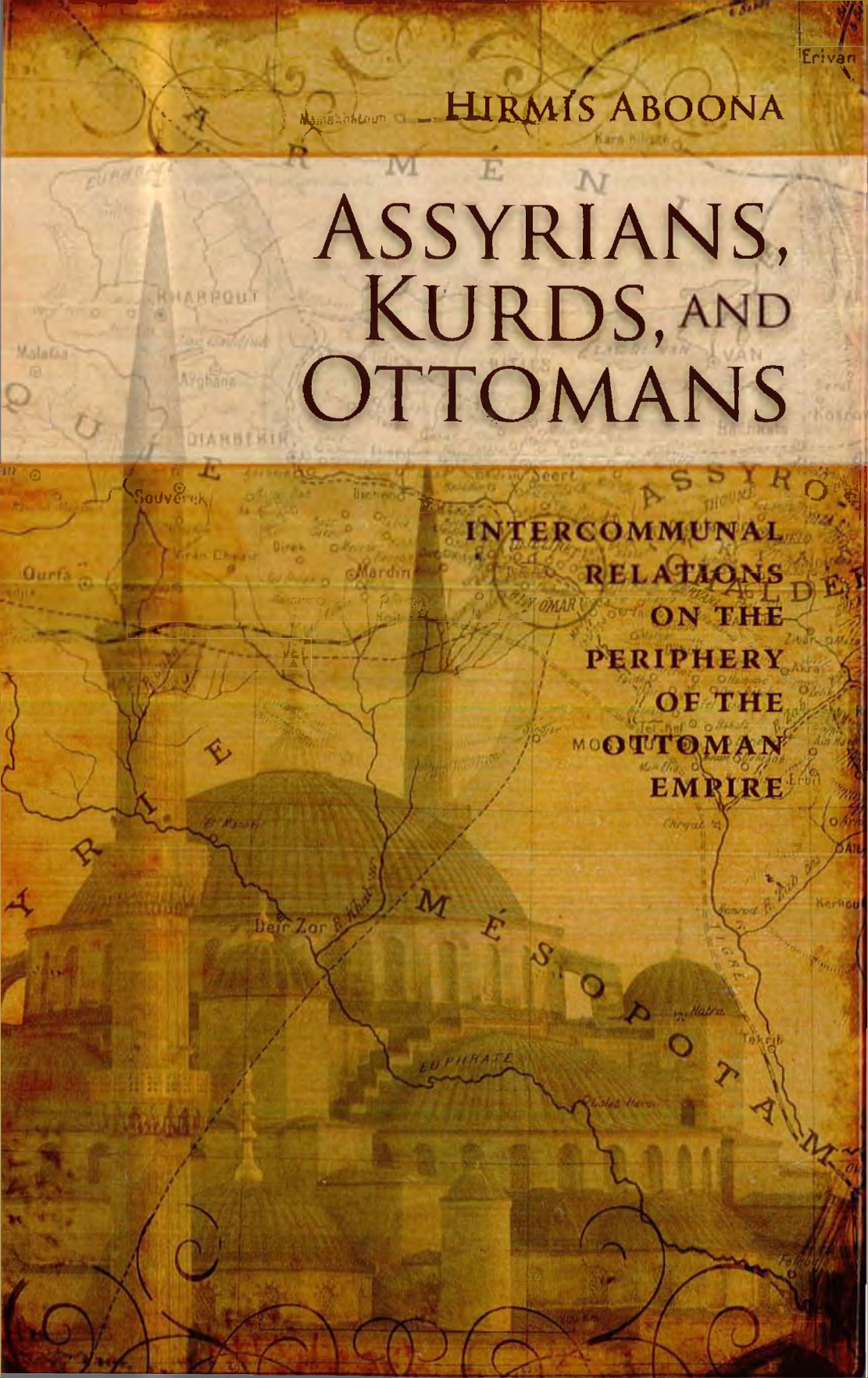


HIRMIS ABOONA

ASSYRIANS, KURDS, AND OTTOMANS

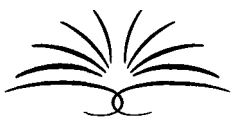
INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans

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Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire

Hirmis Aboona



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אוניברסיטת תל-אביב
הספריה המרכזית
ע"ש א. סוראסקי

In fond memory
of my son Rafid

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FOREWORD

Hirmis Aboona's *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* is a work that will be of great interest and use to scholars of history, Middle East studies, international relations, and anthropology. It presents compelling research into numerous primary sources in English, Arabic, and Syriac on the ancient origins, modern struggles, and distinctive culture of the Assyrian tribes living in northern Mesopotamia, from the plains of Nineveh north and east, to southeastern Anatolia and the Lake Urmia region. Among other findings, the work debunks the tendency of modern scholars to question the continuity of the Assyrian identity to the modern day by confirming that the Assyrians of northern Mesopotamia told some of the earliest English and American visitors to the region that they descended from the ancient Assyrians and that their churches and identity predated the Arab conquest.[1] It details how the Assyrian tribes of the mountain dioceses of the 'Nestorian' Church of the East maintained a surprising degree of independence until the Ottoman governor of Mosul authorised Kurdish militia to attack and subjugate or evict them.

Many scholars, in the U.S. and elsewhere, have decried the racism and 'Orientalism' that characterises much western writing on the Middle East. Such writings conflate different peoples and nations, and movements within such peoples and nations, into unitary and malevolent hordes, uncivilised reservoirs of danger,[2] while ignoring or downplaying analogous tendencies towards conformity or barbarism in other regions, including the West.[3] Assyrians in particular suffer from Old Testament and pop-culture references to their barbarity and cruelty, which ignore or downplay massacres or torture by the Judeans, Greeks, and Romans who are celebrated by history as ancestors of the West.[4] This work, through its rich depictions of tribal and religious diversity within Mesopotamia, may help serve as a corrective to this tendency of contemporary writing on the Middle East and the Assyrians in particular. Furthermore, Aboona's work also steps away from the age-old, oversimplified rubric of an 'Arab Muslim' Middle East, and into the cultural mosaic that is more representative of the region.[5]

Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire will stand as a lasting contribution to the history of Christianity in Asia, of the Ottoman Empire, and of one of the Middle East's largest ethnic and religious minorities. As an account of the Assyrians' nineteenth-century struggle for independence from Ottoman rule, it has no peer. Other works are strong on Assyrian history and Ottoman-Christian relations in Mesopotamia during other periods, particularly in the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries (e.g., David Wilmshurst's *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318–1913* and Christoph Baumer's *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*); the Hamidiye massacres of the 1890s (e.g., Sébastien de Courtois' *The Forgotten Genocide: The Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans*); and World War I and its aftermath in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Persia (e.g, Abraham Yohannan's *The Death of a Nation, or, The Ever Persecuted Nestorians or Assyrian Christians*, Joseph Naayem's *Shall This Nation Die?*, David Gaunt's *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia During World War I*, and Ronald S. Stafford's *The Tragedy*

of the Assyrians). No other work, however, provides an equally detailed and ambitious depiction of Assyrian-Kurdish relations in northern Mesopotamia from the Seljuk Turkish invasions up to the mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, Aboona's attention to the various ecclesiastical sects within the Assyrian community and their history during the period in question is of vital importance, as these religious denominations are rarely discussed in reference to each other, but rather solely in reference to the Ottoman State. The work also details geographically the largely overlooked Assyrian tribal homeland in the nineteenth century.

The chapters, in roughly chronological fashion, discuss the process by which formerly autonomous Assyrian tribes came to be brought under more direct Ottoman rule, and suffered cultural and ethnic devastation and the loss of many of their ancestral villages along the way. Chapter 1 sets the geographic and sociocultural stage quite concisely and usefully, and describes, among other things, the difference between the independent Assyrian tribes under the temporal as well as the spiritual leadership of the patriarch of the Church of the East (with the descendible title Mar Shimun), and the dependent and semi-independent tribes, which tended to live in the plains rather than in the mountains. Chapter 2 explains the temporal leadership of the Assyrian patriarch, who administered laws from the mountain seat of his church in Qudshanis, in the Hakkari mountains, and enjoyed the loyalty of thousands of Assyrian musketeers. Chapter 3 details the original division of the Assyrian and Babylonian Christians into traditionalist (Church of the East), Catholic (Chaldean), and Monophysite (Jabobite 'Syrian') denominations. Chapter 4 recounts the competition of European powers for missionary inroads into the Assyrian fold. Chapter 5 describes the origin of the Kurds in Persia and Azerbaijan, and their migration into Mesopotamia beginning in the ninth century and accelerating with the Seljuk Turkish and later the Mongol conquests, reaching a mini climax after the Ottoman settlement of Kurds on the Persian border as a sort of defensive barrier. Chapters 6 through 8 deal with the tentatively modernizing reforms of an era in which the Ottoman Empire encountered increasing instability in the eighteenth

and early nineteenth centuries, due largely to its conflicts with several European empires, Persia, and Arab, Kurdish, and various Orthodox Christian rebels. Chapters 9 and 10 recount how the Ottomans determined to bring the independent Assyrians and nearby Kurds under central government control, leading to the deaths of thousands of Assyrians in campaigns by Kurdish tribes under Badr Khan Beg with Ottoman acquiescence. Chapters 11 and 12 describe the final siege of the independent Assyrian tribes and British efforts to urge the Ottomans to put down the Kurdish tribes under Badr Khan Beg. Ultimately the Ottomans and a rival Kurdish leader prevailed in 1847, ending the 'Kurdish war'.

This work provokes new questions that may give rise to further research. How, for example, did the independent Assyrian tribes and the Church of the East manage to carve out a zone of autonomy so close to the Ottoman *vilayet* of Mosul, not to mention Persia? Why were the independent Assyrian tribes caught off guard and deported from their lands so easily in the 1830s and 1840s, after resisting centuries of such attacks by their local rivals? How did the Jacobite Assyrians of southeastern Anatolia and the Chaldean Assyrians of urban Mosul and its environs react to the devastation of the independent Assyrian tribal regions, as it occurred?

Aboona's book is an engaging first look at the tribal politics and ethnocultural and interreligious conflict and cooperation in northern Mesopotamia and southeastern Anatolia during the late Ottoman period. He has begun to carve out a niche for Assyrian studies within the field of modern Middle Eastern studies that specifically deals with this understudied indigenous people, laying the groundwork for future research.

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Endnotes

1. Such important references from Aboona will further aid in the correction of the now disproved theory that the opposite occurred (i.e., that western travellers and missionaries named the Assyrians).
2. Scholars frequently cite films such as *Aladdin* (Disney 1991), *True Lies* (20th Century Fox 1994), and *300* (Warner Bros. 2007), which portray westerners as heroic and virtuous and Middle Eastern people as evil, barbaric, depraved, dictatorial, and violent. See Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), and Kai Hafez, ed., *Islam and the West in the Mass Media: Fragmented Images in a Globalized World* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2000).
3. Regarding the tendency to ignore atrocities by or in western nations, genocide scholar Adam Jones has written, 'For proponents and defenders of Western states, for those who buttress the idea of the West's exceptional role as a civilizing force, ...[d]emocratic states "wouldn't do" something atrocious; therefore they "don't"'. Adam Jones, introduction to *Genocide, War Crimes, and the West: History and Complicity* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 11.
4. Compare, for example, Chris Bergeron, 'At the MFA: Art and Archaeology', *Daily News Tribune* (Waltham, MA), 21 September 2008, at http://www.dailynewstribune.com/arts/x689528668/AT-THE-MFA-Art-and-archaeology (noting the 'brutality' and 'murderous ferocity' of ancient Assyrians); with H. W. F. Saggs, *Everyday Life In Babylonia and Assyria* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987), 99, who wrote, 'The Assyrian Empire was efficient and would not gladly bear those who wished to upset the civilised world order, but it was not exceptionally bloody or barbaric. The number of people killed or mutilated in an average Assyrian campaign in the interest of efficient administration was, even in proportion to the population, probably no more than the number of dead and mangled humans that most Western countries offer annually as a sacrifice to the motor-car, in the supposed interest of efficient transport'; Magnus Magnusson, *Archaeology of the Bible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 178, who wrote, '[T]there is no evidence that the Assyrians were more cruel in their methods of warfare than any of their contemporaries were', and 'no mention of Assyrian "atrocities"' in some contemporary sources describing the fall of a city to

Assyria. The Macedonian Greeks, Judeans, Romans, and Persians would crucify hundreds or thousands of individuals upon suppressing a rebellion or conquering a city. See K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 92 (Alexander the Great crucified two thousand Phoenicians in Tyre in 332 BC, and the high priest of Judah crucified eight hundred rebel Judean prisoners in 88 BC); John Pairman Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, vol. 2, *Sacred Institutions With Roman Counterparts* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 107 (six thousand prisoners were crucified by Romans after revolt led by Spartacus in about 70 BC, and three thousand were crucified or impaled by Darius the Great after the conquest of Babylon in 521 BC).

5. Such homogenisation tends to elide the differences between distinct ethnic groups such as Assyrians, Kurds, and Arabs. See http://www.aaiusa.org/page/file/6a268f88611a0ed6f2_yzemvy7hy.pdf/NYdemographics.pdf.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife Nany for her care and for my younger son Cal for his care of the whole family during the years of my illness.

Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans

Chapter 1

The Homeland and Origin of the Independent Assyrian Tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari

1. The Homeland and Its Location

During the period under study, the country of the Assyrian tribes occupied the central parts of ancient Assyria. J. W. Etheridge stated that

> Adiabene, Ashur, or Atyria, Assyria were names for the same region. In this region, lived from time immemorial, the Assyrians as independent people, and during the first half of the nineteenth century they were in constant conflict with the Kurds for pastoral rights. Because they were independent therefore they were called '*Asherat*'.[1]

According to Asaheel Grant,

> Assyria was bounded according to *Ptolemy* on the north by part of Armenia and mount *Niphatis* on the west by the Tigris; on the

> south Susiana: on the east by *Choatra* and Zaggros. The country within these limits is called by some the ancient Adiabene (or rather Adiabene was included in Assyria) and by others *Atiria* or Atyria—Assyria is now called Koordistan.[2]

This definition seems to match with that given by the historians of the ancient world and by classical scholars, who define Assyria as the triangle between the two lakes of Van and Urmia and the city of Mosul.[3]

Earl Percy wrote that the country of the Assyrians, or Nestorians, extended from Bitlis to Mosul along the Tigris River, with the Persian frontier forming its eastern limit along the height of land running from Lake Urmia to Karmanshah.[4] An Assyrian writer defined the country between the mountains in the north, the Euphrates in the west, and the Zagros in the east as the region where the Assyrians had lived in large numbers for ages.[5] Etheridge stated that "the region principally inhabited by them has been the mountain country in the interior of Assyria, a district they have possessed for ages as an independent people though subject to frequent collisions with the Nomadic tribes of Koordistan".[6]

The country of the independent tribes occupied the upper valley of the Zab River. More accurately, the Zab with its tributaries runs throughout the country of Tiyari and Hakkari, dividing it into two halves.[7] Both Upper and Lower Tiyari lay on the western bank, while other provinces known as Hakkari lay on the east side and contained the lands of the independent tribes of Tekhoma, Baz, Jelu, and Diz located near the border of Persian Azerbaijan. The district of Julamerk-Kochanis, which was the centre of these provinces, was a short way northwest of Zab. The mountain ranges of Jabal Tur Abdin overlooked the western border, while Persian Azerbaijan adjoined the eastern border. To the north, the country reached as far as the immediate district south of Lake Van. Ainsworth mentioned that the Tura (mountain) of Matineh defined the country on the west.[8]

During the first part of the nineteenth century, this country was known as Tiyari and Hakkari. After Turkish authority was established over the whole region (1831–1847), a new administrative regulation of 1868

created the *Sanjaq* of Hakkari, which was later subject to further regulations and amendments.[9]

However, the territories of the independent Assyrian tribes bordered those of semi-independent Assyrian tribes. The village of *Mellawa* marked the border between the independent tribes and the semi-independent and *Ra'aya* (which literally means "standard" or "flag" tribes; i.e., those subdued by Turks or Kurds) towards the north and northeast. It was under the rule of the Turkish Pasha of Bash Qalla.[10]

Description of the Independent Assyrian Country

The beauty of the Assyrian tribes' country overwhelmed foreign visitors who had access to visit it after 1839. Grant stood on the peak of Mount Asheetha enjoying the impressive scene around him. He was able to command a view of Asheetha to the south, Amadia further south, *Zakho* to the west, and the Zab River descending in the distance to the southwest. *Julamergi* was visible to the northeast. He could also see the Liehun River descending to join the other branch forming the Zab River. The villages of *Hertush* were visible to the northwest, while Chamba, the capital of Upper Tiyari, lay at a distance to the northeast. From the same spot, the district of Tekhoma was clearly visible to the southeast. Further northeast was the summer resort of King Ismael of Tiyari, while Jelu and the village of *Zawetha* lay to the south-southeast.[11] This was the country described by many as a Garden of Eden.[12]

The British diplomat James Rich was the first European to give a detailed account of the independent tribes and their country and also the first to venture to send an envoy with a post to Constantinople through their country. Speaking about his desire to send the post, he wrote,

> To reach Asia Minor by this route, he [the envoy] would have to pass through the wild and inaccessible country of the Chaldean Christian Tribes who, I believe, are the only Christians in the East who have maintained their independence against the Mohametans, to whom they have rendered themselves very formidable... The men are all remarkable for strength, size, and bravery, and it is said to be less safe to pass among them than through the

> Mahometans tribes. They inhabit the country between Amadia and Julamerk, in which tract there is only one Mahometan tribe. They give something to the Prince of Hakkari, occasionally, when he conciliates and entreats them, but never by compulsion. The territory of Hakkari extends to within about two hours' journey from Urmia.[13]

Rich further spoke about the state of independence of the tribes and their firm control over the borders of their country. He described what his envoy encountered as the first stranger to approach their southern border in 1820. His Turkish *Tattar* was stopped:

> They asked him what manner of man he was: he told them he was an *Osmanli*, but they did not understand what that meant; and, to his great scandal, though he durst not express it, they neither knew nor cared about the Sultan. They comprehended, however, that he was a Mussulman, and told him they had been there long before his Mahommed.[14]

Badger described the nature of the country and its inaccessibility, which he thought was a prime factor enabling the Assyrians to resist the attacks of the Kurds and the aggression of their other powerful neighbours, as well as the incursions of the Catholic missionaries.[15]

2. THE REGIONS SOUTH OF THE TRIBES' COUNTRY

The Plain of Nineveh

The homeland of the Assyrian independent tribes was surrounded on the east, west, and south by Assyrian provinces whose inhabitants were semi-independent or mostly *Ra'aya* to the Kurdish and Afshar landlords. To the south lay Amadia, which demographically formed a continuation of the Assyrian population, who shared a common history, religion, tradition, language, and culture with the rest of their community extending further south throughout the plain of Nineveh. Thus, as has been mentioned, geographically, the whole region from Lake Van to Mosul was from the earliest times to the period under study the homeland of the Assyrians, despite the drastic changes in the ethnic and

linguistic map as a result of invasions, massacres, and settlements of alien people.[16]

Persian Azerbaijan

Towards the east, the country of the Assyrian tribes was two hours' distance from Urmia.[17] The Assyrians of Persian Azerbaijan were concentrated throughout the whole region of Lake Urmia, which measured fifty miles long. Here were the fertile plains, which stretched westward to the border of Turkey. As Dr. Grant learnt from the local Muslims, the Assyrians had been settled there before the advance of the Muslims and even in the pre-Christian era, while according to local Muslim scholars, Afshars and other Muslim groups had settled there only in the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. The Assyrians had succeeded in turning their land into a veritable paradise as western visitors and observers described it; however, massacres and persecution and ethnic cleansing had gradually thinned this dense population of Assyrians, until in the latter half of the nineteenth century, only 102 villages remained.[18] It was among the Assyrians of Persian Azerbaijan that Rome enjoyed its greatest successes in converting the followers of the Church of the East to Catholic doctrine.[19] Similar activities took place in the *Ra'aya* districts of Bash Qala, adjoining the Persian border, near the uppermost tributaries of the Zab.[20]

Districts of *Ra'aya*

There were many districts containing large numbers of Assyrian *Ra'aya*. They were subject to Kurdish and Afshar landlords, and according to western observers they suffered continual oppression, persecution, and exploitation. Among these were the districts of Gawar or Gavar, Somai, Chara, and Mamoodiah.[21] In the district of Berwar, located south of Tiyari, its intense Assyrian concentration was reduced to seventeen villages, which were all that remained from the preceding changes: Bebal, Ankari, Malkta, Halwa, Bismiyah, Duri, Iyat, Aina Nuni, Derishki, Mayah, Akushta, Misekeh, Robarah, Dereghl, Tashish, Besh, and Hayis.[22] In 1846 Layard visited Berwar and reported that the district contained villages belonging

to both Kurds and Nestorians.[23] Similar developments had affected the Assyrian settlement in the upper regions of Persian Azerbaijan.

District of Dilman, Persian Azerbaijan

The Assyrian presence in Persian Azerbaijan suffered a steady decline. During the first half of the nineteenth century, their numbers fell sharply throughout the regions where they had formerly formed the whole population. By 1840, only sixty-three villages remained in the province of Dilman northwest of Lake Urmia. That remnant came under intensive pressure from Catholic missionaries, and many of them were converted from their ancestral doctrine.[24]

Bash Qala

Bash Qala is one mile north of the town of Albaq, near the ancient Assyrian monastery of the 'Seven Churches'. The missionary Thomas Laurie reported on 5 July 1841, that the Kurds had recently invaded the Assyrian village of 'Seer' and taken away everything that the villagers had possessed. The inhabitants described to him the cruelty that their Kurdish neighbours had practised against them and how sharply the continual attacks and oppression had reduced their once substantial numbers.[25]

District of Albaq and Van

Assyrian villages were spread throughout this as well as the other adjoining districts. A route from there led to Kochanis, the seat of the patriarch Mar Shimun.[26] The road south from the city of Van led to Kochanis and ran through fertile orchards and fields in the midst of breathtaking scenery. Many Assyrian villages were located along this four hours' route, such as Sura d'Mmidayi (Baptised) and Hoze near Van.[27]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Major-General Sir Charles Wilson followed the route from Van to Jezerah Ibn Omar in what is now southeastern Turkey. He reported that many of the Assyrian Christian villages north of the Bohtan River had been completely deserted by their inhabitants due to the attacks of their neighbours, but there were still many Assyrian villages on the south bank. He also noticed many Nestorian and Chaldean villages along the route between *Si'arat* and Mardin.[28]

District of Gawer

As has been mentioned, all Assyrians, whether they were independent, semi-independent, or *Ra'aya* tribes, were in constant contact with their patriarch as their religious head, while he was the civil leader of the independent tribes as well. All districts maintained their strong attachment to the see of their church and remained loyal to its doctrine. People from all districts were paying regular visits to the Patriarch, even if they came from such distant provinces as Gawer.[29]

In the second decade of the nineteenth century, J. S. Buckingham passed through ancient Assyria and was able to see the large numbers of the Assyrians in their homeland, including the region of the upper Zab River. He stated that the whole population was Christian Nestorians and whole villages could not speak any language except their native Syriac.[30]

3. Transport and Communications

A country with such difficult terrain as the homeland of the Assyrian independent tribes must have presented serious daily challenges to its inhabitants. The movement of the people was very restricted in all provinces of Tiyari and Hakkari, owing to the inaccessible nature of the terrain. This was true during all seasons; however, in winter, the difficulties were compounded by snow, which usually blocked all the routes and access so completely that hardly anyone ventured to take even a short journey.

As the most populous place, and hence the most active economically, Asheetha became a hub for business, commerce, and transport to other provinces; however, this applied only to the Upper Tiyari and the eastern provinces of Hakkari. Lizan, which was also a large village, had the advantage of its location on the Zab, with a very busy bridge across the river joining the two halves of the country. Mosul was the main source of supply for the Assyrian tribes, and the most useable route to it passed through Chamba in the centre of Upper Tiyari to Asheetha Dory, Amadia, and Dohuk.[31]

The inaccessibility of the country was also noted by those who had an opportunity to visit it or became acquainted with its conditions. The American missionaries were the earliest westerners to enter the Tiyari

and Hakkari and gave details about its inaccessible nature. According to one,'[S]ome of the districts...are so rough that no beast of burden can travel over them and even men find it difficult to climb about from cliff to cliff'.[32] To move around, people had to wear special mountain shoes called *rashichi* or, in winter, snowshoes made from thick leaves.[33] People of different villages were able to call to one another across the deep streams, but to reach each other required a journey of many hours.[34] These difficulties were compounded during the winter, 'the road thither being impassable to mules or horses on account of the snows'.[35] While heading to Asheetha, Layard noticed that wild goats might use the path, but certainly not horses and mules; if they got through, it was surely a miracle.[36] The passes were so difficult that in many places footholds were cut into the rock to fit a man's foot to the cliffs on both sides.[37] Travellers had to use their hands to keep their balance and cross by narrow tracks on the edges of steep cliffs.[38] This might explain why crossing the district of Jelu and Baz required two days' journey. To ascend the narrow gorge leading to Tekhoma, one had to take a most difficult and inaccessible path, along which were located four villages of this district. The houses, however, were nicely distributed through the valley for miles alongside the streams. Except in the northwestern stretches, they were built on the mountain slopes one above another, so that the flat roof of the lower house served as the forecourt of the upper one.[39] Unlike Tiyari, this district included no good farmland; the people had to carry soil from distant places to fill the man-made terraces[40] on the slopes of the mountains—an achievement that astonished the visitor Ainsworth. These conditions hampered communications between various provinces and settlements—for instance, to reach the district of Tekhoma from Baz entailed crossing the high mountains and deep gorges, which took a long time.[41]

Dr. Browne, who spent twenty-five years in the country, became intimately acquainted with its conditions, carried on intensive studies of the land and the people, and travelled widely. He noticed that crossing-bridges were sometimes as narrow as one foot and only one foot above the water level. These crossingbridges were mostly used for driving sheep and were made of tree trunks. They were difficult for strangers to

use, but the Assyrians were accustomed to carrying the elderly and personal loads with confidence. The patriarch Mar Shimun had a notable experience with using one of these bridges when his carrier threatened to throw him into the river unless he let him smoke before mass.[42] Regular roads were unknown; the tracks of mules and other domestic animals were all that marked the paths—which were rocky, treacherous, and narrow—running along the mountain slopes or between the mountain bases and the banks of the swiftly flowing rivers.[43] Hence people used to measure the distance between places by the time they took walking through.

The Chamba Bridge and the Connection With Kochanis

As has been mentioned, Chamba, the centre of the Upper Tiyari, stood on the bank of the Zab River. Here the Assyrians built another bridge across the river, which measured 150 feet in length and 3 feet wide, rising 20 feet above the water level.[44]

As the see of the patriarchate and residence of Mar Shimun, Kochanis was constantly visited by Assyrians from all districts. Many Kurdish *aghas* (landlords or chiefs) also attended his daily audiences to discuss issues between their peoples. Those who came from the Jelu district had to pass the highest mountain in the region called *Tor d'Jelu*, meaning the mountain of Jelu. They reported that the path was completely unmarked, since it went over solid rock and was thirteen thousand feet above sea level; even the mules had to stop and carefully check the safety of the road before taking a step forward.[45]

4. The Independent Tribes

The independent Assyrian tribes were living side by side with their Hakkari Kurd partners in the emirate of Hakkari. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the western observers found the tribes living in a compact body in their homeland. Among some prominent tribes mentioned by Ainsworth were the Upper and Lower Tiyari, the Tobi (Techoma—Tekhoma), the Jellawi (Jelu), the Piniyniski, the Al Toshi,

the Artoshi Bashi, the Bazi, the Sati, the Ormari, the Julamergi, the Dez, the Siliyahi, and the Berwari.[46] Each tribe had its own ruler or chief, known as the *malik*, who was appointed by Mar Shimun, where the office was not hereditary. Mar Shimun was the patriarch of all the Nestorians, whether they were independent, semi-independent, or *Ra'aya*. He was the temporal and spiritual head of his nation, and they recognised no leader but him. Mrs. Bishop closely examined his status and authority:

> Mar Shimun is not only a spiritual prince but the temporal ruler of the Syrians [Nestorians] of the plains and of the mountains of Central Kurdistan, as well as a judge...He appoints the Maleks or lay rulers for each district, where the office is not hereditary, and possesses ecclesiastical patronage. For four centuries the Patriarch has been of the family of Mar Shimun, which is regarded as the royal family; and he is assisted in managing affairs by a 'family council'.[47]

Maclean and Browne found that 'Mar Shimun exercises temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction, especially over the tribes of independent Syrians [Nestorians] of Tiyari and Hakkari',[48] while Dr. Grant's assessment was that 'he is in an important sense the temporal as well as the spiritual head of his people'.[49] Wigram put the political status of the patriarch above his ecclesiastical authority, stating that 'Mar Shimun is accustomed to think of himself rather as a chief of his nation than as Patriarch of his Church (or to be accurate not to separate these two offices in his mind)'.[50] As has been noted, it should be remembered that the civil authority of the patriarch was limited to the independent tribes, while the rest of his followers recognised only his religious authority, as they had done since their split from the Church of the East in 1580.

Rich also described the political conditions in great detail and referred to the tribes' state of independence. He affirmed that they were the only Christian body in the East who maintained their independence by force of arms, acknowledging their bravery and ability to defend their freedom, as did many other Europeans who got to know the same region afterwards.[51]

5. Villages of the Independent Assyrian Tribes

Tiyari

Before the various westerners began visiting the homeland of the Assyrian tribes after 1839, there was no detailed information or statistics regarding the conditions in their country. Until Dr. Grant arrived in November of 1839, and then Dr. William Ainsworth in June 1840, the tribes' country was completely unknown to the outside world. Alongside his deep involvement in the political affairs of the tribes and the region at large, Grant observed the related issues concerning the general conditions of the people and their country, and he was the first to reveal them to the outside world in much details. The next year, Ainsworth, the envoy of the archbishop of Canterbury, produced additional information, in particular a survey of the provinces and villages. His mission opened the first chapter in British-Assyrian relations, which led eventually to the establishment of a permanent British vice-consulate at Mosul.

Christian Rassam, who accompanied Ainsworth on this visit to the homeland of the independent tribes, was shortly after appointed as British vice-consul at Mosul. An Assyrian native of the Chaldean Church who came from a prominent Christian family in Mosul, he served as a link between Great Britain and his nation.

To understand the extent and nature of the tribes and their country, as well as the rest of Mar Shimun's followers, it is important to examine Ainsworth's account and compare it with those written by others. The region that came under the direct focus of various interested western powers was dotted with towns, villages, and pre-Islamic monuments that showed that it had been inhabited by the Assyrian people from the dawn of history. The settlements formed a largely homogenous ethnic, linguistic, and religious extension to those of Tiyari and Hakkari. The Syriac-speaking people who inhabited the territory of ancient Assyria were the only survivors of Assyria and Babylonia.[52] Speaking about the district of Amadia, Layard stated,

> The plains of Amadia contain many Chaldean villages, which were formerly very flourishing. Most of them have now been deserted,

> and the inhabitants have taken refuge in the higher mountains from the violence and tyranny of Kurds and Turkish governors, and from the no less galling oppression of proselytizing bishops.[53]

The surviving remains of Nineveh and the Babylonians were mainly to be found in the so-called Assyrian triangle between Mosul, Lake Urmia, and Lake Van.

6. THE DISTRICTS OF THE INDEPENDENT TRIBES

In addition to the Upper and Lower Tiyari country, the following are some of the districts of the Assyrian country in Hakkari district east of the Great Zab, mainly those of the independent tribes.

District of Jelu
Alson, Jelu, Zirinik, Mar Zya, Thilana, Ummut, Zir, Sirpil, Bobawa, Shemsiki, and Murtoriya.

District of Julamergi
Julamerk, Kochanis, Burjullah, Espin, Gavanis, Kotranis, Euranis, Syriani, Daizi, Shamasha, Mar Dadishu, Madis, Merzin, Zerwa, Deriki, Kermi, Gesna, Kalanis, Khazakiyin, Kewuli, Meilawa, Pisa, and Alonzo.

District of Tekhoma (Tobi)
Kunduktha, Muzra, Tomago, Berjai, and Jissah.

District of Baz
Orwantiz, Shoawootha, Argub, and Kojijah.

District of Diz
The small town of Diz occupied a strategic location on the route between the country of the independent tribes and the Assyrian and Kurdish districts in Persian Azerbaijan such as Bash Qala, Albaq, and Salamis, and Van in Turkey.[54] The villages of Diz were Rabban Dadishuh, Maddis,

Chiri, Suwa, Golosel, Mar Kiriyakos, Akoshi, Chalchan, Gorsi, Savarins, and Chemmasha.

The following villages belonged to other districts: Walto, Neivdi, Gesnak, Paprashin, Burun, Bijani, Gawar, Albak, Shams-ud din, Shapat, Brasinnai, Dirakan, and Narwa in Amediaya, or Bahdinan.

7. The Semi-Independent and *Ra'aya*

The semi-independent tribes enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in controlling their own affairs and usually recognised Mar Shimun as their religious leader, while at the same time, they paid an agreed tribute to their Kurdish landlord. In the *Ra'aya* provinces, the Assyrians lived under the direct control of the Kurds and Afshars in both the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and there were no independent centres. This was due to the drastic changes in the demography of the land and the success of both the Kurds and Afshars in subduing various Assyrian settlements, which, in the words of W. Wigram, had turned the original inhabitants into serfs tilling their own ancestral lands under their new masters.[55]

Many western travellers observed the harsh conditions in which these people were living. During her travels in Persia and Turkey, Mrs. Bishop was able to see at first hand the persecution and exploitation that the Assyrians were suffering. Among other districts, she reported the deteriorated conditions in the region of Van, where the Assyrians formed a continuation of those in Tiyari and Hakkari. She attested to the degradation of the people in the villages of *Katranis*, a typical example for the living conditions of all the eighty thousand Assyrian Christians who inhabited the region.[56]

8. Origin of the Tribes

Badger's Theory of Refugees Moving From the South to the North

Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, the history and origin of the people was much debated. The majority of western visitors

agreed on the antiquity of the people in their homeland, and that they were the lineal descendants of the people of Nineveh. Badger, however, advanced the theory that the people were refugees from the south, driven northward by the Mongol invasions and massacres, particularly the horrible slaughter of Timur Lang (1393–1401), which had forced the people to take refuge in the mountainous regions of Assyria. The contemporary western scholars and missionaries who observed the conditions and investigated the history of the people in question rebutted this theory and affirmed the antiquity of the people in their homeland, providing concrete evidence to support their convictions.[57]

Refutation of Badger's Theory

Badger's theory of refugees from the south does not stand on any solid historical foundation and betrays a lack of insight into the history of the region and its people. At first acquaintance, one might be led to believe that there are some facts to support it, since it was connected to a period that witnessed bloodshed, general disorder, and insecurity. The region that came under Timur Lang's attacks might have offered some of the victims many alternatives to escape the pressing danger. Normally when people are faced with immediate danger, they attempt to flee to safer places; and in this case, the Mongols under Timur Leng dominated the plains of Mesopotamia, which could not provide the same safety as the mountainous regions to the north. But a thorough inquiry must consider both the geography and the political and military factors, notably, how Timur Lang and his huge armies were constantly scouring throughout Mesopotamia for eight years. This fact enables us to account for the fate of the people who fell under the direct thrust of the invading armies and provides much evidence to disprove Badger's theory.

