kema-yenbagı vukuf-ı tâmları olmamasından ve bu kadarcık maaş ile buraca idareleri müşkil olub bir takım masraf ihtiyarıyla irsalinden bir faide hasıl olamayacağı emsali delaletiyle müsbet olup ve Musul Vilayeti'nde bu sıfat ile muttasıf haceler bulunduğu ve ol mikdar maaşlarla tedariki kabil olduğu hicetle buradan intihab ve tayin ve isallari halinde bunların kabul-i İslamiyet rah-ı hidayede isbat ve metanet-i diniyyelerini mucib olacağı bi'l-etraf teemmül ve tedebbür ve kumandan-ı müşarün-ileyh ile bi'l-istişare meclis-i acizanemizce tensib ve mütalaa kılınarak mekatib ve mesacid inşa olunacak mahallerin tayin-i mevkileriyle masarif-i inşaiyye ve maaşatın mikdarını mübeyyin tanzim olunan pusula leffen huzur-ı celil-i Sadaret-penahilerine arz ve takdim kılınmış ve icra-yı icabı mütevakkıf-ı emr ü irade-i celile-i fehmet-penahileri bulunmuşdur ol babda emr ü ferman hazret-i veliyyü'l-emrindir.

Fi 27 Muharrem sene [1]310 ve fi Ağustos sene [1]308

Ed-da'i Vekil-i Vali Na'ib-i Musul  
Yusuf Sıdkı

*and the other signatures*









*Document 1:*

Bugün Şeyhan ahâlisinden yirmi kadar Yezidi nezd-i acizanemize gelerek beraber getürdikleri yedi reis maktu'u ile bunların Ömer Pasa'nın mahdumu Akif ve Şeyhan Müdürü sabık Reşid Efendi tarafından nakl edildiğini iddia ile taleb-i mu'adelet-i seniyye eylemeleri üzerine veli nimet bi-minnetimiz hazretlerinin âmâli hümayunları kaffe-i teb'a-i şehriyarilerinin mazhar-ı adâlet olmaları suretinde olduğundan hükümet-i seniyyece bi't-tahkik icra-yı hakaniyet edileceği ifadesiyle tarafımızdan iade kılındıkları ve derûn-ı memleketde bu gibi şeylerin vukû' bulması yâr ü agyâra karşı pek çirkin olacağından tekerrürinin men'î vilayete ihtar eylediği maruzdur.

12 Kanun-ı sani sene [1]308  
Kamil Sadık Şakir

Aslına mutabıktır  
Yâver-i Ekrem Kulları Derviş

*Document 2:*

Şeyhan ahâlisinden yirmi kadar Yezidi'nin beraber getirdikleri yedi reis maktu'u Ömer Paşa'nın mahdumu Akif Bey ve Şeyhan Müdürü sabık Reşid Efendi katl eylediğini iddia ile muadelet-i seniyye-i mülükânelerine mazhariyetlerini talep ve istida etmek üzerine kendüleri ne gibi tefhimat icrasıyla iade olunduklarına ve derun-ı memleketde bu misüllü şeylerin vücuda getirilmesi yâr ü agyâra karşı pek çirkin olacağı cihetle men'-i tekerrürü dahi vilayete ihtar kılındığına dair heyet-i tahkikiye tarafından varid olan şifre telgrafnamenin suret-i mahlulesi merbutan arzı atebe-i ulyâ kılınmıştır. Bu babda vuku'undan şikayet olunan ahval ve muamelat gayr-i marziyeden dolayı yegan yegan isticvabları lazım gelen zabitan ve efrad-ı askeriyenin emr ü isticvablarını icra etmek üzere heyet-i mezkure azasından birinin riyaseti tahtında bir komisyon teşkiline ve saireye dair layiha hatır-ı fatır olan mütalaat fi-10 Kanun-ı Sani 308 tarihleriyle müverrih üç kıta arıza-i müstereken çakeranemizle arz-ı huzur-ı ali kılınmakla ol-babda ve kâtebe-i ahval irade ve ferman hazret-i veliyyü'l-emr efendimizindir.

Fi 8 Receb sene [1]310 ve fi 14 Kanun-ı Sani sene [1]308

Kulları Şakir  
Kulları Derviş İbrahim bin İbrahim

مورد هیئت تحقیق در مورد سبزه افغانه محمودی

کرمی نام ایدم دوام ایدم تحقیقاً نزد عمر یا ساریک محمودی ملازم عاکف بکلم شیخان نا هیسی مدیری سابقه رشید افندی  
شیخان و شیخان فرزندان و قوی بوده جهابنده و نظونیندی اکلاکتمه اولیفنده حقارنده اولیفنده معمله استیانه اولونور فرما  
۱۴۱۰ کلاکتمه  
میرلوا کامیل      مبارک      وریو ساکر

مارالیم لاری  
در و کلمه

اصلی مطابقت

Germi-i tâm ile devam eden tahkikatımızdan Ömer Paşa'nın mahdumu mülazım Akif Bey'le Şeyhan Nahiyesi müdiri sabık Reşid Efendi'nin Şeyhan ve Sincar taraflarında vuku bulan cinayetde maznuniyetleri anlaşılmaqda olduğundan haklarında olacak muamele istizan olunur ferman.