The scholars who intimately studied the Assyrians became convinced that they had survived and remained in their homeland ever since the fall of Nineveh. J. Perkins stated that 'Koordistan is the ancient Assyria,

embracing also a part of Armenia and ancient Media'.[58] According to Chesney, Joseph Bonomi stated that the German archaeologist Dr. Shultz had discovered the city of the Assyrian queen Semiramis along the south shore of Lake Van and had copied forty-two cuneiform inscriptions.[59] During his residence at Mosul, Fletcher found that '[t]he Chaldeans and Nestorians are the only surviving human memorial of Assyria and Babylonia'.[60] Archaeological evidence showed that Nineveh was thinly populated after it fell to the anti-Assyria alliance known as 'uman-manda' in 612 BC, and an Assyrian population survived there under the rule of successive dynasties:'On the conquest of Nineveh by Nabopol-assar, the city was by no means destroyed. It probably shared, with the rising Babylon, the favour of the sovereign, who was still sometimes styled the king of Assyria'.[61] Ainsworth referred to Tavernier and his description to the city with reference to earlier writers who had written about it.[62] Even their Turkish oppressor, Beirakdar Pasha of Mosul, acknowledged that the Assyrians had lived in their country since time immemorial.[63]

Records of succeeding periods show that the people did not move in droves from one region to another, but remained strong enough to influence their successive rulers in the fields of culture, religion, and language. Wigram's statement might be considered typical. He wrote,

> It is sometimes said that the Assyrian or Nestorian Christians have no connection with the Assyrians of antiquity, either by language or, so far as is known, by race.With all respect, the present writer ventures to differ altogether from that conclusion, and to assert his belief that the present Assyrian, Chaldean, or Nestorian, does represent the ancient Assyrian stock, the subjects of Sargon and Sennacherib, so far as that very marked type survives at all. It is not a matter that is capable of documentary or monumental proof, from the nature of things, but certain facts that can be quoted seem to speak at least as loudly as do the words of any historian. Here are a people who, in the time of the beginning of the Christian era, are found living in the lands where, in the year 600 B.C. the Assyrian stock had

> been established since history began; nor is there any record of any considerable immigration into, or emigration from, that land, in the interval. Their own traditions affirm that they are of the old Assyrian blood, with a possible intermixture of certain Babylonian or Chaldean elements.[64]

Thus the tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, who are the direct descendants of those who survived the fall of the Assyrian Empire, had remained in their ancestral homeland, as is evidenced by numerous towns and villages that have continued to exist to the present time. Their settlement stretched from Mosul to the shores of Lake Van.[65]

Many scholars and historians have affirmed that the majority of the inhabitants of the rolling and mountainous regions of Mesopotamia and ancient Assyria before the Mongol invasion were Assyrian Christians.[66] Thomas Laurie believed that the Assyrians had been in their homeland before Timur Lang's invasion.[67] The continuity of the Aramaic language, which was the language of Assyria and has continued to be spoken in the country of the independent tribes and the other regions of Assyria until the present time, is further evidence of the persistence of the population. Professor Jŕgen Laessoe stated that 'in small places in Iraq, Aramaic dialects are still spoken by small groups of the population, a belated survival of the last spoken language of Mesopotamia in ancient times of Babylonia and Assyria'.[68]

Another indication of the weakness of Badger's theory of refugees from the south is the large number of Assyrian monuments and historic architectural remains throughout the rolling and mountainous regions, which attest to its Assyrian culture well before Islamic times, some of them even going back to pre-Christian times. The evidence appears not only from the ruins and the Syriac/Assyrian geographical names of many towns and villages that are well attested from older sources, but also from the political and religious history of the people during and after the chaotic years, which is well preserved. Travellers and historians, as well as the remnant of the monks throughout the region, continuously recorded the existing conditions. Scholars who examined

the people on the ground affirmed that there are also monumental and architectural remains throughout the region, which suggest a longer residence of Nestorians in Kurdistan before the Mongol invasion and pre-Islamic era. Maclean and Browne affirmed the existence of pre-Islamic monuments, among which were churches, monasteries, and the geographical names for the mountains, rivers, valleys, and so forth.[69]

To begin criticizing the theory of refugees, we must understand that the topography of Mesopotamia and Assyria (approximately present-day Iraq) falls into three different zones:

1. **Zone A:** Mountainous, stretching from zone B to the Ararat Mountains on the north, and to the Zagros to the east, as shown in the following sketch.
2. **Zone B:** Rolling, stretching from zone A to a distance of about thirty to fifty kilometres north of Mosul, Arbil, Kirkuk, and Kufri.
3. **Zone C:** A flat region, located to the south of the Hamrin Hills.

Zone A: Mountainous Regions

From zone B to Van-Se'arat

Zone B: Rolling Regions

An average approximately 50 km north/northeast of Mosul...Arbil...Kirkuk...Kufri

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Zone C: Flat Regions

From south of zone B to the Arab Gulf

Before Timur's invasion, the Assyrian people were to be found in all three zones, as well as in Persian Azerbaijan. Adiabene, which included in its territory the homeland of the independent tribes, was mostly within zones B and C. Speaking about ancient Adiabene, Grant wrote,

> It is worth particular notice that the most central parts of this region are, and have been from time immemorial, entirely inhabited by the Nestorians, to the exclusion of every other class of people. A great part of the Independent tribes of Tiari [Tiyari] and the whole of the tribes of Tekhoma, Bass, Jelu and other smaller tribes, are included in the boundaries of Adiabene.[70]

The majority was concentrated in zone B, as far as the region of Urhai (Urfa—اورفا اورهاي), northwest of Mosul and the region of Adiabene, with Arbil as its centre. Christianity was introduced there in the first century and became well established in the second,[71] and the Assyrians people were among the earliest to embrace the new faith. Edessa (Urfa), Nisibis, Bald, Mosul, and Arbil (the old region of Adiabene), which flourished over centuries as Syriac/Assyrian centres of education and theological learning, could never have been established and maintained unless there had been a majority of Assyrian inhabitants in those parts. The European travellers who passed through the region of ancient Assyria many times during the thirteenth century explicitly noted that the original inhabitants then still formed the majority of the population.[72] Church records attest to their large concentration from Lake Urmia to Lake Van and on into the upper-central and southern regions of Mesopotamia.[73] Those records belong to the period both before and after Timur Lang's invasion, though giving different figures.

If, as Badger supposed, people from the south took refuge in the mountainous region (zone C), it follows that the people already settled there, besides being safe themselves, were able to offer protection to their brethren from central Mesopotamia (zone A). If the local inhabitants had not themselves been Assyrians, they would have rebuffed the refugees. Even if we accept Badger's theory in this modified form, we shall have to conclude that the inhabitants of zone C were largely

untouched by Timur. What, then, about the fate of the population of the other two zones, A and B?

Following the routes of Timur's invasion from 1393 to 1401,[74] we find his advance covering both zones A and B. In practice, people who face danger try to flee for safety and escape the threat of massacre. Those with the best chance to escape were the inhabitants of zone B, because their homes were nearest to the place of refuge in the mountains (average thirty to fifty kilometres), while those who were living in the flat regions, zone A, had comparatively less chance to escape. The shortest distance from central and southern Mesopotamia to places of safety ranged between six hundred and twelve hundred kilometres. So it must be kept in mind that even if refugees from central and south Mesopotamia managed to leave their homes, they still faced a journey of about one month on foot across the country where Timur and his armies were constantly scouring. Between 1393 and 1401, Baghdad was sacked in three successive campaigns, each of which inflicted severe destruction throughout Mesopotamia and Assyria.[75]

Since ancient times and up to the present, when faced with imminent danger, the people of Mesopotamia have taken refuge in the mountains for a time, and then when the danger seems over, returned to their homes. A native historian of Mosul mentioned in the eighteenth century that Nineveh had been repopulated once again during the Muslim advance of the seventh century.[76] Just so, during the horrible massacres of Timur and his followers, the only survivors were the mountain people or others, mostly from zone B as seems likely, who managed to flee their homes and take refuge among their brethren in the high country.[77] The non-Turkish ethnic and religious groups adopted the same survival strategy during the Ottoman military campaigns of centralisation.[78]

While it seems fair to assume that the invasion of Timur Lang brought destruction to many Assyrian provinces, common sense and the analogy of what happened during later invasions support the Assyrians' own tradition, which is that many people from the rolling regions that came within the reach of the invaders managed to flee temporarily from their homes. On this subject, the Assyrians told Dr. Grant, '[O]ur fathers sought

an asylum among our fellow tribes in their mountains. [And] when the country became quiet we gradually returned to our present homes'. The refugees could not have got shelter and asylum in the mountain regions if they had not been among their own people.[79] Horatio Southgate, during his first visit to Mesopotamia in the late 1830s, advanced the same theory as Badger; however, during his next visit in 1844, when he more closely examined the conditions, he corrected his opinion and affirmed that the people had been in their homeland since time immemorial:

> I was at first surprised to find so large population of Syrians so far separated from the mass of their community in Mesopotamia and Syria...I saw that these of Kharpout were only a continuation of that population from the East, and not, as I had at first supposed, emigrants from the south.[80]

With the conversion of the Mongols to Islam under Ghazan Mahmud (1295–1304) and his adoption of a policy of general persecution of the Christians in the Ilkhanid Empire, the patriarch of the Church of the East had to flee from Baghdad and become a fugitive running from place to place. He settled for a while successively in *Maraghah* (مراغة), then Arbil, *Karmiles*, Mosul, Jezerah Ibn Omar, and Dair Rabban Hormizd near Alqush. Since the vast majority of the former inhabitants of the rolling country returned to their homes after the storm subsided, the surviving bishops also returned to their flocks, who mainly lived there. Among those who did so were the bishop and people of Arbil, as well as the inhabitants of the towns and villages from Urfa to Sulaimaniyah through Mosul, Arbil, and Kirkuk. Evidence of this appears in the continuity of the ethnic and religious settlements there with their established Syriac tradition and culture. People returned to their ancestral towns even though the invaders had devastated many of them. The Yazidis of the Sinjar and *Shikhan* districts also made their escape to safer places, as their present-day settlement attest.

What Timur's invasions did was to reduce the numbers of the Assyrian Syriac-speaking population in the rolling region (zone B) and to ravage their country. In the words of Sir Charles Wilson, '[L]arge districts

were depopulated and abandoned to the nomad, and many flourishing towns were so completely destroyed that they have never recovered'.[81]

The Kurds, as we are told by their own historians, joined and participated in Timur Lang's invasion, especially during his attack on Van and the district east of the country of the independent Assyrian tribes. Along with the Turkomans, they filled most of the depopulated districts that had been previously inhabited by millions of Syriac/Aramaic–speaking people and Armenians since time immemorial. It is well known that the Kurds did not suffer from the Mongol invasion as much as the Assyrian inhabitants of the land, especially those dwelling in the open plains of Assyria. This was because the vast majority of the Kurds were then nomads moving between Persian Azerbaijan and Assyria, and living more in the high valleys than in the towns and villages, which were chiefly populated by Armenians and Nestorians.[82]

Thus the homeland of the Assyrians was subject to constant changes in its demography due to the continual waves of invaders and settlers from Persia, a pattern that progressively thinned out the original inhabitants. The demographic changes struck those European scholars and travellers who happened to visit Mesopotamia for the first time. Thus Tavernier, during his Persian travels in the eighteenth century, wrote of 'the Arabians and Curds [Kurds], which are the inhabitants of the ancient Assyria, now called Curdistan' and noted that he 'made choice of a Curd, or Assyrian, for our *Caravan Bashi*'.[83]

Historical Monuments in the Assyrians' Homeland

As had been stated, it was during the early centuries of the Christian era that the Assyrians professed the Christian faith brought to them by the apostles St. Bartholomew and St. Thomas, and by *Addai* and *Mari*, who, according to tradition, were two of the seventy-two disciples mentioned in Luke 10:1. Rich followed Tavernier in his reference to the Assyrian Syriac-speaking followers of the Church of the East and their historic name. Speaking about the early spread of Christianity among the people, he stated, 'The Chaldeans or Assyrians received Christianity in the time of the twelve apostles'.[84] Christianity was deeply rooted in Assyria, and

the structures of the Church of the East reveal the early establishment of the churches and administrative institutions. Southgate noted the existence of ancient traditions among the Assyrians that dated back centuries before the Christian era, such as the feast of Nineveh, and stated that the patriarch *Mar Joshu Bar Nun* had merged the sees of 'Adiabene' and 'Ashur'(Assyria) under one metropolitan.[85]

Maclean and Browne observed that

> there are Churches, some said to be built by kings, which are claimed to date from before Mohammed, as Mar *Giwergis* (George) of *Khananis*, and two Churches in the district of *Dizz* or *Dizan*... A famous church in the valley of Zab, in Tiyari, is dedicated to Mar Saw, who is said to have been a descendant of the Magi.[86]

Wigram noted that '[t]he central shrine and Cathedral of the district of Jelu...is the ancient church of *Mar Zeia*, a building remarkable enough to merit a word of description to itself',[87] and some scholars went further, even stating that there are monuments going back to the time of Mar Addai.[88] Sir Charles Wilson, in his survey of the Ottoman Asiatic regions, stated that there existed in Kurdistan historical monuments going back to the period of the Assyrian Empire.[89] Grant noted that '[t]he Nestorians have the history of churches now standing in Adiabene, or the central parts of Assyria, that were built more than two centuries before the Mohammedan era'.[90]

These remains were closely examined not only as physical structures but also as monuments with a rich history. According to Badger, these included 'Mar Gheorghes (St. George) of Leezan,...tradition says that Mar (Saint) Audishu was erected 366 years before Mohammed'.[91] He also wrote,

> There are in different parts of the mountains of Coordistan and about Jezeerah [Jazirah], Nestorian Churches in which are buried the bodies of hermits and other renowned for sanctity. The graves of these reputed saints are held in high veneration...in former times, they possessed many convents.[92]

The historical evidences supporting the long residence of the independent tribes in Tiyari and Hakkari were also to be found in the surrounding Assyrian provinces. In the region of Urmia, many ancient monuments confirm the antiquity of the Assyrians in the land before the advance of Islam:

> The Church of Mart Mariam (St. Mary) in the town of Urmia is by far the most interesting building the Syrians possess in Persia. It is said to have been built by the Magi and contain the tomb of one of them.[93]

We can understand this if we realise that the country of the independent tribes was part of the bishopric of *Salakh*, which until AD 700 was part of the metropolitan district of Azerbaijan; it was then detached and annexed to the territory of the metropolitan see of Adiabene-Arbil.[94]

Many ancient Arab historians confirmed the fact that the Nestorians/Assyrians inhabited most of the regions of Assyria and upper Mesopotamia, in particular those surrounding the country of the independent tribes. The Arabic writer *Mahfouth al Abbasi* (محفوظ العباسي) asserted that they inhabited the country of Tiyari and Hakkari for twenty-five centuries.[95] Beside classical Arab historians and geographers, many Kurdish historians and writers also admitted this fact, among them Mohmmed Ameen Zaki, and *Ali Sidu al Qurani* made a similar statement.[96] *Ibn Hawkal, al Bayroni, Al Istarkhi* (ابن حوقل، البيروني، الأسطرخي) and others offered many pieces of historical evidence and referred to monuments that had existed since the early centuries of the Christian era.[97] *Eshoo'dnah* of *Basrah* (إيشو دناح البصري), a seventh-century historian, gave many details on this subject, among which he referred to *Mar Habib*—who was a member of *Dair Krdu*, a monastery located in Jezirah Ibn Omar, and a graduate of the school of Ctesiphon, the Parthian capital (south of Baghdad). He went to the mountain of *Zinai* with thirty Ninevite monks and built a monastery in the mountain of *Zamik*. He also mentioned a bishop of 'Ashur' (Assyria)[98] and gave a long list of ancient monasteries, such as *Dair al Ghab* (دير الغاب) in Mosul and *Dair Habisha* (دير حبيشا), which was built by *Mar Yacub* (مار يعقوب) near

the city of *Sa'arat*.[99] A historian from Mosul mentioned the ancient monasteries of *Mar Yonan* (Jonah—مار يونان - النبي يونس), stating that Nineveh was one of the cities of Adiabene, surrounded by walls. He quoted *Amru* of *Tirhawi* (عمرو بن متي) of the thirteenth century, who cited the monastery of Yonan, located on the south side of the ruins of Nineveh.[100] These neutral authorities serve to confirm the Assyrians' own tradition that they have lived in northeastern Mesopotamia from time immemorial.

ENDNOTES

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2. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 121.
3. A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria* (1923; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 13.
4. Earl Percy, *The Highlands of Asiatic Turkey* (London: E. Arnold, 1901), 11.
5. Rev. Joel E. Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia, or, The Assyrian Nation and Church*, (n.p.: The Author, 1924; repr., Chicago: Assyrian Language and Culture Classes, 1990), 205. Hakkari is 1700 metres above sea level and 210 kilometres south of Lake Van. The Assyrian villages were spread throughout the region stretching from the border of Persia to the Tigris in the west, and from the south shores of Lake Van to Mosul. The location could be defined roughly as between latitudes 34° and 38°.
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7. Arthur John Maclean and W. Henry Browne, *The Catholicos of the East and His People* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1892), 29.
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9. Maj.-Gen. Sir Charles Wilson, *Handbook for Travellers in Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, Persia, etc.* (London: J. Murray, 1895), 239.
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12. Edwin M. Bliss, 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', *Andover Review* 4 (1885), as cited in *Cambridge Bibliographical Dictionary*, new edition (Cambridge, 1936), 20.
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14. Rich, *Narrative*, 1:279.
15. George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals with the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Koordistan in 1842, and of a Late*

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17. Rich, *Narrative* (London, 1896), 1:276.
18. Rev. E. L. Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1877), 24–25.
19. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:299–301.
20. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:288.
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22. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:285.
23. A. H. Layard, *A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh* (London: John Murray, 1851), 118.c
24. Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour Through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia, With Observations on the Conditions of Mohammedanism and Christianity in Those Countries* (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1840), 1:291.
25. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 177–178.
26. Ibid., 237.
27. Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent*, 189.
28. Wilson, *Handbook*, 240–241.
29. Frederick G. Coan, *Yesterday in Persia and Kurdistan* (Claremont, CA: Saunders Studio Press, 1939), 156.
30. J. S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia* (1827; repr., Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishing, 1971), 320.
31. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:214.
32. Perkins, *A Residence*, 5; American Sunday-School Union, Committee of Publication, *The Nestorians of Persia: A History of the Origin and Progress of the People, and of Missionary Labours Amongst Them, With an Account of the Nestorian Massacres by the Koords* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1848), 13.
33. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:233; Lilian, *Assyrians*, 4. Ainsworth described the ruggedness of the mountains by saying that to descend from a mountain was much harder than climbing up. For the difficulties and inaccessibility of the country, see also Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 64, 70; Rev. Eli Smith and Rev. H. G. Dwight, *Missionary Researches in Armenia: Including A Journey*

Through Asia Minor, and Into Georgia and Persia With a Visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas (London: George Wightman, 1834), 2:375–376.

34. Coan, *Yesterday*, 75; Bliss, 'Kurdistan', 20; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:212.
35. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:389.
36. Layard, *A Popular Account*, 121; Isabella Bird Bishop, *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* (London: John Murray, 1891), 2:314.
37. Rufus Anderson, *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commission for Foreign Missions to the Oriental Churches* (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1873), 1:193.
38. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 241, 257; Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:218, 233.
39. Lilian, *Assyrians*, 3.
40. Coan, *Yesterday*, 140–143.
41. Ibid., 78.
42. Maclean and Browne, *The Catholicos*, 33.
43. Lilian, *Assyrians*, 4.
44. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 253.
45. Coan, *Yesterday*, 79–80.
46. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:284.
47. Bishop, *Journeys*, 2:288.
48. Maclean and Browne, *The Catholicos*, 188. See also Lilian, *Assyrians*, 7.
49. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 75.
50. Wigram, *The Cradle*, 273.
51. Rich, *Narrative*, 1:175. Henry Ross referred in detail to the power of the tribes and their ability to maintain their independence; see *Letters From the East*, ed. J. Ross (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1902), 51–69.
52. Layard, *A Popular Account*, 38.
53. A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, (New York: George P. Putnam, 1850), 142.
54. Coan, *Dr. Grant*, 71.
55. Wigram wrote, '[T]here are plenty of Christian villages, almost entirely of the Nestorian church, though at the western end of it some belong to the "Jacobite" today. All of these, however, are rayat or feudally subordinate, to the Kurdish chiefs among whom they live, and are little better in fact than serfs'. *The Cradle of Mankind*, 312.
56. Bishop, *Journeys*, 2:323.
57. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:78.
58. Perkins, *Residence*, 6.

59. Joseph Bonomi, *Nineveh and Its Palaces: The Discoveries of Botta and Layard* (London: Office of the Illustrated London library, 1852) 124–125. Mrs. Bishop, who toured throughout the region late in the nineteenth century, stated, 'The founding of Van is ascribed to Semiramis, who, according to Armenian history, named is Shemiramagerd, and was accustomed to resort to its gardens, which she had herself planted and watered, to escape from the fierce heat of the summer at Nineveh'. *Journeys*, 2:338.
60. J. P. Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh, and Travels in Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Syria* (London: Lea & Branchard, 1850), 1:347. Mentioning the persecution and massacres of Shahpur II (339–379) against the Assyrian Christians, Fletcher stated that Assyria 'was governed by a satrap, whose name Sennacherib recalls the old days of the Assyrian monarchy'. *Notes From Nineveh*, 2:134.
61. Bonomi, *Nineveh*, 70.
62. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:138, 146, 141. He referred to the visit of Rabai Benjamin of Tudella in the second part of the twelfth century and remarked that a bridge was in existence joining the city of Nineveh with Mosul. This statement was made by Abu al Fida of the fourteenth century. *Travels*, 2:137; 'Alī Saydū al-Gūrānī, *Min 'Ammān il al-'Imādīyah, aw jawlah fī Kurdistān al-janūbīyah* / ta'līf; taqdīm Sa'd Abū Dīyah, edition al-Tab'ah 2 (1939, repr., 'Ammān: Dār al-Bashīr, 1996), 146. During his visit to Mosul he stated that it contains Islam and Christians descendants of Assyrians and Arameans.
63. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 61.
64. W. Wigram, *The Assyrians and Their Neighbours* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1929), 178–179.
65. Edgar Wigram, 'The Ashiret of Highlands of Hakkari', *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 2 (1916), 52.
66. William of Rubruck, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World 1253–1255*, trans. William W. Rockhill (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1900; repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), xxvi.
67. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 102. See also Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:224. Southgate mentioned that many Muslims acknowledge their Assyrian origin, while Layard explicitly stated that the Chaldean/Assyrians and Syrian Jacobites are the only remaining survival of the ancient Ninevites, and the others were aliens to the land who settled during the series of invasions. Southgate, *Narrative*, 31; Layard, *A Popular Account*, 24.

68. Jŕgen Laessoe, *People of Ancient Assyria: Their Inscriptions and Correspondence*, trans. F. S. Leigh-Browne (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 36.
69. Maclean and Browne, *The Catholicos*, 11–2, 44, 295–299, 301–302, n. 1. See also Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun* (London: Faith Press, 1920), 4, 8.
70. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 129.
71. E. T. Wiltsch, *Handbook of the Geography and Statistics of the Church*, trans. John Leitch (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1859, 1868), 1:22–58.
72. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:176; Carsten Niebuhr, originally published under the title *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und anderen Umliegenden Ländern*, 2 vols (Copenhagen 1774–1778); translated into English by Robert Heron, *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East, January 1761*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: R. Morison and Son, 1792).
73. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 330; Rev. Joseph Naayem, *Shall This Nation Die?* (New York: Chaldean Rescue, 1921), xxxvii; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:373; Grant, *The Nestorians*, 121–122, 126–127; Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia*, 199, 270.
74. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 313; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 54; Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 144; Wilson, *Handbook*, 294, 305–306; Dwight and Smith, *Armenia*, 205; Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Qaramānī, *Akhb ar al-duwal wa-ath ar al-uwal fi al-tarikh* (Beirut: Ālam al-Kutub, 1982), 288–290; Karl Broklman, *Tārīkh al-shu'ūb al-islāmīyah*, naqalahu il al-'arabīyah Nabīh Amīn Fāris, Munīr al-Ba'labakkī, edition al-Tab'ah 7 (Beirut : Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1977), 420.
75. Laurie stated that his pyramid of Baghdad in 1401 contained ninety thousand heads. *Dr. Grant*, 54; Leenhert Rouwolf, *Seer Aanmerkelyke Reysen na En Door, Syrien,t Joodsche Land, Arabien, Mesopotamiaen, Babylonien, Assyrien, Armenien & Jaar* c. *in't 1573*, translated in English by Nicholas Staphorst as *A Collection of Curious Travels and Voyages* (London: Printed for S. Smith and B. Walford to the Royal Society, 1693); Arabic translation by Selim Taha al Tikriti, *'Rihlat al Mashrik ela al Iraq wa Suriya wa Libnan wa Falastine* (Baghdad: Wazārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Funūn, 1978), 204–205; Petros Nasri, *Historie des églises chaldéenne et syrienne* (Mosul, 1913) 2:190; translated into Arabic as *Tha'kherat al Ath'han fi Tarikh al Masharika wa al Maghariba al Suryan* (Mosul, 1905); Rouwolf, *Travels and Voyages* (Arabic translation), 204–205; Mohammed Amin Zaki, *Kholasat Tarikh al Kurd wa Kurdistan min Akdam al*

Osur al Tarikhiya hata al'an, translated into Arabic by Mohammed Ali Awni (Cario, 1936), 150.

76. Mohammed Amin al Umari, *Man'hal al Aw'liya wa Ma'shrab al As'fiya min Sadat Mosul al Hadba*, 2 vols, ed. Sa'ed al Diwachi (Mosul: Sa'ed al Diwachi, 1967–1968), 1:56, n. 2.
77. Wilson, *Handbook*, 281; Forbes Beatrice Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72–73.
78. Lawrence E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 172.
79. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 160–161.
80. Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian [Jacobite] Church of Mesopotamia* (New York: D. Appleton, 1844), 81. Many historians referred to the continuity of the Assyrians since the fall of Nineveh. Herodotus, in his *History*, clearly described the people as he saw them in their homeland; Xenophon in 401 did the same in his *Anabasis*. The successive Iranian dynasties mentioned the Assyrians and their homeland in their monuments, such as Darius (512–486 BC) in the famed 'Nakshi Behistun', and in the Sassanian rule, Mesopotamia was known as 'Asorestan', or Assyria. Shahpur I (241–272) accounted Asorestan as part of his empire. See *The Greek Historians: The Complete and Unabridged Historical Work of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Arian in Two Volumes*, ed. Francis R. B. Godolphin. (Random House, New York. 1942), 623–628. Moreover, countless historians and clergymen from the Church of the East have provided detailed accounts of the establishment of the church in Assyria. Badger stated that '[i]n many Syriac manuscripts, Mosul is styled as Athur and it is no uncommon practice with ecclesiastical writers of the present day to use the same phraseology'. *The Nestorians*, 1:78.
81. Wilson, *Handbook*, 54; al Umari, *Man'hal al Aw'liya*, 1:130; Abbas al Azzawi, *Tarikh al Irak ben Ihtilalen* (Baghdad, 1939), 2:122.
82. Al Bidlisi spoke highly of Timur Lang's award for the Kurds for their support. *Sharafnama*, trans. Mohammed Awni (Cairo: Dar Ihya'a al Kutub al Arabiya, 1958) 1:88, while Mohammed Zaki stated that al Bidlisi headed for Timur Lang camp to submit his loyalty and was well received and rewarded by Timur. *Kholasa Tarikh al Kurd*, 171–172.
83. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six Voyages en Turquie, en Perse et Aux Indes* (Amsterdam: Johannes van Someren, 1678) *Turky* [*sic*], 2:71–72. Mohammed Amin Zaki acknowledged the antiquity of the Assyrian tribes in their homeland in Tiyari and Hakkari before the Christian era

(130), while Yusuf al-Sayigh stated that Assyria consisted of three major provinces: Adiabene (the land between the two Zab rivers) with Arbil as its capital; Bagirmi in the region of Kirkuk; and Halwan, which is the present-day Sulaimaniyah. *Tarikh al-Musul*, 3 vols. (Cairo: The Salafiyya Press, 1923). Ainsworth confirmed that the present-day Kurdistan is Assyria, which corresponds with the definition of Ptolemy. *Travels*, 2:260.

84. Rich, *Narrative*, 2:120.
85. Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 155. See also Aubrey R. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches: A Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia From the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians* (London: Independent Press, [1937]), 115.
86. Maclean and Browne, *The Catholicos*, 298–299, 301.
87. Wigram, *The Cradle*, 171.
88. Etheridge, *The Syrian Churches*, 110.
89. Wilson, *Handbook*, 246–248.
90. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 224.
91. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:253.
92. Ibid., 137.
93. Maclean and Browne, *The Catholicos*, 298–301.
94. Wiltsch, *Handbook*, 1:495.
95. Mah'futh al Abbasi, *Emarat Bahdinan al Abbasiya* (Mosul, 1969), 209–210.
96. Ali Gurani, *Min Amman Ila al Amadiya*, (Cairo, 1939; 2nd printing Amman, 1996), 153–155; Zaki, *Kurd wa Kurdistan*, 130.
97. Abi al Hassan Ibn Hawqal, *Kitab Surat-al-Arth* (Leiden, the Netherlands: J. de Goeje, 1967), 205–206; Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad al-Istakhrī, *Masālik al-mamālik. 'Kitāb al-aqālīm' /* e codice Gothano, edited by J. H. Moeller (1839; repr., Baghdad : Maktabat al-Muthannā, [c.1964]), 40. Al Bayroni was quoted by Abraham Yohannan, *The Death of a Nation, or, The Ever Persecuted Nestorians or Assyrian Christians* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 102–106.
98. Eshu D' Nah al Basri, *al Diyora fi Mammlakati al Furs wa al Arab*, trans. Polus Shieko (Detroit, n.d.), 48–49.
99. Ibid., 35–36.
100. Al Saigh, *Tarikh al Mosul*, I. 38–39; Rev. Polus Bijan noted that Mar Kirdagh, who ruled Assyria during the reign of Shahpur II (339–379), was a convert to Christianity and a descendant of the Assyrian royal family, and his mother claimed descent from Nimrod, who is credited in Genesis 10:11

with founding Nineveh. See *Kitab Serat Ash'har Shuhada al Masriq al Qidisen*, translated into Arabic by Mar Addi Sheer, (Mosul, 1900) 311–345; Mari bn Sulaiman, the historian of the thirteenth century, referred to the persecution of the Christians of Mesopotamia by Shahpur II, which lasted forty years; see *Akhbar Patarikat Kursi al Mashriq* (Rome, 1899), 21.

Chapter 2

Church, State, and Social Life

1. The People and Their Patriarch

The Assyrian followers of the Church of the East who inhabited the regions of Tiyari and Hakkari formed a compact body of independent tribes paying tribute and allegiance to none other than their patriarch and *maliks*. The civil and ecclesiastical head of the people was their patriarch, known by the title of Mar Shimun. Before the advance of the Catholic missionaries and their labours in various parts of ancient Assyria, all Syriac-speaking Christians were followers of either the Church of the East or the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) Church. The geographical distribution, doctrines, and ecclesiastical affiliations were therefore quite different from what emerged following the activities of the missionaries, especially from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards.

However, throughout most of their modern history, the people remained loyal to their ancestral church, despite the harsh times they had been

through and the Roman Catholic missionaries' offers of protection from oppression. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, even outside the country of the independent tribes, Nestorians still far outnumbered those who had joined the Church of Rome.[1] Rome only succeeded in converting most of the followers of the Church of the East after the wholesale massacres and destruction that the independent tribes suffered in the 1840s. These massacres led to the political subjection of the tribes, and, with their collapse, the Syriac-speaking followers of the Church of the East lost their defence line. Those who were living in the rolling and flat regions could no longer withstand the inducements of the Roman Catholic missionaries, who were staunchly supported by French diplomats and Ottoman authority.

However, for a century and half during which those missionaries worked among them, the independent tribes managed to resist and rebuff all efforts to induce them to leave the doctrine of their forefathers and adopt a new one. This stand, as has been stated, was maintained by the force and power that the tribes possessed before 1843, while the followers of the Church of the East, living in less-defensible places, inclined to withstand the propaganda and influence of the Roman Catholic missionaries.

2. THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND THE AUTHORITY OF MAR SHIMUN

The independent tribes were living in a compact body, comprising many large and small tribes. All were ruled by their patriarch Mar Shimun, who, as we have seen, possessed both temporal and ecclesiastical authority over his people. Each tribe had its own chief known as the *malik* (ملك), which literally means king; this term was in wide use in Mesopotamia during antiquity.[2] Each tribe contained many subtribes or clans, forming a sort of pyramid structure, and was ruled by a *ra'es* or chieftain (رئيس), which is originally a Syriac administrative term. The council of *ra'eses* assisted the *malik* in administering the affairs of the tribe, while all the *maliks* formed a supreme ruling council headed by the patriarch.[3]

The clergy played an important role in the administration, along with the *maliks* and *ra'eses*, as a reflection of the people's attachment to their church. This long-existing system had been born of necessity, having evolved among the tribes over a long period of time as the only way to survive. There were also several other bishops in Jazirah, Azerbaijan, and various districts in Mosul vilayet who accounted directly to the patriarch Mar Shimun.[4] Col. Sheil, who toured the region in 1836, reported that intensive Assyrian settlements existed in the region of Khabour and that three bishops from that district were then on a visit to Mar Shimun in Tiyari.[5]

For their part, as Fraser stated, the followers of Mar Shimun acknowledged their loyalty to their only temporal and spiritual leader, paying

> neither obedience nor tribute to any foreign authority...in realty subject to none but their own chiefs. The principal of these chiefs, who is patriarch...exercises a perfect authority over his subjects both in spiritual and temporal affairs.[6]

Maclean and Brown too were very precise in stating the extent of Mar Shimun's authority: 'Mar Shimun exercises temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction especially over the tribes of independent Syrians [Nestorians/ Assyrians] of Tiyari, Tekhoma, Jelu, Baz, Diz, and the other valley of Central Kurdistan'.[7] Rev. Joseph Naayem, referring to the nature of the governing system among the independent tribes, stated, 'They lived under the administration of their chiefs who were known as *Maliks*, and whose form of government was extremely primitive. Over all was a supreme chief called Mar Shimun'.[8] However, as we shall see, a dissident faction eventually found its opportunity in the presence of the Catholic missionaries in the region and in their hostility to the original patriarchal line of the Church of the East, which claimed descent from the disciples Mar Addai and Mari.

Kochanis, the Seat of the Patriarch

Kochanis is located on a mountain seven thousand feet above sea level.[9] It served as the seat for the patriarchate of Mar Shimun's line, situated

a short distance from Julamerk, the administrative centre of Hakkari district and the official headquarters of the Hakkari Kurdish chief of the emirate. Two deep valleys, which join together south of the village, define it; the Zab River, as it is called by the Assyrians, flows through both. The northern side of the mountain forms a sharp, rocky, precipitous slope, while another mountain looms from the south. Here, above a rock, stands the patriarchal church of Mar *Sheleta* (كنيسة مار شليطا), which was also the burial place of the patriarchs for many generations. The church of Mar Mosa is located in the valley a short distance from Kochanis, about a mile distant from the plateau.[10] Here the successive patriarchs ran the affairs of their people, as well as administered jointly the affairs of the emirate of Hakkari, and it was usual for Mar Shimun to act as chief executive in the absence of the Kurdish emir.

The System of Natir Kursi (Office Guardian— ناطر كرسي)

A word must be said about the *Natir Kursi*, which means the guardian and designated successor to the office of patriarch. This system was introduced by the patriarch Mar Shimun al Basidi (1437–1497).[11] It remained as canon law of the church in the original line at the monastery of Rabban Hormizd near Alqush until 1838. The same system was also adopted by the line of Mar Shimun in Kochanis after 1580 and came to an end in 1975 with the assassination of the patriarch Mar Shimun Eshai. Under the *Natir Kursi* system, the office passed from a deceased patriarch to his designated successor, who was usually his nephew. This system addressed the critical situation that the Church of the East faced after the devastating invasions of Timur Lang (1393–1401) and his successors.