14 Kanun-ı sani sene [1]308

Mirliva Kamil      Sadık      Şakir

Aslına mutabıkdır  
Yâver-i Ekrem Kulları Derviş











*Document 1:*

Bab-1 Ali  
Meclis-i Mahsus  
499

Sincar'daki Yezidiler'in te'dibi için Musul redif livası Bekir Paşa kumandasıyla Sincar'a sevk edilen Dördüncü Ordu-yı Hümayun'a mensub Otuz Birinci Alay'dan üç taburla Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun'a mensub süvari ve ester süvardan mürekkeb iki yüz neferin ve iki cebel topunun adem-i kifayetine mebni Musul'dan Kırk Yedinci Alay'ın Birinci ve Üçüncü taburlarının miralayları refakatiyle Sincar'a ve muvakkaten Musul'da bulunmak üzere Kerkük'deki Kırk Sekizinci Alay'ın Birinci taburunun dahi Musul'a hareket etmesi hakkında Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun Müşiriyeti'nden vukubulan işar üzerine istizanı havi tezkere-i Seraskerî manzur-ı âli olarak kuvve-i askeriyenin ne taraflara gönderileceği ve oralarda ne gibi icraatda bulunacağı velhasıl kuvve-i mezkureye ne yolda talimat verileceği bil-etraf anlaşılacak lazımeden olacağı böyle işlerin kuvve-i cebriye istihsal olunamayan semeratın muvaaza ve nesaih-i müessire icrasıyla iktitaf edildiği emsaliyle müsbet ve mücerrit bulunduğu göre buraları temil ve tezekkür olunarak neticesinin ba-mazbata arz-ı hakipa-ı ali kılınması şeref-sadr olan malumat irade-i seniye-i hazreti hilafet-penahi iktiza-i celilesinden bulunduğunu mübelliğ tezekkür-i hususa tezkere-i maruza-i seraskeri ile beraber meyane-i bende-ganemizde kıraat olundu. Malum-ı ali buyurulduğu üzere Yezidiler'in meellüf oldukları hareket-ı serkeşhaneye geçende icra-yı ıslahat sırasında haklarında gösterilmiş olan muamelatı gayr-ı merziye ile asakiri müstebitlerden Said Çavuş'un başına bir takım eşkiya cemmiyle Yezidi köylerine icra-yı fezaihe cür'et etmesi ve cubur aşiretinin hareketi manzum olarak ahz-ı sâr teşebbüsâtında buldukları Musul vilayetinden ve Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun Müşiriyeti'nden işar olunması üzerine müma-ileyh Bekir Paşa kumandasında salif-ül-beyan kuvve-yi askeriyenin sevkiyle Yezidiler'in teşebbüsât vakıalarının men'i ve ıslah-ı hallerine müteallik tedabirin ittihazı lüzumu tayin ederek olbabda sübuk eden arz ve istizan-ı seraskeri mucibince irade-i seniyye-i cenab-ı hilafet-penahi şeref sünuh ve sudur buyurulmuş ve ber-mantuk-ı emr-ü ferman-ı hümayun mahallerine tebligat-ı lazıme icra kılınmış idi. Suret-i işara nazaran kuvve-i meskurenin adem-i kifayetine mebni Musul'dan iki taburun daha sevkine lüzum görüneceği anlaşılıp vakıa böyle kuvve-i askeriye sevkiyle bir sünuf-ı teba-i şahanenin tenkiline kasdı olunmaktan ise müktezayı irade-i hükümet ifade-i cenab-ı padişahiden olduğu vech ile müvaza ve nesaih ve kavleyen ile ahali-yi merkumenin daire-i itaat ve inkiyada idhalleri esbabına tevessül olunması hal-ü maslahata da muvafık olacağından Diyarbekr müftisi efendi ile imama-yı mahalliyyeden münasip ve evsaf-ı matlubeyi câmi ve lisanlarına aşına zevatdan mürekkep bire heyetin mahalline gönderilerek ve vesaya ve nesahi-i müessire icra ve evvelce müma-ileyh Bekir Paşa kumandasında sevk olunan asakiri şahaneden başka talep olunan mezkur iki tabur dahi kuvvetü'l-izhar olunmak üzere nukat-ı lazıme de ikame olunarak şu suretle tesviye-i maslahata teşebbüs olunması ve şayed suret-i maaruza vechle ittihaz edilecek tedbir ahali-yi merkumeye hüsn-ü te'sir içinde yine mualefet ve adem-i itaatde ısrar eyleyecekleri halde ana göre iktiza-yı halin kararlaştırılarak arz-ı atabe-i ulya kılınması müstehiden bil-tezekkür salifül zikr tezkire-i seraskeri iade ve takdim kılınmış olmağla suğveri maruza muvafık emr-i fermanı hükümet beyanı hazreti hilafet-penahi olduğu takdirde olvehile işfa-yı müktezayâtı zımnında taraf-ı seraskeri ile dahiliye nezaretine tebligat-ı lazıme icra olunacağı muhat-ı alim ilmince buyuruldukda ol-babda ve katabe-i ahvalde emr ü ferman hazreti veliyyü'l-emr efendimizindir