The Nature of the Tribes' Independence

Rich was the first westerner to discuss the tribes' political system, reporting in his narrative on

> [t]he wild and inaccessible country of the Chaldean Christian tribes, who I believe are the only Christians in the East who [have] maintained their independence among the Mohammetans, to whom they have rendered themselves very formidable...they

> neither knew, nor cared about the Sultan—they comprehended Mr. Rich's envoy as a Mussulman, and told him that they had been there long before his Mohammed.[12]

As Southgate wrote, '[T]he Nestorians of the mountains have been independent of all foreign rules'.[13] Ainsworth, while touring the country of the independent tribes in the summer of 1840, noted that 'Kurdish villages located in the midst of these tribes were ruled by Nestorians'.[14] In 1840 Brant, the British consul at Erzeroom, reported on the conditions of the independent Assyrian tribes, mentioning that

> [t]he Christian population is a bold and hardy race; keeps itself from the Mohamedan, and maintains its territory, its property and its rights by force of arms...the Christians as well as the Kurdish portion, are jealous of their liberty.[15]

During his mission on the border dispute between the Ottomans and Persians, Fraser observed the existing conditions and the primitive administrative structure of the Nestorians' government, stating that they

> constitute a sort of commonwealth of their own, separate from the rest of the world, and who yield neither obedience nor tribute to any foreign authority...They are particularly jealous of their freedom and very able to defend it, for they are very brave and resolute have 20,000...musketeers (تفنكجي - حامل البندقية). This is the country which, it is said, no power has ever succeeded in reducing to subjection.[16]

As has been stated, the Turkish operations in the region opened central Kurdistan to the labours of western Protestant missionaries. Among the earliest to attempt to visit the country of the independent tribes was the American Dr. Asaheel Grant, who applied to Beirakdar, the pasha of Mosul, for protection. Beirakdar's response clearly illustrates the power of the tribes, which enabled them to maintain their independence in the midst of the powerful enemies:

> 'To the borders of their county' said the vigorous Pasha of Mosul 'I will be responsible for your safety; you may put gold upon

> your head, and you will have nothing to fear; but: I warn you that I can protect you no farther. Those mountain infidels (Christians) acknowledge neither Pasha nor Kings, but from time immemorial every man has been his own King'.[17]

Grant advanced his own theory of how the Assyrians were able to maintain their independence, affirming,

> Not only are the principal part of the Nestorians shut out by physical barriers from the people around them, but their civil condition required them to remain peculiarly distinct. It is, perhaps, to this as much as to the nature of their country, that they owe their present independence, in the midst of numerous and powerful enemies.[18]

Meanwhile J. Perkins believed that

> the term independent applied to them in an unqualified manner, may be as deceptive as it is grateful. What then is the real import of their independence? Why, that by the aid of the rocky ramparts that surround them, their muskets and spears which they always keep near them, and their corresponding habits of fierce, desperate daring.[19]

And Ross found that

> the Nestorians were always prepared for raids; their rooms were hung with arms, and a shot echoing in the narrow valleys called out every male above fifteen to the strife—even children of ten or twelve frequently handled their rifles with effect...In the time of war they were led by their own *Maliks* or hereditary chiefs.[20]

Thus, as we have seen from various authorities, the Assyrian tribes maintained their independence from any foreign influence by force of arms, resisting any foreign attempt for their subjection as they had done since time immemorial. They continued to do so up to the period when the Ottomans began implementing the policy of centralisation to bring all autonomous centres into subjection. As we have seen, many authors wrote about the nature of the tribes' independence, which appeared to

present an abnormal state of affairs. A Christian minority living in the midst of powerful and hostile majorities of Kurds, Turks, Afshars, and Persians was able to maintain its hold and keep its borders safe.

While the independent tribes had the advantage of an inaccessible country, the main factor in preserving their existence and identity was their warlike habits and courage. The Assyrians were famous as horsemen and lancers, and used to show off their skill with swords and spears even when they visited their patriarch.[21] Boys were taught how to use bows and edged weapons from the age of nine or ten, and at puberty, each received a dagger, which he carried for the rest of his life. As late as 1914, M. Y. A. Lilian noted that '[t]here is no house in which you will not find a latest rifle, daggers and bandoleers hanging from the wooden pillars or walls', and both youths and men carried their rifles to church and after mass showed off their skill in shooting.[22] Many times down to 1843, they vindicated their right to remain distinct from the surrounding ethnic and religious elements as a state. But from then on, various factors contributed to dramatic changes in the status and life of the Nestorian tribes.

The Patriarch and His Authority

As we have seen, the independent Assyrian tribes succeeded in maintaining their independence and governing themselves under their successive patriarchs, but they could never have done so without a mature, capable administrative body that was able to lead and defend their country. Clearly the pyramid system described earlier was able to address the pressing issues and conditions and to function successfully. But it was chiefly thanks to the unquestioning obedience of all the followers of Mar Shimun and to his capable leadership that the tribes managed by force of arms to resist all foreign attempts at their subjection from time immemorial until 1843. Many had the opportunity to examine the resources and power of the tribes and the qualifications of their leadership, especially when the country became a no man's land for several centuries during the era of Ottoman-Persian conflict, in which the Kurds became an additional factor after the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. Meanwhile the Afshars in

Persian Azerbaijan were draining the resources of the Assyrians, whom they exploited and looted as *Ra'aya*. This reveals the reluctance of the regional Muslim majorities to accept coexistence with the native Christian minorities. The conditions of the independent tribes were quite different from those of their co-religionists elsewhere, since they enjoyed different geopolitical conditions. From a legal point of view, they constituted an ethnic and religious group whose status was later regulated in the *Hatti Sheif* of Gulhan of 1839.

After their subjection in 1843, however, the tribes' historical isolation came to an end. The rugged mountains could no longer keep the people detached from surrounding developments, particularly the determination of the Turks to reestablish their authority in the region. Thus the tribes were dragged into the arena of events without being equipped to deal with the new concepts represented by the modern thinking of the westerners, Turks, Persians, and others.

3. Economic, Social, and Cultural Conditions

The western visitors who spent a considerable time with Mar Shimun and his people learned at first hand the position of the family among its followers and how he was considered the supreme civil as well as ecclesiastical authority. The American missionaries reported the prestigious status of the patriarchal family among their followers, who regarded them as princes.[23] They lived in an exceptionally large house with an antechamber, a large 'saloon' or reception room, and six other rooms. The antechamber was hung with the horns of mountain deer that the patriarch himself had hunted. In the saloon, he received his guests sitting on a settee covered with rugs, and they were expected to kneel before him.[24]

Economic Conditions

As we have seen, the country of the Assyrian tribes was known for its mountainous terrain. Many districts had no land for cultivating barley or other crops. The exception was the district of Tekhoma, which was

famous for its fields and the tobacco that grew there. The Assyrians made up for the shortage of agricultural land in creative ways—in the village of Lizan, for instance, the people turned the slopes of the high mountains into fertile fields by bringing soil from a distance to fill the twenty-five terraces that they had constructed on the rocky surface. Ainsworth was astonished at the architectural skill and the achievement. These man-made terraces were irrigated by a highly advanced system, by which the water was distributed to the high level at the same time as to the lower parts.[25] Channels of aqueducts, which were remarkably well built, irrigated the beautiful orchards around *Chamba*, the capital of Upper Tiyari. These aqueducts, which resembled the old *Jirwana* aqueduct in the plains of Nineveh during antiquity, transferred water across the channels, which were built from stones, while, as elsewhere, the terraces were filled with soil brought from distant places. In *Asheetha*, the few fertile spots were carefully exploited and cultivated. Some wheat was grown, but mainly rice, and also millet, potatoes, and hemp for rope and cloth. Most vegetables were also widely grown. *Lizan* and *Minayanish* were famous for their watermelons and cucumbers, while most fruits were available, especially grapes. Many villages were surrounded by vineyards, from which the people used to produce a good quality of wine.

Raising livestock, in particular sheep, was common among the people and formed the prime resource for their living. Dairy products and wool were sold in the chief surrounding cities, mainly Amadia, Mosul, and Julamerk. In return, they satisfied their annual needs for clothes, foodstuffs such as sugar, soap, and other essential needs. The women worked very hard knitting the wool to make cloth for their family members. The village of *Garamoon* was famous for coloured stocks, sheets, and other textiles. To supplement their diet, the people gathered honey, hunted deer, and shot birds with their bows and rifles.[26]

The tribes were often confronted with the consequences of the devastating floods of the Zab River, when they had to suffer the loss of their crops. These floods were frequent in Tiyari and Tekhoma districts, as well as in the *Salabikan* basin.[27]

Cultural and Educational Conditions

For centuries, the tribes were cut off from the outside world and unacquainted with its progress. Illiteracy prevailed, especially among the independent and semi-independent tribes. During the period under study, *Qasha* (priest) Orahma of the Asheetha, who was considered the most learned person among the Assyrian tribes, explained the learning situation and why his people remained mostly illiterate by telling Badger, 'What do you expect? People are very poor, and they hardly see anything except the sky up above and the earth down below'.[28]

Learning on modern lines was unknown among the Assyrians throughout the period of their decline. The situation changed only with the arrival of the western missionaries, who provided several levels of education, notably the American mission after Dr. Justin Perkins arrived at Urmia to head it in 1834. English missionaries also took a role in education, beginning towards the end of the nineteenth century. American missionaries first were involved in education programs among the Assyrians of Azerbaijan, in particular in the city of Urmia and its immediate surrounding villages, and this movement also had its effect on those in Tiyari and Hakkari. In 1835 Bishop Mar Yohannan, with the priest Oraham, paid a visit to Dr. Perkins, and right after their return, the priest opened a school and began teaching English.[29] However, the majority of the people still remained cut off from modern knowledge because they knew no language but their own, which they were only able to speak; during the troubled centuries through which they had passed, the knowledge of writing and reading had become almost entirely confined to the priests and bishops.[30]

Social Conditions

Thus it is safe to say that the tribes' society was quite primitive. Their continual state of isolation had shaped their lifestyle, which remained much the same as in the pre-Christian era. For generations, the people had met their own needs from within. They had learnt how to make basic primitive tools; each man had to make his own, collecting raw iron from open mines. The people of Asheetha, for instance, had a particularly

good reputation for smelting iron and making the large picks and goads, which were needed by the farmers and muleteers. The village of Surspedoo was famous for its production of lead. There were many mineral pits, among which a famous one was in the village of *Duri*, on the southern border of Tiyari. Phosphates abounded in many places throughout the tribes' country, and people used to collect them to make their own ammunition; every man was responsible for making his own, with the help of his wife.[31]

Ordinary people's houses mostly consisted of only two or three rooms. The ground floor was used as the living quarters in winter, and the upper one in summer, but in hot weather, the people had to build themselves outdoor sleeping booths from tree branches to escape from the heat and insects. In the upper room of each house was a small earth oven in which the family baked its bread and cooked its meals. Most had no furniture; the family members squatted on their knees round an open fire, and if a guest came, they provided him with a carpet. Food was brought from the oven on a large earthenware platter and served in earthenware or copper dishes, or, in the poorest households, on goatskins. There were no metal spoons or forks; instead, people used wooden ones, and some ate with their fingers. Apart from weapons, as was previously mentioned, most houses had no ornaments except a simple wooden cross on a pillar in the front room, before which, every morning and evening, the elders of the family would stand and pray. *Maliks* usually had somewhat larger houses with a third story from which they could shoot down at their enemies.[32]

Village churches were mostly small, narrow, and dark because they had no windows. After the establishment of the central Turkish authority late in 1847, the churches were built with flat roofs and even narrower doorways, to prevent the Turks or Kurds from desecrating them by driving in sheep, goats, or cattle. The apsidal sanctuary was separated by a curtain and contained the altar with the cross at the east end, and on the right side, a tub by way of a font. All churches had bells, but none had towers or bell cotes; instead, the bell was hung from the trunk of a tree adjoining the church. Beside the main church, there was often an even

smaller one serving as a chapel, where in summer, the people might pray every morning and evening. Neither churches nor chapels had crosses on their roofs, lest they attracted the attention of the Muslims. Inside, apart from the cross in the apse, the only usual ornaments were cloths hung up as thank offerings by people cured of sickness.[33]

Men and boys wore embroidered shirts, sleeveless embroidered vests, baggy trousers, stockings, soft woolen shoes that would not slip on the mountain paths, conical white hats resembling those of the ancient Assyrians, and, in cooler weather, long-sleeved cloth robes fastened with strings or buttons. Most carried the curved daggers that they had received at puberty stuck in their girdles. They seldom cut their hair, wearing it in two or three plaits hanging behind the head. All but priests and old men shaved their beards. Deacons wore ankle-length albs with red girdles, and the higher clergy wore similar robes, but only when officiating in church; at other times, the clergy dressed like the laity.[34] Women and girls wore three or more embroidered shirts, one over another, under long-sleeved, ankle-length dresses of embroidered cotton or silk; on their heads, they wore the Turkish fez, wrapped with a strip of coloured or embroidered muslin or other fine fabric, and decorated their foreheads with gold coins. They braided their hair and hung it behind their heads. In Kochanis, however, women wore a simpler, originally monastic, robe called the *dera*, with a plain Turkish fez.[35]

Assyrian girls enjoyed much greater freedom than their Muslim counterparts, in that they regularly met and worked with boys and their families in the fields or on the mountains. Youths normally married at between fifteen and twenty years of age, maidens at between twelve and fourteen. Weddings were occasions for feasts and dancing for the whole community, lasting at least three days and sometimes as long as a week. Church law and social custom enforced exogamy, and Assyrians were allowed to marry Christians of other nationalities, though never Muslims. The two families normally arranged marriages, but lovers whose families did not wish them to marry not infrequently eloped. When they returned, their families were usually reconciled with them, but the girl forfeited her inheritance. Family life was strong, because the church forbade divorce

except for adultery by the woman and severely discouraged concubinage by excommunicating both parties and refusing them Christian burial if they died unrepentant. But as might have been expected in a small nation anxious to keep up its numbers, public opinion refused to condemn a man who took another woman if his wife had proved barren.[36]

A typical family in Tiyari and Tekhoma consisted of three generations and about forty members: patriarch and matriarch, sons and their wives, unmarried daughters, and grandchildren. When the patriarch died, his younger brother or eldest son stepped into his place. In domestic life, the matriarch ruled supreme, assigning their tasks to her daughters and daughters-in-law. The women fetched grass, firewood, and water, and did all the baking and cooking and, when their men were away, all the fieldwork, too. They ate together, apart from the men, and after the latter had finished their meal. As with the Armenians, a married woman had no right to speak to her in-laws; she communicated with them through her husband.[37]

4. The Population of the Independent Assyrian Tribes, With References to the Surrounding Regions of Mar Shimun's Followers

Until the establishment of direct Ottoman rule in the summer of 1847, there is no official census available for the independent Assyrian tribes. However, with the arrival of the western envoys and missionaries, attempts were made to give estimates. The earliest westerner to provide one was Dr. Walsh, who put their total number in Turkey and Iran at five hundred thousand.[38]

Smith and Dwight were the first westerners to introduce the people to the outside world in 1831; they stated that the Nestorians counted fifty thousand families.[39] A Chaldean priest gave seventy thousand as the total number, which the British consul in Tabreez rejected as much too low,[40] while Wigram estimated the Independent Tribes alone at one hundred thousand.[41] For the number of the Assyrians in Azerbaijan, we also have different figures, ranging from Perkins' thirty to forty

thousand, to Smith and Dwight, who stated that the Assyrian population of Azerbaijan amounted to one quarter of the total number.[42] Maclean and Browne gave the same percentage,[43] while Edward Cutts gave a figure of twenty-five thousand for the Assyrians of Urmia alone.[44] Rufus Anderson put the total number of the Nestorians at one hundred and fifty thousand, including forty thousand in Persian Azerbaijan.[45] Grant, who studied the people more intimately, put the total number of the Nestorians followers of Mar Shimun at two hundred thousand, which included the independent, semi-independent, and *Ra'aya*. Etheridge, Coan, and Maclean and Brown gave the same number.[46] As the tables in appendix B show, there are great differences between the totals given by Badger and Ainsworth and the figure of one hundred thousand for the independent tribes stated by Dr. Grant.

Asheetha, the capital of Lower Tiyari, affords an example to test Badger's estimates. He put the total number of its houses at four hundred, while Ainsworth stated that Asheetha could provide one thousand fighters out of its five thousand inhabitants.[47] Badger also provided a table giving statistics for many Assyrian villages (see appendix B). However, the issue of the tribal structure and the difference between the independent and nonindependent will be addressed in the following chapters.

Endnotes

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16. Fraser, *Travels*, 59.
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22. Lilian, *Assyrians*, 14, 19.