25 Muharrem [1]311, 25 Ağustos [1]309

Dahiliye Nazırı	Hariciye Nazırı ve Şura-yı Devlet Reisi Vekili	Bahriye Nazırı
Adliye Nazırı	Serasker Şeyhü'l-İslam	Sadr-ı azam ve Yaver-i Ekrem
Sadaret Müsteşarı	Ticaret ve Nafiya Nazırı	Maarif Nazırı Evkaf-ı Hümayun Nazırı
Maliye nazırı	Tophane-yi amire müşiri	Meclis-i mahsus-ı vükela memuru

*Signatures*

*Document 2:*

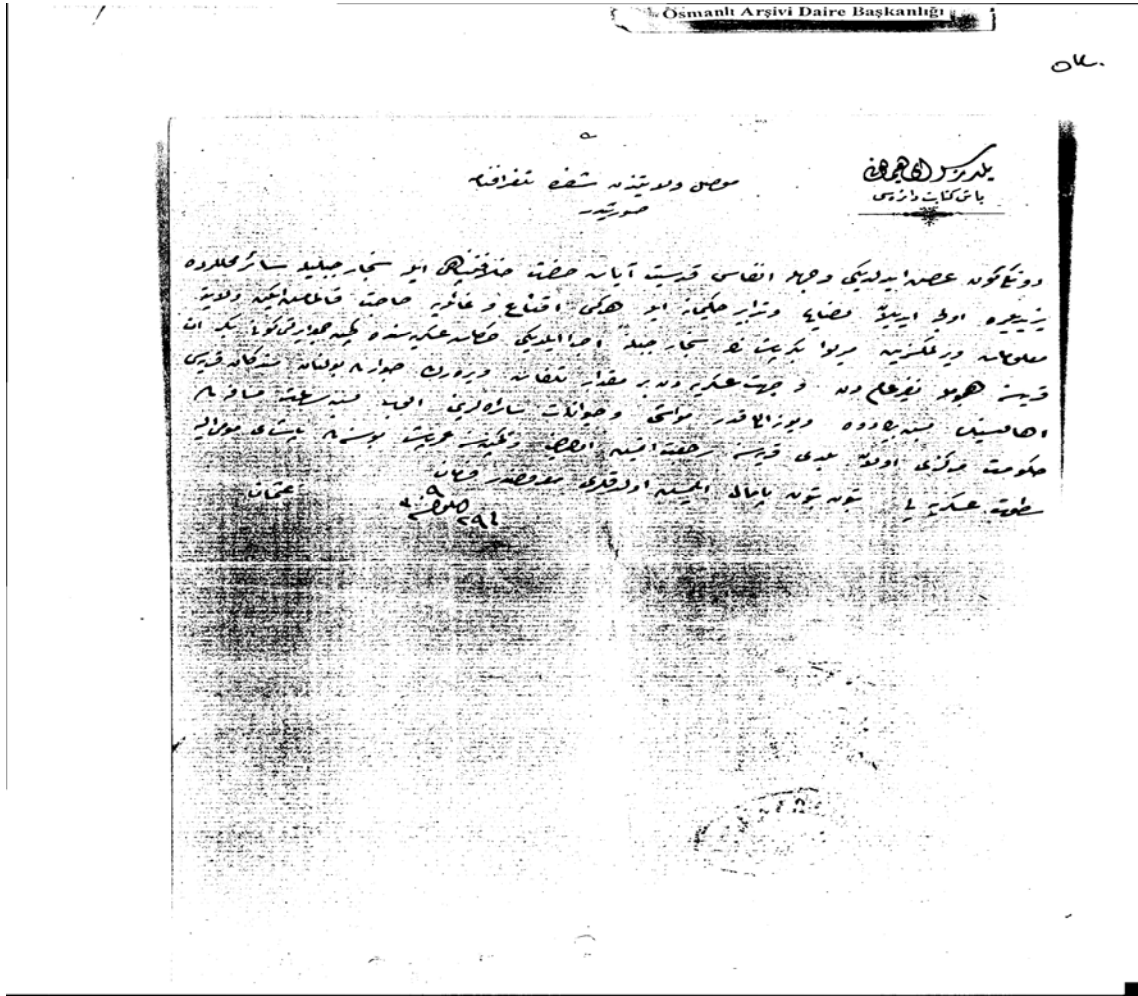
Makam-ı Seraskerî  
Mektubî Kalemi

Devletlü efendim hazretleri

Sincar'daki Yezidiler'in nesaih-i haseneyi telakki etmemekte ve haklarındaki lütf-ı celil-i cenab-baniyi takdir etmiyerek serkeşliklerinde ısrar ve devam ve her gün kuvvetlerini tezyid ve Diyarbekir ve Haleb dahilindeki hem-cins ve hem-mezheblerini davet ve etrafa icra-yı müfrite kadar cür'et göstermekte olduklarından ve ırâkda bu kavmin kader ve itibarı olmadığı halde bu suretle şımarması o havalide su'î-tesir hasıl edeceği gibi vakit geçdikçe mazarrat ve muhaziri tezayid eyleyeceğinden ve 22 Temmuz 309 tarihinde şeref-sadır olub tebliğ olunan irade-i seniyye-i hazret-i hilafet-penahi mucibince Musul redif livası Bekir Paşa kumandasıyla Sincar'a sevk edilen Dördüncü Ordu-yı Hümayun'a mensub Otuz Birinci Alay'dan üç taburla Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun'a mensub süvari ve ester süvardan mürekkeb iki yüz neferin ve iki cebel topunun adem-i kifayetinden bahisle müstaciliyet-i maslahat üzerine Musul'dan Kırk Yedinci Alay'ın Birinci ve Üçüncü taburlarının miralayları refakatiyle Sincar'a ve muvakkaten Musul'da bulunmak üzere Kerkük'deki Kırk Sekizinci Alay'ın Birinci taburunun dahi Musul'a hareket etmesi yazıldığı ve tob sevki eğerçe muhassenatı mucib ise de hareketin tehirine bais olacağı cihetle sevkinden sarf-ı nazar olunduğu beyanıyla vakit geçirilmeksizin haklarında olunacak muamelenin bildirilmesi Altıncı Ordu-yı Hümayun Müşiriyet-i celilesinden telgrafname işar olunması üzerine ol-babda istizan-ı irade-i seniyye-i mülukaneyi mütezemmin Erkan-ı Harbiye-i Umumiye Dairesi'nden tanzim olunan mazbata 25 Muharrem sene 311 tarihli tezkere-i resmîye-i acizi ile arz ve takdim kılınmışdı. Müşiriyet-i müşarün-ileyhden bugün alınan telgrafnamede Sincar gâilesinin teskin ve def'i ve orada tahassün eden Yezidi taifesinin terbiye tenkilleri hakkında henüz bir güne irade-i seniyye tebliğ olunmadığından ve taife-i metrkumenin şımarması te'diblerine lüzum acil hüsn etdirilmekte bulunduğundan bahsle te'kiden isitzan-ı keyfiyet olunmuş olmağla suret-i işara ve müstaciliyet-i maslahata nazaran olbabda emr ü ferman-ı hümayun-ı cenab-ı cihan-bani her ne merkezde şeref-sünuh ve südur buyurulur ise mantuk-ı âlisi infaz olunacağı beyanıyla istizana ibtidar kılındı olbabda emr ü ferman hazret-i men lehü'l-emrindir.

Fi 15 Safer sene [1]311 ve fi 15 Ağustos sene [1]309

Serasker Paşa  
Rıza



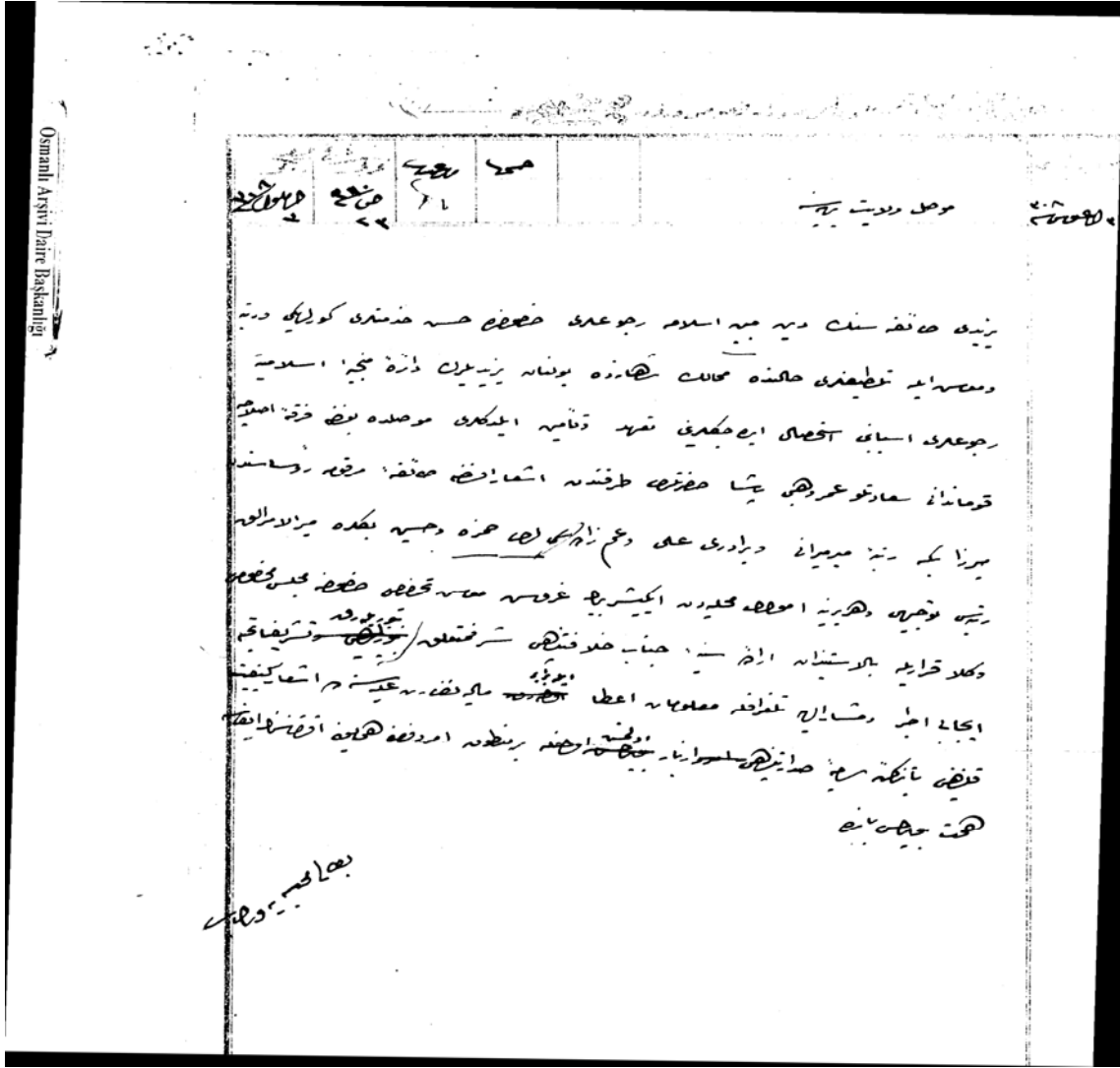
Yıldız Saray-ı Hümayunu  
Başkitabet Dairesi