23. American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 280.
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Chapter 3

The History of the Church of the East Down to the Arrival of the Roman Catholic Missionaries

1. Early Christianity in Assyria and Mesopotamia

As we have seen, Christianity was introduced into Assyria and Mesopotamia during the first century AD and became well established in the second. The inhabitants of the kingdom of Urhai (Edessa) were the first to receive the message during the reign of King Abgar Okama V, followed by the kingdom of Adiabene.[1] The disciples St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew were said to have preached among the independent tribes; the traditions in that region continuously commemorate St. Bartholomew's mission and the existence of a monastery bearing his name that he built in *Albaq*.[2]

Scholars have observed that 'Christianity had its roots among Aramaic Syriac-speaking people in Mesopotamia and Assyria: this was the

preaching-language of the disciples' as well as that of Jesus Christ.[3] Despite Persian and Roman persecutions, the followers of the Church of the East were later able to spread their faith into Persia, Arabia, and the central and remotest parts of Asia.[4] The Assyrian and Babylonian Christians continued to foster their faith zealously, supporting it by multiplying the numbers of metropolitans, bishops, churches, monasteries, schools, colleges, and universities. Thus Urhai served as a cradle and a centre for Christianity in the East much as did Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria within the Roman Empire.[5] Learning was widespread, as could be seen from the schools adjoining the churches and monasteries.[6] After adopting Christianity, some Assyrians and Babylonians even declined to use the ancient ethnic personal names because of what were considered their pagan associations.[7]

2. THE 'ECUMENICAL' COUNCILS

The first four 'ecumenical' councils of the Christian Church—those of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451)—represented successive efforts to resolve a single controversy, namely, how Jesus Christ could be said to be both God and man.[8] It is important, however, to understand that these were controversies within the Church in the Roman Empire; indeed, they were largely confined to the eastern territories that became known as the Byzantine Empire. There theological disputes often led to riots and even bloodshed. The Roman emperors, as the supreme authority, convened councils to deal with these issues with a view to securing peace and tranquillity between the various churches and factions within the empire. Churches beyond its limits were not directly involved in these disputes and so were not expected to send delegations. Church historians have termed these councils 'ecumenical'; but we must keep in mind that the Roman authorities habitually used *oikoumene*, of which 'ecumenical' is the adjective, to mean not the whole known world but the empire—as if it were the only part of the world that mattered.[9] Moreover, except when the emperor (or the empress as the power behind the throne) had definite views of his/her own on the issues,

the state was less interested in having a council arrive at the truth than in having it produce a formula that would secure peace and harmony. Once a council did produce such a formula, all loyal subjects of the emperor were expected to accept it, and so it became a test of loyalty as well as orthodoxy.[10]

During the period under study, the councils nearly always reached decisions that agreed with the opinion of the popes.[11] The reason for this, however, was not theological as much as political: the pope was the eastern emperor's most effective remaining agent and representative in the lands that had been the western half of the empire. Until 476 there was still a titular western emperor, but after about 450, he was a puppet in the hands of his barbarian army commander, and his authority was scarcely recognised even in theory outside Italy. If the real emperors who still reigned in Constantinople wished to retain any influence in the West, let alone recover the power that their predecessors had exercised there, they could not afford to alienate the popes for very long.

While the eastern Roman emperors were obliged to conciliate the views of the popes and were unwilling to challenge their influence, the case was quite different with the church in the Sassanian Empire, which was in constant hostility with Byzantium. Accordingly the successive councils gave very little consideration, if any, to whether the doctrines they proclaimed were acceptable to the Church of the East.

The endemic hostility between the Roman and Sassanian empires also meant that the followers of the Church of the East were largely cut off from their co-religionists in the West. Their main contact was through the theological college of Urhai (Edessa), located in Roman territory near the border between the two historic foes. The importance of this college can be assessed from its role as a major centre for theological learning; many famous fathers of the Church of the East were its graduates. But the role of this college came to an end when the doctrine of the Church of the East was officially banned within the Roman Empire. As is explained in greater detail later, the emperor Zeno closed the college in 489 and ordered its Nestorian teachers persecuted. This obliged many of them to take refuge among their Nestorian brethren

in the territory under Persian rule. There they were welcomed by the Persian rulers as Christians having serious differences with their Roman enemy.

3. NESTORIUS AND THE COUNCILS OF EPHESUS AND CHALCEDON

The roots of the disputes that led up to the Council of Ephesus lay in the rivalry between the patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch with their respective theological schools. The school of Alexandria tended to exalt Christ's divinity to the exclusion of his humanity, while that of Antioch adopted a view that gave at least an equal prominence—sometimes too much prominence—to his manhood.[12] A second factor was the rivalry between the sees of Alexandria and Constantinople and the personal jealousy that Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, felt for Nestorius, archbishop of Constantinople, who had been trained at Antioch (which was a cradle of the Syriac liturgy and literature) in the theology developed by Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, and Diodore, bishop of Tarsus.[13] Probably a deeper cause, however, was the growth in the first half of the fifth century in the cult of the Virgin Mary. Cyril and his supporters were particularly zealous for these developments, which gave the Egyptians a Christianised substitute for the worship of Isis to which they had been devoted before their conversion. In contrast, Nestorius had been born and trained up in an environment influenced by Syriac culture and literature. This stressed the uniqueness of God and the unlawfulness of worshipping any other being, and Nestorius seems to have seen in the developing cult of Mary a dangerous tendency to pay her honours that belonged to God alone. His background, influenced by Syriac theology, led him to develop a theory of Christ's nature and personhood that stressed that he was only the son of Mary *as a man*, and that it was therefore wrong to call Mary *Theotókos* (which is often rendered 'Mother of God' but properly means 'the one who gave birth to God'). This belief led Cyril to denounce Nestorius, claiming that his teaching implied that Christ was two persons, not one, which was clearly heretical.[14]

In 431 the emperor summoned a council to meet at Ephesus and decide this dispute, as well as the controversy over the teaching of Pelagius, which was also dividing the church. The emperor had wished for a balanced representation of all regions among the bishops, but he did not get his wish. Cyril brought about fifty bishops with him and an imposing number of important clerics and monks. When the Egyptians arrived in Ephesus some days before Pentecost, Nestorius was already there with his entourage, including the influential Count Irenaeus. On June 12, Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem arrived with fifteen bishops from Palestine. While the primatial authority of Ephesus was not effective over the whole civil diocese of Asia, the prestige of that apostolic see was incontestable, and the increasing intervention by the bishops of Constantinople was greatly resented there. So Memnon of Ephesus and the one hundred other bishops from that diocese sided with Cyril. Memnon made his position quite clear by refusing to allow Nestorius and his adherents into the churches of the city.

Patriarch John of Antioch had sent word ahead that he and his bishops would arrive late and asked for the opening of the council to be put off until they came; but Cyril, supported by Juvenal and Memnon, decided instead to speed things up. He clearly wished to take advantage of the situation, knowing that John and his bishops wanted to put him on trial for the anathemas he had hurled at Nestorius. The Roman delegates were also late arriving, but that was no problem for Cyril, because he regarded himself as having received a commission from Pope Celestine the year before. So Cyril convoked the council for 22 June; however, he seems to have made this decision only the day before, and on the evening of 21 June, he received protest from eight bishops, including twenty-one metropolitans. Whether it was too late to postpone the meeting or Cyril thought that would be undignified, the decision stood, and on Monday, 22 June, nearly 160 bishops gathered in the cathedral of Ephesus, which incidentally was dedicated to Mary.

The proceedings began immediately, despite the protest of the emperor's representative, Count Candidian. Cyril, Memnon, and Juvenal seem to have taken a decisive role.[15] Nestorius was absent, since he

did not consider the summons sent out by Cyril and his followers to be valid. He was summoned a second and a third time, but to no effect. Meanwhile the council began to examine the points at issue and adopted Juvenal's proposal to judge the contradictory doctrines by the standard of the creed of Nicaea, which was then read. Cyril's second letter to Nestorius was then declared to conform with the faith of Nicaea, while Nestorius' answering letter was condemned. Nestorius was deposed from his see and degraded from his priesthood, and the custom of calling the Virgin Mary *Theotókos* was confirmed.[16]

Then on 26 June, John of Antioch and the Syrian bishops at last arrived in Ephesus. Count Irenaeus, being a friend of Nestorius, went to John and his entourage to tell them what had happened. Cyril sent a delegation, who officially informed the Antiochians that Nestorius had been condemned and deposed, and required them to have nothing to do with him. Immediately, with Count Candidian's support, John and his group held a meeting, which those bishops who had not wanted to go to Cyril's meeting of 22 June also attended. One motion was adopted that summed up the complaints of the opponents: Cyril and Memnon were held mainly responsible for the happenings of 22 June, and they were deposed and excommunicated until they and their followers came back to their senses.

On 9 July, the pope's delegates arrived and, following his instructions, contacted Cyril. On 10 July, a new session of the council was held in Bishop Memnon's residence. All who had attended the first session were there, and they read a letter from Celestine, which the Roman delegates were carrying. Then on 11 July, the Romans endorsed what had been done before their arrival and ratified Nestorius' deposition. John of Antioch's countercouncil was condemned as 'a conventicle of apostasy'; the number of bishops with him was minimised, and several of them were declared irregular.

On 16 July, the council sent John two summonses ordering him to appear, without result. It then passed a series of decrees against anyone who held any shade of opinion similar to what was labelled as the errors of Nestorius and the Pelagian Celestius.

The pope was informed that the council had confirmed his condemnation of the Pelagian leaders, and a letter addressed to the emperor put great stress on the ecumenicity of the council.[17] He accepted its decision and banished Nestorius to a monastery in the Sahara Desert, where Cyril could keep him isolated and powerless. Cyril then drew up an explanation of his teaching that John of Antioch agreed to accept, but only under great pressure from the emperor.[18] The dispute between Alexandria and Antioch had only been papered over, not resolved.

By 448 both Cyril and Pope Celestine were dead. In that year, a local synod in Constantinople condemned the teaching of the abbot Eutyches, who said that Christ's manhood was swallowed up in his godhead like a drop of vinegar in the ocean. Dioscorus, Cyril's successor as patriarch of Alexandria, persuaded the emperor to summon a council to review the decision, which met at Ephesus in 449 with Diosorus presiding. Bullied and intimidated by both the emperor's troops and a mob of supporters whom Dioscorus had brought with him, the council vindicated Eutyches and deposed both the archbishop of Constantinople and the patriarch of Antioch. The archbishop was so badly treated that he died soon afterwards.[19]

An incidental result of this council's decision was that all teachers and students at the Syriac college of Edessa were expelled. These included the revered theologian *Ibas* and his pupil *Bar Soma*, the future archbishop of Nisibis.[20]

Pope Leo the Great, who is considered a much better theologian and a much more judicious statesman than his predecessor, Celestine, was appalled by these proceedings. He refused to approve the council's decision and wrote to the emperor demanding a fresh one. The emperor refused, but in 450 he fell off his horse and died. His sister Pulcheria then married a senator named Marcian, who became the new emperor and agreed to a new council, which met at Chalcedon in 451.[21] This was more balanced in its representation of the clergy and more fairly conducted than either of the councils held at Ephesus. It condemned the council of 449 and the teaching of Eutyches, but it also condemned Nestorius' alleged doctrine that Christ was two persons and affirmed the

view of Leo as expressed in his 'Tome', that Christ was one person in whom two natures, divine and human, existed together without either one swallowing up the other.[22] This council also promoted both the archbishop of Constantinople and the bishop of Jerusalem to the rank of patriarch, establishing the classic Orthodox system of five patriarchs, with the pope as the senior patriarch, but only in the sense of being first among equals.[23]

Nestorius was still in exile in Egypt and was not allowed to attend the new council. However, a treatise known as *The Bazaar of Heraclides*, which was only rediscovered at the beginning of the twentieth century, is ascribed to him by most scholars—and if he did write it, it shows that he was satisfied with the doctrine of Leo and the Council of Chalcedon and believed that it embodied the essence of the views that he had sought to defend against Cyril. If so, then one can conclude that Nestorius, at least at the end of his life, was no Nestorian.[24]

4. THE THREE-WAY SCHISM BETWEEN THE CATHOLICS, THE JACOBITES, AND THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

The controversy did not end there. Many clergy and laity in Egypt and in the western provinces of Syria continued to support the views of Cyril and Dioscorus, and refused to accept the decision of Chalcedon. Then when Ibas, the head of the college at Edessa, died in 457, his pupil Bar Soma was expelled from the college for the second time by the Roman authority. He returned to his own country and—as has been mentioned—found a warm welcome in the territories of Mesopotamia under Persian rule. He became metropolitan in his native city of Nisibis and the second-ranking prelate in the Church of the East. Very exceptionally, his abilities also led the Persian king to appoint him warden of the marches and commander of the troops on the frontier—a post hardly ever given to a Christian in the Persian Empire.[25]

In 476 the last western Roman emperor abdicated, and the lands of the former western empire fell completely under the rule of the Germanic barbarian invaders, who were mostly either pagans or Arians. The eastern

emperor Zeno apparently decided that it was now more important to secure religious harmony within his own dominions than to conciliate the pope, who was now effectively the subject of a barbarian king.[26] This time the emperor did not choose to summon a council, probably because he thought that it would only stir up fresh controversy. Instead, in 482 he issued a new confession of faith on his own authority, called the *Henoticon* or 'Formula of Unity'. This condemned both Nestorius and Eutyches and declared that Christ was one person but did not explicitly add 'in two natures' or approve the decrees of Chalcedon. The pope therefore rejected it, and so did most or all of the teachers at the school of Edessa. In retaliation, Zeno closed the school for good in 489. Most of the remaining teachers then took refuge with the Church of the East in Nisibis, where Bar Soma founded his own theological school, with the refugees making up much of its staff.[27]

This seems to have been the time when the Church of the East first formally declared itself separate and detached from the church in the Roman Empire. Bar Soma held a synod at Bait Lapat in 484 that organised the Church of the East as an independent church and affirmed the right of higher clergy, as well as priests, to marry.[28] Under his influence and that of the other refugees from Edessa, the Church of the East endorsed the theological traditions supported by Theodore, Diodore, Nestorius, and Ibas—which they seem to have judged as agreeing with the ones that they had received from their own apostles, Addai and Mari—and Bar Soma persuaded King *Piruz* to expel from his dominions all Christians who disagreed with those teachings, arguing that their loyalties lay not with him but with the Roman emperor.[29]

Even at this point, however, the Church of the East does not seem to have made any decisive breach with the Catholic Church of the Roman Empire. After Bar Soma refused to attend a church council summoned by his superior, the patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, that council annulled all the decisions of his synod except the one allowing higher clergy to marry. When Justin became Roman emperor in 518, he recognised the decrees of Chalcedon. The pope then came back into communion with the church in the Eastern Roman Empire—and so, apparently, did the

Church of the East, since the Catholicos Mar *Aba* visited Constantinople in about 530. When war broke out again between the Empire and Persia in 540, the Persian King *Chosroes* persecuted the Church of the East, which suggests that he regarded its members as once again in sympathy with the Christians in the Roman Empire.[30]

The council that really created a definite schism between the Catholic Church and the Church of the East was the Second Council of Constantinople, which was convoked by Justin's son and successor, Justinian, in 553. Since his general Belisarius was reconquering Italy for him, Justinian once again wished to have the support of the pope, so his council obligingly reaffirmed the teaching of Pope Leo as endorsed at Chalcedon. The Monophysites of Syria refused to accept this decision and set up their own church under Jacob Baradaeus.[31] Over time, this religious difference became a focus for the growing resentment that the Aramaic-speaking Syrians felt at the way they were governed by the emperor's Greek-speaking officials from Constantinople.[32] After the Arab conquest of Syria, the Syrians, like the adherents of the Church of the East, found that they got better treatment from their new masters because their own brand of Christianity was not the same as that of the Melkites (emperor's men), as they called the Orthodox.[33] Their church has endured as the Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite Church ever since.

However, Justinian's council went beyond the decisions of Chalcedon when it passed the 'Three Chapters', which condemned the teachings of Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas, all of them long since dead.[34] The theologians of the Church of the East could not accept this condemnation of Bar Soma's revered master, Ibas, and the earlier leaders of the same school. Accordingly in 585 the patriarch Ishuyahb held his own synod, which condemned the Three Chapters but passed a confession that was completely in accord with Leo's Tome and the decrees of Chalcedon.[35] Thus it was their refusal to accept the Three Chapters of the Second Council of Constantinople, rather than their supposed failure formally to endorse Ephesus and Chalcedon, that led the Catholic Church to regard the Church of the East as heretical and schismatic. The Church of the East in fact included both the Tome of Leo and the acts of the Council of

Chalcedon in its *synodicon*, or official collection of approved conciliar decrees.[36]

From then until the nineteenth century, the Church of the East remained largely cut off from the rest of Christendom. In modern times, however, the leaders and theologians of the worldwide Anglican Communion have extended it the hand of fellowship, because they have come to believe that the whole difference between the Church of the East and the western churches that accepted the decrees of Chalcedon was a matter of words, not beliefs. The Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican churches all teach that Christ is one person with two natures. The Church of the East teaches that Christ has one *persopa* but two *qiani* and two *qnumi.* Anglican theologians have concluded that the whole disagreement arose because older western doctors misconstrued *qnuma* as meaning what they understood by 'person', when in fact it means 'essence'.[37] That Jesus Christ the God-man is one person (*parsopa*) in whom are conjoined both a human and a divine nature (*kiana*) and essence (*qnuma*) is precisely the doctrine of Leo and the Council of Chalcedon and also, if he indeed wrote *The Bazaar of Heraclides*, what Nestorius himself came to believe, at least by the end of his life. The Church of the East styles Mary 'Mother of God the Word', which is also in accord with the decrees of Chalcedon. Apparently, then, the action of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in labelling the Church of the East heretical has been nothing but a tragic mistake that caused an unnecessary division in Christendom.

Thus the Christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries split the Syriac-speaking people into two distinct Christian sects, matching the political division that set apart the Romans from the Persians and also dived both groups from the main body of western Christendom. The zeal of both communities made them exert their energies in missionary activities in Asia, reaching as far as China and Japan. They established learning institutions with the Syriac language common to both, making valuable contributions to knowledge, such as translating Greek learning into Syriac and Arabic, which later was passed to Europe by the Arabs through Spain. Having freed itself from any connection with the western

churches and reaching a good understanding with its Persian rulers for most of the time, the Church of the East embarked on a huge missionary enterprise, which reached its peak under Abbasid rule. All the eastern parts of the world, as far as China and even Japan, became a field for missionary labour—a task that the church fulfilled by converting many pagan ethnic groups to Christianity.[38]

These missionary successes, however, served to mask the dangerously exposed situation in which the Syriac-speaking peoples found themselves. As long as they remained under the rule of the Zoroastian Sassanids and the Ummayad and Abbasid caliphs who succeeded them, the Nestorians' isolation from the rest of Christendom actually worked in their favour, because all those dynasties were willing to tolerate Christians who behaved like peaceable and obedient subjects and gave no loyalty to any foreign power. The same attitude actually secured better conditions for the Jacobites, after the Arab conquest of Syria, than they had experienced under the rule of Byzantine emperors who were zealously orthodox as defined in Constantinople. However, once they came under the rule of Muslim dynasties such as the Seljuk Turks and the Mongol Ilkhans, their religious division hampered the members of both Syriac-speaking churches from mounting any concerted resistance to pressure and persecution by their Muslim, non-Arab neighbours and rulers, while their perceived status as 'heretics' made first the Byzantines and then the crusaders less concerned to rescue them from oppression than they might have been if they had acknowledged the Syriac Christians as full brothers and sisters in Christ. As we shall see, these factors were to influence the fate of the Assyrian Nestorians and the Syrian Jacobites right down to the period that forms the focus of the this study.