Musul Vilayet'inden şifre telgrafname suretidir

Dünkü gün arz edildiği vechle enfas-ı kudsiyet-i âyat-ı hazret-i hilafet-penahi ile Sincar Cebeli'yle sair mahallerde Yezidiler'e evvelce edilen nesaih ve tedabir-i hakimane ile her kimi ikna ve gaileye hacet kalmamış iken vilayete malumat vermeksizin Mirliva Bekir Paşa'nın Sincar Cebeli'ne icra eylediği hareket-ı askeriyesinde geçen Cuma ertesi günü Bikran Karyesi'ne hücumla nefir-i ammdan ve cihet-i askeriyeden bir miktar telefata vererek civarda bulunan Mendekan Karyesi ahalisinin beş bin deve ve yüz elli kadar mevaşi ve hayvanat-ı sairelerini alub beş saat mesafede hükümet merkezi olan Beledi Karyesi'ne [sic] rücuat etmiş olduğu ve geçen sene Ömer Paşa bu sene de paşa-yı müma-ileyh satvet-i askeriyeyi bütün bütün pa-mâl eylemiş oldukları maruzdur ferman.

Fi 29 Eylül sene [1]309

Osman



Musul Vilayet-i behiyyesine

23 Safer [1]310, 3 Eylül [1]308

Yezidi taifesinin din-i mübin-i İslama rücu'ları hususunda hüsn-i hıdmetleri görüleceği ve rütbe ve maaş ile taltifleri halinde memalik-i şahanede bulunan Yezidiler'in daire-i münciye-i İslamiyet'e rücu'ları esbabını istihsal edeceklerini taahhüd ve temin eyledikleri Musul'da bulunan fırka-i islahiye kumandanı saadetlü Ömer Vehbi Paşa hazretleri tarafından işaret olunan taife-i merkume rüesasından Mirza Beg'e rütbe-i mir-i mirani ve biraderi Ali ve ammizadeleri Hamza ve Hüseyin Begler'e mirü'l-ümeralık rütbesi tevcihi ve her birine emval-i mahalliyeden ikişer bin guruş maaş tahsisi hususuna meclis-i mahsus-ı vükela kararıyla bil-istizan irade-i seniyye-i cenab-ı hilafet-penahi şeref-taalluk buyurularak teşrifatca icabı icra ve müşarün-ileyh telgrafla malumat itâ ile beraber Maliye Nezaret-i aliyyesine de işaret keyfiyet kılınacağı ba-tezkere-i samiye-i sadaret-penahi izbar olunmuş olmağla ber-mantuk-ı emr ü ferman-ı hümayun iktizasının ifasına himmet buyurulması babında.







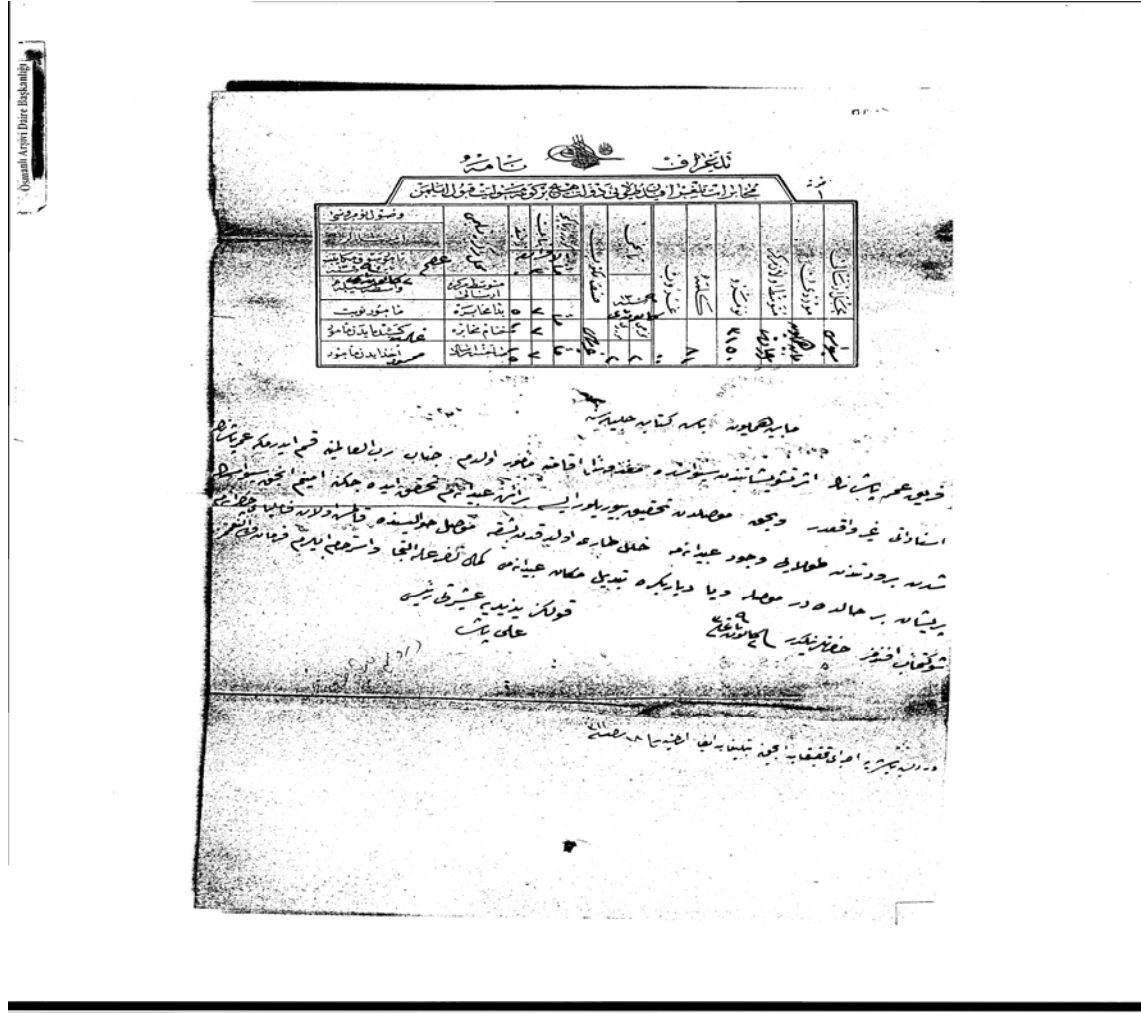
## Musul ve Kastamonu Vilayet-i celilerine

9 Ramazan sene [1]310/20 Mart sene [1]309  
EvraK Numerosu: 4011

Yezidi taifesinin daire-i mün-ciye-i İslamiyet'e rücu'ları hususunda hüsn-i hizmetleri görülen taife-i merkume rüesasından Mirza Bey ile biraderi Ali ve emm-zadesi Hamza ve Hüseyin Paşalar'a ba-irade-i seniyye-i hazret-i padişahi tahsis olunacağı fi 29 Kanun-ı evvel 309 tarihlü tahriratla işar olunan maaşâtın üç yüz sekiz senesi ağustosunun yirmi altıncı gününden müma-ileyhümadan Ali Paşa'nın ahiren Kastamonu'ya kaldırılması cihetle anın için Eylül nihayetine ve diğerleri için dahi Şubat nihayetine kadar altmış mikdarı bulunan otuz dokuz bin beş yüz kırk sekiz guruşun vilayet-i behiyyelerinin senesi emvalinden tesviyesi zımında tahsisatın Dahiliye'ye mahsuben hazine-i celil-i maliyece tanzim olunan havalenamesi leffen irsal kılınmış olmağla icra-yı icabı babında.

## Kastamonu Vilayeti'ne

Ve ahiren Kastamonu'ya kaldırılan taife-i merkume rüesasından Ali Paşa'ya ba-irade-i seniyye-i hazret-i padişahi tahsis olunacağı fi 29 Kanun-ı evvel 309 tarihlü tahriratla işar olunan maaşâtın üç yüz sekiz senesi Teşrin-i evveli ibtidasından Şubatı nihayetine kadar beş aylık on bin guruşun vilayet-i behiyyelerinin senesi emval-i umumiyesi tahsilatından tesviyesi zımında hazine-i celil-i maliyece tahsisat-ı Dahiliye'ye mahsuben tanzim ve tevdi olunan havalenamesi leffen irsal kılınmış olmağla icrası icabına himmet buyurulması babında.



Mahal-i irsali: Sivas

Mabeyn Başkitabet-i celilesine

Ferik Ömer Paşa'nın eser-i teşvişânesinden Sivas'da mağduren ikamete memur oldum. Cenab-ı rabü'l-alemine kaseş ederim ki Ömer Paşa'nın isnadatı gayr-ı vakıadır. Ve bihakk Musul'dan tahkik buyurulur ise beraet-i übudanem tahakkuk edeceğine eminim ancak Sivas'ın şiddet-i birudetinden dolayı vücud-ı übudaneme halel târi olduğdan başka Musul havalisinde kalmış olan familya-yı çakeranem perişan bir haldedir. Musul'a veya Diyarbekir'e tebdil-i mekan-ı übudanemi kemal-i nefer (?) iltica ve istirham eylerim ferman veliü'l-niğmetimiz şevket-meab efendimiz hazretlerindedir.