After 1295 the Church of the East gradually dwindled into a shadow of its glorious past. Its sharp decline could be seen by the beginning of the fifteenth century, when it was unable to call a church council to elect a new patriarch because it had only one metropolitan serving a few communities in their original homeland who had survived the catastrophic events especial the slaughters of Timur Lang. The decline

was compounded by continual persecution and ethnic cleansing by uninterrupted waves of alien invaders and settlers who headed to Assyria to fill the vacuum left by Timur's devastation and the elimination of the vast majority of the indigenous inhabitants. The conditions existing among the people during the period of Ottoman decline added another factor, which further accelerated the decline of their church. Rome then exploited the Christian minority's situation to absorb the greater part of their church and bring the people under its sway.

5. The Schism Between the Orthodox and Latin Churches

The later relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the separated churches of the Near and Middle East—the Jacobites and the Church of the East—were also profoundly affected by the schism between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Like the earlier schisms, this was at least as much a matter of politics and cultural difference as theology. Indeed it seems fair to say that the two bodies first quarrelled about questions of power and authority and then found a doctrinal excuse for condemning each other.[39]

As early as the fourth century, the popes had claimed to be the unique successors of St. Peter and the sole heirs of Christ's promise to him, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18), and therefore supreme over all other prelates.[40] The patriarchs in the Eastern Roman Empire had always politely ignored this claim, and their theologians interpreted the text differently.[41] But by the end of the eleventh century, all the churches of western Europe had admitted the claim and the popes were seeking to enforce it on all Christendom.[42] Pope Urban II, in launching the First Crusade, aimed to extend his authority over the Christians in the Near East, and he also hoped that by freeing the Byzantines from the Turkish menace, he would earn their gratitude and induce them, too, to admit his claim to supremacy over the whole church. Doubtless, Urban sincerely wished to help the eastern Christians and to rescue them from aggression and persecution by the Turks, but his

notion of how to do that involved bringing them under his own rule and control.[43]

The real causes of the schism were the cultural cleavage between western and eastern Europe and the rivalry between the western and eastern empires and their chief sees of Rome and Constantinople.[44] The chief doctrinal excuse was the issue of the *Filioque*, the Latin word for 'and the Son', which the churches under the pope's authority came to insert in the Nicene Creed.[45] The pope and the patriarch of Constantinople traded anathemas over that issue in 1054, but even that act did not create a complete schism between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.[46] What made the schism definite was the action of the crusader Prince Bohemond of Antioch in 1100, when he deposed the Orthodox patriarch of that city and appointed a Latin patriarch, obedient to the pope, in his place. The other Orthodox patriarchs all refused to recognise the deposition, and from then on the eastern emperors and the popes began to appoint rival patriarchs of both Antioch and Jerusalem.[47] After that, both sides began to act as if there were two rival churches, not a single Catholic Church with some internal disputes.

From that time on, the papacy came to regard the Orthodox Church as its main rival and consistently followed a policy of trying to win over all the native Christians in the Near and Middle East who were in schism with Constantinople. The ultimate objective of the strategy was, as it were, to outflank the Orthodox Church by planting Latin Christianity on its eastern as well as its western doorstep, and to encourage the Orthodox, too, to acknowledge the claim of Rome to be the hub of all Christendom. Then as now, the popes sincerely desired to unite Christendom; but then as now, they were unable to imagine how Christendom could be united without themselves as supreme heads. The division of western Christendom prevented it from presenting a united front against Muslim pressure on it eastern flank and diverted effort and resources that would better have gone to resisting that pressure into an internal quarrel, as appeared most tragically when the Fourth Crusade was divided into an attack on Constantinople. In this complex chess

game, the 'Separated Eastern Churches' were to be little more than pawns.

6. The Crusaders, the Early Phase of the Missionaries

The dramatic developments of the eleventh century in Mesopotamia, which brought the Seljukid occupation to Baghdad in 1055, were only the beginning of the geopolitical, demographic, and religious changes that came as the direct result of the successive waves of invaders from the west and from Central Asia. The decline of the Abbasid Caliphate had created a military and political vacuum throughout the region. This was shown as soon as the Seljuks occupied Baghdad, but its worst effects only appeared when the Mongols followed then in 1258.

These developments were closely watched by the Catholic European states, which responded by organizing a series of crusades during 1097–1291. The presence of crusaders in the lands that had given birth to the separated churches prompted Rome to reassert its historic claim to supremacy over all Christian churches.[48]

Thus, beginning in 1097, Pope Urban II and his successors promoted a series of campaigns to occupy the region that lasted two centuries. At the outset, the objectives were to recover the Christian holy places from the Muslims, deliver the native Christians of the Near East from persecution, and protect Armenia and the Byzantine Empire from Turkish attacks.[49] But the military commanders were mostly at least as interested in acquiring wealth by plunder and carving out kingdoms and principalities for themselves, and so the waves of invaders brought destruction to the regions inhabited by the followers of the national churches.[50] Thus we find a contemporary historian, a native of the city of Urhay (Urfa, known in the West as Edessa), recounting the early crusader campaigns and describing in detail the destruction wrought by their occupation to the ancient emirate of Urhay and their illtreatment of the intensive native Christian population.[51] Another contemporary historian, the famed Ibn al Ibri (ابن العبري), painfully described the tragedy of the sack of

Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade (1204), to which many clergy and laity of the city fell victims, and which put an end to the Byzantine Empire as a great power and a bulwark of Christendom against its foes.[52]

The attitudes of some crusaders towards the native Christians could be seen from a letter that the leaders of the Second Crusade sent to Pope Eugenius III (1145–1153): 'We defeated the atheist Turks, but we are unable to use violence against the infidel Rums [Orthodox], Armenians and Syrian Jacobites. Come and destroy with your might, which has no parallel, all the infidelity'.[53] According to Cardinal Ogen Tsran, Pope John XXII (1316–1343) wrote on 2 November 1326 to the commander of a later campaign, urging him to uproot both the Nestorians and the Jacobites from Cyprus, 'leaving the necessary measures to his wise judgment'.[54] The people had to adjust to the new conditions, including the creation of a Catholic body in Lebanon in 1204.[55] The crusaders exerted themselves to convert the non-Catholic native Christians in all the territories that came under their rule, and they left a trace of that endeavour in the Maronites of Lebanon, whom Rome succeeded in converting during the Fourth Crusade.[56]

Both the crusaders' incursions into the Holy Land and their ultimate withdrawal from the region had far-reaching consequences for the local Christians. After the Muslims' victory over the Mongols at Ain Jalut in 1260, and their conversion to Islam at the end of the thirteenth century, a general anti-Christian feeling developed and led to massacres throughout the territories under Ilkhanid rule.[57] The reaction to the crusaders' behaviour took the form of general massacres to force Islam on the native Christians, especially after 1295.[58]

Thus the early forcible attempt by Rome to 'reclaim' the so-called 'heretical churches' had evil consequences for both its own followers and for the local Christian churches. For the former, the lesson was to rest in the repository of history until a new opportunity presented itself. The latter were obliged to live with their wounds after having been subjected to two waves of invaders.[59]

Endnotes

1. Etheridge, *The Syrian Churches*, 15–16; Rich, *Narrative*, 2:120; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 47; Sam Parhad, *Beyond the Call of Duty: The Biography of Malik Kambur of Jeelu* (Chicago: Metropolitan Press, 1986); Adam Mez, *Al Hathara Al Islamiya fi al Qarn al Rabi al Hijri*, trans. Mohammed Abdul Hadi (1902; repr., Beirut, 1967), 1:25.

   Aziz Atiya, *History of Eastern Christianity* (London: Methuen, 1968), 242–259; Rev De Lacy O'Leary, *The Syriac Church and Fathers* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1909), 23–33; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:36; Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia*, 226–227; Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 40; 'Al i ibn al-Husayn al-Mas' ud i, *Mur uj al-dhahab* (Beirut, 1986), 339. Mez mentioned that the 'mandilion', which tradition says has the image of Jesus Christ printed on it, was kept in the Grand Church of Urhai and was handed over to the Byzantines in return for lifting the siege of the city and liberating the Muslim captives. Al Kirmani, while speaking about the existence of more than three hundred churches in Urhai (al Ruha), refers to its great church, which contained the cloth. See al-Qaram ani i, *Akhb ar al-duwal wa-ath ar al-uwal f i al-t ar ikh* (Bayr¯ut: '¯Alamal-Kutub, 1982), 351; Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent*, 169; Lt. Col. R. S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1935), 20, n. 1.
2. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 132; Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: An Abridgement*, by M. Low (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), 186; Wiltsch, *Handbook*, 1:22; Rufael Babo Ishaq, *Tarikh Nasara al Iraq monthu Intishar al Nisraniya fi al Aktar al Iraqiya ela Ayamina* (Baghdad, 1948), 8–9; Albert Abouna, *Tarikh al Kanisa al Sharkiya, I. min Intishar al Masihiya hat'ta Maji al Islam* (Mosul, 1973), 21. E. Crawford Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London: John Murray, 1904), 9; Mary Lewis Shedd, *The Measure of a Man: The Life of William Ambros Shedd, Missionary to Persia* (New York: George H. Duran Co., 1922), 33; Philip Hitti, *Lebanon in History* (London: MacMillan, 1957), 252; American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 11.
3. Rev. John Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), xxx. F. C. Burkitt, mentioning Urhai as the first Christian centre of the Syriac-speaking world, argued that while Christianity was introduced first among the Hellenic-speaking

people, the language of the majority of the disciples was Aramaic. See M. L. Shedd, *The Measure*, 53; Waltsch, *Handbook*, 1:1–19, 21, 25; George David Malech, *History of the Syrian Nation and the Old Evangelical-Apostolic Church of the East* (Minneapolis, MN, 1910), 75–77.

4. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 59. Mohammed Kamil and Mohammad al Bakri affirmed the influence of Syriac in spreading the Christian faith. They contended that the original version of the New Testament was in Syriac, not in Greek: see Kamil Murad and Mohammed al Bakri, *Tarikh al Adab al Siryan* (Cairo, 1949), 10–15.
5. Rev. B. J. Kidd, *The Churches of Eastern Christendom From A.D. 451 to the Present Time* (London: Faith Press, Ltd., 1927), 418; Atiya, *A History*, 249.
6. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 39; Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise*, 40; Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 1:250.
7. Herodotus wrote on the subject of the Assyrians during his visit to Assyria, stating that '[t]he Assyrians are equipped with bronze helmets made in a complicated outlandish way, which is hard to describe, shields, spears, aggers (like the Egyptian ones), wooden clubs studded with iron, and linen corsets. Those people used to be called Syrians by the Greeks, Assyrians being the name for them elsewhere'; see book 7 of his *Histories* in *Herodotus: Literally Translated From the Text of Baehr*, trans. Henry Cary (London: G. Routledge, 1891), 466–467. There are different opinions regarding the adoption of the name *Syrians*; some suggest that since Christianity was introduced and brought from Syria, the term *Syrian* took its origin from the religion's birthplace, but the witness of Herodotus in the fifth century BC refutes this theory. More likely the reverse is true: *Syria* and *Syrian* are aphetic derivatives of *Assyria* and *Assyrian*, which came to be used for all Aramaic-speaking peoples after they were subjugated by the Assyrians.
8. See the table in C. B. Moss, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1954), 67.
9. Sir Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 18; Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, AD 610–1011* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 4–7, 107.
10. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 59; Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 32.
11. The 'Robber Synod' of Ephesus in 449 is an exception that proves the rule: because Rome would not accept its outcome, the emperor had to assemble a new council at Chalcedon in 451, which condemned the previous one and declared that it had not been a true ecumenical council.

12. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 57–58; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 294–297.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 197–198.
15. Ibid., 146–147.
16. Ibid., 146–149.
17. Ibid., 150–151.
18. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 68.
19. Ibid., 80.
20. Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 38–39.
21. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 81.
22. Ibid., 81–82.
23. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 14–15.
24. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 68; Hughes, *The True Image*, 305–306.
25. Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 38–39.
26. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 84.
27. Moss, *Christian Faith*, 84; Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 40–41.
28. Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 39.
29. Ibid., 40.
30. Ibid., 40–44.
31. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 84–85.
32. Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 37.
33. Sir Stephen Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951–1954), 1:9.
34. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 85.
35. Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 43–44.
36. Ibid., 46.
37. Ibid., 49–55.
38. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, 50–54; Stewart, *The Nestorians*, 202.
39. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 5–15, 58; Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 7, 70–71, 105–115, 176–177, 353–354.
40. Moss, *The Christian Faith*, 307–308.
41. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 66; Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 351–353.
42. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 57–58.
43. Ibid., 78.
44. Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 348–360.
45. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 30; Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 355–356.
46. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 44–50; Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 356–360.

47. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 90–92; idem., *History of the Crusades*, 1:320–321.
48. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 115.
49. J. H. Kurtz, *Church History*, trans. Rev. John MacPherson, Foreign Biblical Library, ed. Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: Funk & Wagnails, 1889–1890), 2:13; Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 1:103–108. See also Hugh Thomas, *An Unfinished History of the World* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979), 66, 70, 90.
50. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 1:142–147, 157–160, 197–212, 233–235, 285–288.
51. *The History of the Unknown Edessan*, trans. Fr. Albert Abouna (Baghdad, 1980), 2:77.
52. Abu al Faraj Jamal al-Din Ibn al-Ibri, *Mokhtasar Tarikh al Dowal* (repr., Qoum, n.d.), 228. He also mentioned that in 1129 Joscelin, Count of Edessa, one of the Crusade leaders, reached Amid (Diyarbakir) and harried and looted the Turkomans and Kurds in the surrounding villages; see Ibn al Ibri, *Tarikh al Zaman*, trans. Rev. Ishaq Armala (Beirut, 1986), 142. Edward Gibbon gave precise details of the tragic events, which shook to its roots the Orthodox Byzantine Empire; see *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: An Abridgement*, 771–775; Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 3:123–124. For the contemporary Arab historian's account see al Hafith al Thahabi, *Al Ibar fi Khabar ma'n ghabar* (Beirut: Dar al Kutub, 1985), 3:131; Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Makrizi, *Kitab Al Suluk Li-Ma 'Rifat Duwal Al-Muluk*, ed. M. Mustafa Ziada (Cairo, 1942) 1.2:351, and for the beginning of the Crusades, see 558; Karl Broklman, *Tarikh al Shu 'ub al Islamiya* (Beirut, 1977), 245, 257.
53. Jack Tajir, *Aqbat wa Moslimoon mintho al Fatih al Arabi ela 'am 1922* (Jersey City, NJ: Coptic Associations, 1984), 161. J. Wiltsch stated that following the occupation of Antioch, a commander of the campaign wrote to Pope Urban II informing him that 'Jesus gave all Antioch as a possession of the Roman belief and its doctrine', *Handbook* 2:130; while Hugh Thomas stated that 'the Crusaders undoubtedly offered...great opportunities to merchants', *An Unfinished History*, 185. See also Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 3:351–358.
54. Tisserant, *Kholasa Tarikhiya*, 106.
55. Al Thahabi, *Al Ibar fi khabar ma'n Ghabar*, 2:385; Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 2:322. P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East From the Eleventh Century to 1517* (New York: Longman, 1986), 7.

Wiltsch mentioned that this campaign led to the disappearance of the Orthodox patriarch from his seat for some time. *Handbook* 2:147–149.

56. George Kirk, *A Short History of the Middle East: From the Rise of Islam to Modern Times*, 6th ed. (London: Methuen, 1961), 46; Paul W. Copeland, *The Land and People of Syria*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972), 40.
57. Ghrigorios Ibn 'abri, *Tarikh Mokhtasar al-Dowal* (Beirut : Matba'at al-katholikiyah, 1981), 286; Nasri, *Tha'khera't*, 2:8–14.
58. Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia*, 271.
59. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:257, 263.

Chapter 4

The Roman Catholic Missionaries and Their Impact on the Assyrians

1. The Impact of the Ottoman Concessions to France

Rome's interest in converting the separated eastern Christians revived in 1535, when the Ottoman sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent (1520–1566) annexed Mesopotamia and the surrounding Arab countries and awarded King Francis I of France concessions, which included the freedom to establish Catholic missions to labour in the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire. France became the natural ally of the Ottomans, who greatly appreciated their alliance against the Safavids, and accordingly, Sultan Sulaiman awarded King Francis the important concessions of 1535, granting French subjects religious freedom in the Ottoman Empire and the right to establish missionary stations in his newly acquired territories in the Middle East. Both France and the papacy moved promptly to exploit these concessions. As early as 1536, Franciscan missionaries

found their way to Jerusalem and established themselves in the midst of the Nestorians and Jacobites.[1] From then on, Catholic missionaries had better scope to pursue their work with the full support of French government. Despite their occasionally strained relations in Europe, France and the papacy had a common interest in penetrating the Levant, so France strongly aided and supported the activities of the Catholic missionaries for mutual interest. It became normal to find French consuls acting as missionaries, and vice versa.