Fi 2 Kanun-ı sani sene [1]309

Kulunuz Yezidiye Aşireti Reisi  
Ali Paşa

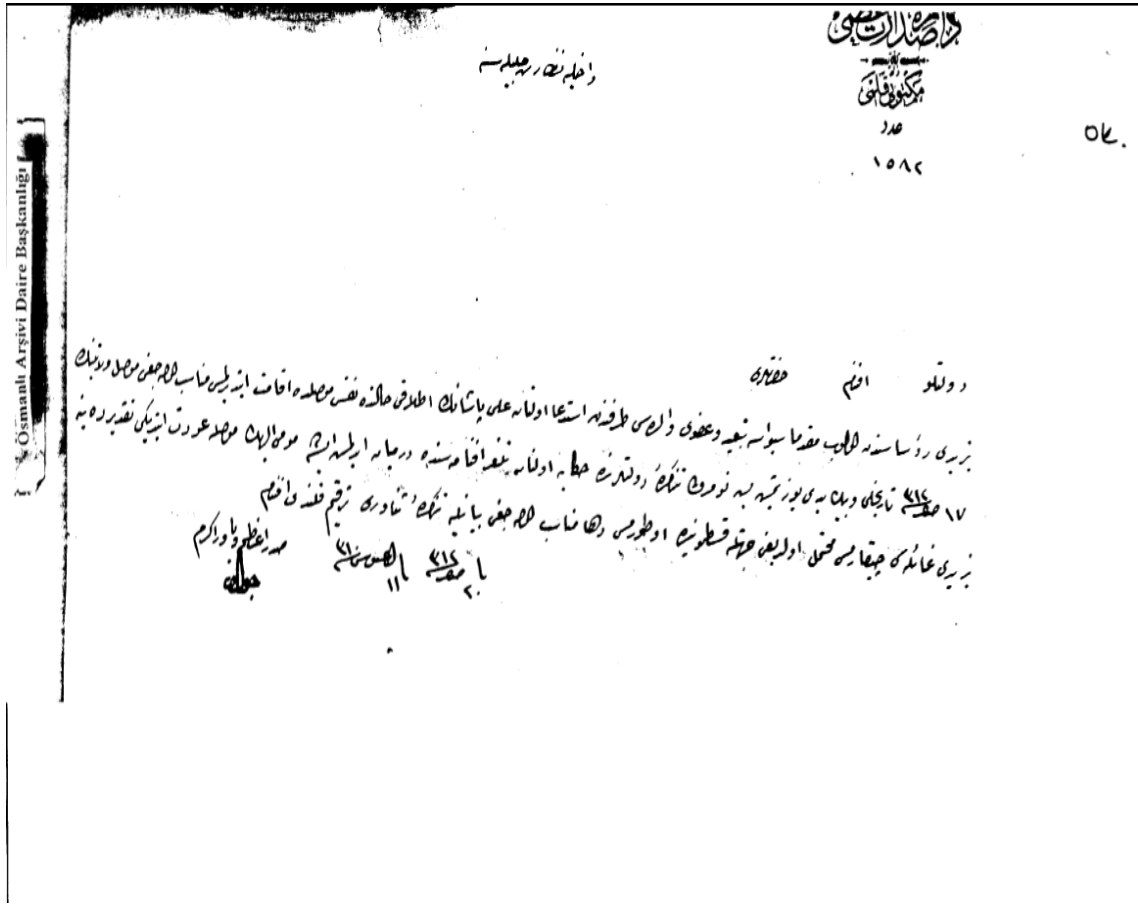
Derviş Paşa'ya icra-yı tahkikat için tebligat ifâ olunmuşdur  
18 Receb [1]311



Ferik Ömer Paşa kullarının istinadıyla Sivas'da mağduren ikamete memur edilmiş ve Musul'dan bihakkin tahkik-i madde ediliyor ise beraet zimmeti tahakkuk edeceği der-kâr bulunmuş olduğundan ve şiddet-i birudeti hasebiyle Sivas'da ikamete vücudu mütehammil olmadığından bahisle Musul ve Diyarbekr'e tebdil-i mekanını ba-telgrafname atabe-i ulya-yı mülükanelerinden istirham eden Yezidi aşireti reisi Ali Paşa hakkında tahkikat icrası Baş Katib paşa kullarının fi 18 receb 311 tarihli ve beş bin yüz on dört numarolu tezkere-i hususiyesiyle tebliğ edilen emr ü ferman-ı hümayun-ı hazret-i hilafet-penahileri iktiza-yı âlisinden bulunmasıyla led-el-tahkik müma-ileyh Yezidi aşiretinin reis-i ruhanisi olup aşiretce fevk-alade nafizü'l-kelim olmasıyla gerek anın ve gerek tesir-i nüfuzu bir kaç derece dünunda bulunan ve aşiret-i merkumenin reis-i maddiyesi olan diğer biraderi Mirza ve Bedii Paşalar'ın güya tashih-i itikad meselesindeki hıdemat-ı vakıalarına mükâfaten rütbe-i haliyeleri olan mir-i ümeralık ile tesirleri Ferik Ömer Paşa kulları tarafından Bab-ı Ali'ye arz edilmiş ve aradan takriben yirmi gün bir müddet geçer geçmez müşarün-ileyh Ömer Paşa kullarının zu'munca tashih-i itikad eden Yezidiler'in ihtilaline müma-ileyh Ali Paşa kulları sâ'i olduğundan bahisle ol-vechile teb'idini arz ve istizan ile icabı icra kılınmış olduğu ve müma-ileyh ise meslek ve vazife-i maruzası icabınca esasen itikad-ı bâtıllıktan fâriğ olmadığı ve taife-i merkumenin tashih-i itikadı meselesi resmen tahakkuk etmediği gibi hakkında bir güne muhakeme dahi sebk eylemediği anlaşılmış ve şu halde paşa-yı müma-ileyh kulları ile biraderleri nasıl şayan-ı taltif değil iseler paşa-yı müma-ileyhin bila-muhakeme hakkında bir hüküm la-hakk olacak olur ise ol-vakit Çöl cihetine karib olmayan münasib bir mahale teb'idi ve şayed beraet-i zimmeti tahakkuk eder ise idaresine kafi bir maaşla tensib-i âli buyurulacak mahalde ikameti varid-i hazır ve kasr-ı bende-ganem olmuş ise de ol-babda ve katebe-i ahvalde irade ü ferman veliü'l-emr efendimiz hazretlerindir.

Fi 25 Receb sene [1]311 ve fi 16 Kanun-ı sani sene [1]309

Yaver-i Ekrem-i Şehr-yarıleri  
Kulları  
Derviş



Daire-i Sadaret  
Mektubi Kalemi  
Aded 1582

Dahiliye Nezaret-i celilesine

Devletlü efendim hazretleri

Yezidi rüesasından olub mukaddema Sivas'a teb'id ve afvı validesi tarafından istida olunan Ali Paşa'nın ıtlakı halinde nefsi Musul'da ikamet etdirilmesi münasib olacağı Musul Vilayeti'nin 17 Safer sene 312 tarihlü ve bin yedi yüz yetmiş beş numarolu tezkere-i devletlerine hikaye olunan telgrafnamesinde dermiyan edilmiş ise de müma-ileyhin Musul'a avdet ettiği takdirde yine Yezidi galesi çıkarması muhtemel olduğu cihetle Kastamonu'da oturması daha münasib olacağı beyanıyla tezkere-i senaveri terkim kılındı efendim.

Fi 25 Safer sene [1]312/ Fi 5 Eylül [1]310

Sadr-ı azam ve Yaver-i Ekrem  
Cevad













## Meclis-i Vükela Müzâkeratına Mahsus Zabıt Varakasıdır

Tarih  
7 C. [1]324

### Hülasa-i Hâli

Yezidiler'in tezkere-i Osmaniye'lerinde mezheb hanesine yalnız Müslim yazılmayub bunlardan Müslim olanlarına verilecek tezkerelerde Yezidi-yi Müslim ve gayr-i Müslim bulunanlarına Yezidi-yi gayr-i Müslim yazılması Nüfus-ı Umumiye Tedkik [ve] Muamelat Komisyonu'nun tebliğ olunan mazbatasında gösterilmesi üzerine Yezidi sakin olan vilayetlerle bu babda cereyan eden muhabereden bahisle bazı ifadeyi havi Dahiliye Nezareti'nden varid olan 3 C. sene 324 tarihli tezkere kıraat olundu.

### Kararı

Misal tezkerede Yezidi sakin olan Van Bitlis Musul Diyarbekir vilayetlerinden alınan telgrafnamelere nazaran Van Vilayeti dahilinde zükur ve inas iki bin otuz üç ve Bitlis Vilayeti'nde yirmi bir bin iki yüz doksan beş ve Musul Vilayeti'nde iki bin altı yüz kırk iki ve Diyarbekir Vilayeti'nde üç bin yüz elli nüfus Yezidi mukayyed olub bunların eski kayıtlarında mezheb hanesinde Yezidi muharrer ise de kendileri esasen Müslim ve İslam isimleriyle müsemma olmalarıyla öteden beri ahz-ı asker muamelatı görmekte ve cümlesinde hemân bir itikadda bulunmakta oldukları ve Diyarbekir Vilayeti'nde Yezidiler'in bir kısmının Hamidiye Süvari Alayları'nda mukayyed buldukları anlaşılıb bu taife esasen İslam oldukları halde sût-i akidelerinden dolayı bir kısmına gayr-i Müslim nazarıyla bakılması ve sicil-i nüfus kaydıyla resmiyete konulması caiz ve mahzurdan salim olamayacağından bunların İslam olarak sicil-i nüfusa idhal ve tezkere-i Osmaniye'lerinin âna göre imla ve ita edilmesi ve şayed içlerinde İslam namıyla verilecek tezakiri kabulden imtina' edecek bulunur ise onların istihsal-i muvafakatlerine bakılmayub İslam olarak kayıtları icra ile tezkere-i Osmaniye iraesı icab edecek hususatda işlerinin tezkere-i Osmaniye ibrazına ta'lik olunması kendilerinin kemâ-kân muamelat-ı askeriye'ye tâbi tutulması lazım geleceği beyan olunmuş ve esbab-ı muharereye nazaran Yezidiler'in tezkere-i Osmaniye'lerinin mezheb hanesine kemâ-kân Müslim yazılması ve sicil-i nüfusa Müslim olarak kaydı ve tezkere-i Osmaniye iraesı ile iraesı icab eden hususatda işlerinin tesviyesinin tezkere-i Osmaniye ibrazına ta'lik olunması ve kemâ-kân muamelat-ı askeriye'ye tâbi tutulmaları tabii görülmüş olduğundan âna göre ifâ-yı muamele olunmak üzere telgrafla mahallerine tebligat icrasının nezaret-i müşarün-ileyhümaya cevaben işarı ve taraf-ı Seraskerî'ye muamelat i'tası tezekkür kılındı.

*Signatures*