Since Islamic law forbade Muslims to convert to other faiths, the Catholic missionaries concentrated their efforts on the local Nestorian and Jacobite Christian inhabitants.[2] However, '[w]ith respect to the Muslims they philosophized that they might Christianize them by first westernizing them'.[3] But this missionary labour made the Muslim majority suspicious of their Christian fellow subjects who maintained relations with the foreign Christians; they were viewed as having suspect ties with distant infidels. This also influenced 'the official Ottoman attitude toward the transfer of loyalties by the *dhmimmi* population from patriarch to pope'.[4]

With the rapid decline of the Ottoman Empire, the sultans awarded increasingly humiliating capitulations to the great European powers. Although France was the first to gain such further concessions, other powers soon secured similar privileges for themselves. These capitulations enabled many non-Muslim individual subjects of the sultan, as well as Europeans, to enjoy a special status of protection and privileges, such as exemption from state dues and taxes. Eventually the capitulations came to undermine Ottoman sovereignty and to contribute to the empire's decline;[5] they produced a class of protégés who were allowed to purchase property and undersell Muslim merchants.[6]

2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROPAGANDA IN 1622

During the early stages of Rome's activities, various Catholic orders of missionaries laboured independently, and the papacy made no attempt to coordinate their efforts. But the conditions changed when the Ottoman decline and the correspondingly enhanced role of France offered more

favourable conditions. Thus in 1622 Rome decided to reorganise its missionary activities by establishing a central authority to direct them; thus the College for the Propagation of the Faith was established to train native candidates as missionaries. Henceforth many of the envoys of Rome were to be chosen from the followers of the 'national churches', including the Syriac-speaking churches. Rome's later success was largely due to these changes, as well as to the effective and staunch support of France, which could apply leverage to the local Ottoman authorities. Catholic missionaries equipped under the new system appeared in Aleppo, Syria, in 1627 and then in Mesopotamia in 1750. Their ambition was to bring all the Christian subjects of the sultan under obedience to the pope, but the evidence suggests that they had no marked success until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, with the establishment of the College of Propaganda, the seeds of Catholicism began to be more efficiently broadcast among the Nestorians and Jacobites. The activities of Francois Picquet, the French consul at Aleppo (1652–1662), could be considered as a cornerstone for the success of the missionaries in sowing divisions within both national churches. He 'was the first to link French economic and political interests in the Ottoman Empire directly to the Catholic cause'.[7] He reported to his home government a remarkable success in his labours, but one scholar doubted his report, and it is not at all clear that he was correct in his claims.[8]

Given their weakness, the Ottoman sultans as early as the seventeenth century grew uneasy about the activities of western missionaries among their Christian subjects. These apprehensions led them 'in the eighteenth century to side with the traditionalists'[9] and to strengthen the national churches. Partly reversing their previous policy, they revived their traditional strategy for dealing with subject population of 'divide and rule' and sought to detach the different religious bodies from each other, issuing *bara'ats* 'for the office of patriarch and metropolitan to partisans of both the Orthodox and Catholic factions'.[10]

The importance that Rome assigned to converting both the Nestorians and the Jacobites could be judged from the numbers of Catholic

missionaries who were working among them. For example, in 1680 there were 'twenty-four Latin Catholic priests and Friars in the city of [Aleppo] but only fourteen resident French merchants...the number of those claiming to be chaplains must have raised more than a few eyebrows in the governor's *saray*'.[11] Although evidence does not support the claim, 'by the end of the seventeenth century, one missionary source estimated that three-quarters of the community in Aleppo were Catholic'.[12] While the sultans were reviving the tradition of the *millet* through empowering the status of various patriarchs, the natives converted to Catholicism were coming to be widely viewed as a potential fifth column that might be manipulated and assisted by the European powers. The Muslim traditional ruling class viewed the sultans' tolerance of the missionaries as contrary to their interests and as subverting the Ottoman Empire.[13] This was an alarming signal for nationalist Ottomans, especially when the labours of the Catholic missionaries were weaning the loyalty of the *ahlu al-dhimma* away from the sultan towards a foreign dignitary.

3. SULAQA AS THE FOUNDER OF THE CATHOLIC LINE IN THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

With the emergence of the Shi'a Safavid state at the beginning of the sixteenth century and its continual hostilities with the Sunni Ottomans, the regions of Mesopotamia and Assyria became once again a battleground between two competing powers. The mutual hostility also brought the European factor into the scene, as the French became an ally of the Ottomans while the Iberian states of Spain and Portugal supported the Safavids. These developments had far-reaching consequences for the Church of the East. However, we have to keep in mind that, when the Ottomans annexed most of ancient Assyria and the whole of Mesopotamia during 1514–1536, the Church of the East and its followers were already bleeding from the tumultuous preceding centuries, which had inflicted on them a continual series of massacres, persecutions, and ethnic cleansing.

Ismail Shah's invasion and occupation of Iraq during 1508–1514 sparked the conflict with the Ottomans. This in turn profoundly altered

both the ethnic and political map of the region. New alliances emerged between its ethnic and religious groups, based on doctrinal affiliation, which in turn were to influence the conditions in the region over the succeeding centuries.

As we have seen, the concessions that the Ottoman sultan awarded to France in 1535 included permission for the Catholic missionaries to establish themselves in the newly annexed territories. The Franciscans lost no time starting to labour among the followers of the Church of the East; their eagerness could be seen from their haste in opening a missionary station in Jerusalem the next year. After fifteen years of labour, they were presented with what seemed a decisive opportunity to realise their goal of 'reconciling' the ancient Church of the East into obedience to Rome.

The chance presented itself when the Patriarch Shimun Bar Mama died in 1551, since his successor, as *Natir Kursi* (guardian of the office) was a child of eight or nine years old. A group of 'notables', among whom were those with commercial ties with France, assembled in Mosul to address the pressing dilemma, but this assembly lacked the three metropolitans needed officially to consecrate a patriarch. So, at the urging of the Franciscans, they agreed to appeal to Pope Julius III (1550–1555) for help. In their appeal, they stated that they were orphans with no head but with a child who came from the same family that had monopolised the patriarchal see for the past hundred years.[14] The signatories begged the pope to consecrate as their patriarch Yohannan Sulaqa, a monk from the monastery of Rabban Hormizd. The missionaries who had organised the meeting and its agenda provided Sulaqa with an escort to take him to Rome. According to Adrian Fortescue,

> In order to fortify himself against his rival he makes friends with the Catholic Franciscan missionaries, who were already working among the Nestorians. They send him to Jerusalem, and there the 'Custos s. sepulchri' gives him letters for the Pope.[15]

Several historians tell us that once Sulaqa arrived at Rome, a special committee was set up to examine his beliefs. After it had done so,

the cardinal assigned for the mission reported that Sulaqa's belief and doctrine were purely Nestorian. Therefore it was decided to instruct him in Catholic teaching under the tutelage of a special cardinal, who took nearly two years to complete his task.[16] At last, in April 1553, Sulaqa was consecrated patriarch as Shimun VIII and sent back to his native country to begin his new function as patriarch of a schismatic line.[17] But the Catholics' hopes were disappointed, since Sulaqa failed to win over the main body of the followers of the Church of the East. Instead, after arriving at Diarbekir in November, he spent a year or so in the remote, rugged, and isolated mountain of Se'arat until he was arrested and put to death by the Turkish government early in 1555.

The tragedy of Yohannan Sulaqa could be seen in his sad end and in the fate of the line that he initiated. He left behind no qualified bishop to succeed him and no solid church structure to administer and organise the new schismatic body that he had founded. Hence the patriarchate remained vacant from early 1555 to 1563. Because the line started in isolation from the main body of the followers of the Church of the East, when put to test, it failed the purpose for which it had been created. The interruptions and the short terms of office of this line can be seen from the following table:

Sulaqa[18]	1553	1555	16 months
Abdeshu[19]	1563	1567	4 years
Eth Allaha	1567	1575	8 years
Total			**13 years and 4 months**

In 1575 there was no successor to Eth Allaha. The line of Catholic Uniates was threatened with extinction and was only saved by a new schism.

4. THE PATRIARCHAL LINE OF MAR SHIMUN

The Background of Mar Shimun's Line

In 1580 Rome found a new opportunity to win over the Church of the East when Shimun Dinkha, the bishop of the important bishopric of

the mountainous regions of Assyria—mainly those of Jelu, Salamas, and Si'arat[20]—revolted at the head of forty thousand Nestorian families against the patriarch Mar Elia, who had his seat at the monastery of Rabban Hormizd.[21] Bishop Dinkha took advantage of the contemporary regional developments and circumstances, and the powerful independent Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, along with other semi-independent and *Ra'aya* tribes, supported his defiance. Apparently the Safavids also encouraged the revolt as a way to establish a branch of the Church of the East that would adopt a more independent policy from the Ottoman authority.[22]

However, the power of Mar Elia obliged Bishop Dinkha to flee from his see and take up his residence in the monastery of Mar Yokhanan near Salamas in Persian Azerbaijan, where the authorities welcomed him as a leader heading forty thousand warlike Assyrian families.[23] The pope quickly confirmed him as patriarch after accepting his Catholic confession and further boosted the movement and strengthened Dinka's position by appealing to Shah Abbas of Persia to support him. The combined support of Persia and Rome helped to establish a new schismatic patriarchal line in the mountains, which has ever since been known as 'the Patriarchal Line of Mar Shimun'.[24] Thus, from the very beginning, this line owed its existence to Rome's support for Bishop Dinkha, who could never have secured his position without the support of an authority that could give him a legitimate title. So a new line of patriarchs was established, all of whom styled themselves Mar Shimun.

When put to the test, the sincerity and conviction of the patriarchs of this line in their Catholic doctrine and acceptance of papal supremacy proved to rest on shaky ground. This was partly because the new patriarchs failed to gain the acceptance and support of the followers of the Church of the East on those issues.[25] As Fortescue correctly stated, the patriarchs of this line gradually became hostile to Rome. This is clear from the fact that while some of them sent their Catholic confessions to Rome, others neglected to do so. Mar Shimun IX and Mar Shimun X and also Mar Shimun XII each sent confessions to Rome, but after 1670 no contacts were maintained. As Fortescue wrote,

> Patriarchs of this line occasionally sent catholic professions of faith and protestations of obedience to Rome, receiving in return the pallium; others did not, and the mass of clergy and people were probably but little conscious of the difference...in 1670 Mar Shimun xii sent the last of these professions. From that time relations with Rome dropped.[26]

Aubrey Vine, who wrote a detailed history of the Nestorian churches, affirmed that the relations of the followers of this line with Rome became interrupted and hostile after Abdeshu.[27] Thus, while Shimun Dinkha produced a new Catholic patriarchal line in the Church of the East, his successors returned to their ancestral doctrine, and both its clergy and laity expressed their resentment at any connection with the see of Rome.[28]

The patriarchs who maintained their submission to Rome and sent their Catholic confessions until 1670 are listed in the following table:[29]

Uniate Patriarch[30]	Period in Office	Doctrine
1. Shimun Dinkha I	1580–1600	Catholic
2. Shimun II	1600–1639	"
3. Shimun III	1639–1653	"
4. Shimun IV	1653–1692	"

Petros Nasri claimed that the first four patriarchs were Catholics. Shimun Dinkha was obliged to adjust to the circumstances of his time and to submit his allegiance to Rome, but the motive of his successors is not clear, since the circumstances had changed. Shimun IV was deposed by his opponents after his submission to Rome. He then appealed to Pope Alexander VII, who appointed Bilajedis de Khanin in 1661 as assistant to the Latin bishop of Babil and as a vicar to Isfahan. He wrote to Shah Abbas II, begging him to give help to the deposed Shimun and to reinstall him in his seat. But he admitted that gradually the Catholics were unable to maintain their hold over the Assyrians.[31] The behaviour of Shimun's successor shows that he and his followers had returned to their ancestral doctrine, as Frazee and Southgate affirmed.[32]

The following patriarchs returned to doctrine of the Church of the East:

5. Mar Shimun Dinkha [33] XV	1692–1700	Church of the East
6. Mar = Shimun Shlemoun[34] XVI	1700–1740	"
7. Mar = Shimun Michael[35] XVII	1740–1741	"
8. Mar = Shimun Yonan[36] XVIII	1741–1820	"
9. Mar = Shimun Oraham XIX	1820–1860	"
10. Mar = Shimun Rouel XX	1860–1903	"
11. Mar = Shimun Benyamin XXI	1903–1918	assassinated by the Kurds
12. Mar = Shimun Polis XXII	1918–1920	"
13. Mar = Shimun Eshai[37] XXIII	1920–1975	assassinated in CA, USA
14. Mar = Khanninya Dinkha IV	1975–present	resides in Chicago

Rome strove hard to establish a new Catholic line in Diarbekir to replace the renegade one, and eventually succeeded in creating a new division in the Church of the East in 1681, when the French consul at Aleppo, Francois Picquet, persuaded the Nestorian archbishop of that city to convert. From then on, the patriarchs of this line styled themselves 'Mar Yousif', but they never gained any followers beyond Diarbekir and occasionally Mardin, and their line died out in 1828.

Thus in 1580 the Church of the East became divided between the followers of the original line of Mar Elia, located mainly in the plains and rolling country, and those of the new line of Mar Shimun, mainly located in the mountains and in part of Persian Azerbaijan. For while Shimun XIII returned to the doctrine and belief of the Church of the East, this did not bring reconciliation with the mother church at the monastery of Rabban Hormizd. Each line maintained its own structure and remained independent from the other, as indeed they still do, despite their common beliefs.

This state of affairs was only exacerbated when the new line of Mar Yousif emerged in Diarbekir in 1681. The backbone of the Mar Shimun line and the main base for its strength remained the independent Assyrian tribes, but it also had a considerable following in the mountainous regions, and partly in Persian territories.[38] Then, beginning in 1750, the

followers of the Church of the East experienced a new severe contest with the Catholics, and Rome scored a great success in 1778 when it won over the bishop of Mosul, Yohannan Hormizd Aboona, from the patriarchal family of Mar Elia. His constant labours over the next fifty years laid the cornerstone of the present-day Chaldean Church.

Nasri referred to the state of alert that the independent tribes maintained to secure the closure of their country and to keep out the Catholic missionaries. Missionaries who did get through were treated harshly, and it was a risky mission for them to venture to the tribes, which might end in their losing their lives. This state of affairs only changed after their subjection and the massacres in 1843.[39]

5. SULTAN MAHMUD II AND THE NEW IMPULSE BEHIND THE MISSIONARIES

The reign of Sultan Mahmud II is considered the nadir of the Ottoman Empire, which then suffered its most humiliating defeats and territorial losses.[40] It also witnessed the entrenchment of the Roman Catholic missionaries, who succeeded in bringing new waves of Ottoman Christian subjects under the sway of the pope. The impulse for this was the fact that various missionary orders obtained *bara'ats* from the sultan, through the influence of the French ambassador. For instance, in October 1821, the sultan recognised the 'Rum Catholics' as a legal religious sect, representing the results of the missionary labours.[41] Fortified with these privileges, various orders such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Capuchins then found ways to convert yet more followers of the local national churches.[42]

Competition and Rivalry Among Missionaries

Missionary labour was a powerful tool that the various Western powers exploited to the full in their endeavours to promote their influence in the Ottoman Asiatic provinces. Accordingly, the various western churches competed fiercely to gain control over the Christians of the empire. Great Britain did not leave the arena alone and, shortly after the French,

it obtained similar concessions, which in due course were renewed and modified.[43] The Baptist Missionary Society, founded in London in 1792, was followed by the Church Missionary Society in 1799 and the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews in 1809. All three bodies sent missionaries to the Ottoman Empire.[44]

The Catholic missionaries responded vigorously to this competition, establishing important institutions such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, and a printing press, and engaging in other essential activities. However, the missionaries' prime tool for establishing themselves was the medical services that they usually offered for local Turkish pashas.[45] J. Fletcher, the contemporary Anglican missionary who reported on the spot, stated that the Catholic missionaries even employed bribes to attain their goals.[46] These heightened activities naturally provoked resentment from the local Christians. Catholic native scholars have observed that all the Christian sects in Mesopotamia—Jacobites, Armenians, and Syrian Orthodox—banded together to resist the activities of the Catholics.[47] The Danish traveller Dr. Carsten Niebuhr observed, in the second half of the eighteenth century, that the Catholic missionaries treated those who declined to follow them and resisted their activities as enemies;[48] he also noted the bitter feelings that they roused among the local Christian inhabitants of Mosul vilayet. He reported the opinion of a native who mistook him for a missionary and painfully asked him whether it was not better to leave them alone to maintain their ancestral beliefs and not to interfere in the affairs of their church. It is easy to understand people's bitter attitude towards the missionaries' labours, which put them under the spotlight, were viewed by the Muslim majority with much suspicion, and provoked much hatred and hostility.

The arrival of the second wave of missionaries after 1831 reflected the political competition between the various European powers even more strongly. Thereafter it was not unusual to find each mission acting vigorously to secure a foothold among the Christian natives as a way to further the interests of its own home government, or to find fierce competition and even hostility between the western missions themselves.[49]

They were also keen to maintain the divisions between the followers of the national churches and employed every possible method to abort any attempts at rapprochement and conciliation.[50]

6. THE LEGAL RELIGIOUS STATUS OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSYRIAN TRIBES

Whereas Bruce Masters stated that the Nestorians under Ottoman rule belonged to the Jacobite *Tifa* (sect) and that a Jacobite metropolitan complained that they had begun taking communion with the Maronites, Dr. John Joseph affirmed that Mar Elia, the original Nestorian patriarch of the plains, was subject to the regulations of the *millet* system, under which the Church of the East belonged to the Armenian *millet*.[51] However, their legal status was to experience a dramatic development, as those who had been won over to Rome were constituted as a new entity known as Chaldean Catholics. This shattered the unity of the Assyrian community.

Still, the seeds of the missionaries' labours were not ripe for harvest until the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Several factors worked together during 1831–1847, among which were the massacres inflicted upon the followers of the Church of the East and the iron fist that Bedr Khan Beg used against the Jacobites of Tur Abdin. The missionaries from various western churches began to exert unprecedented pressure upon the already persecuted Christians of the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the Catholic missionaries scored notable success when they succeeded in ending the old Nestorian patriarchal line of the plains at the monastery of Rabban Hormizd, descended from Mar Addai and Mari of the seventy-two, which had headed the Church of the East since 1318.[52] Thomas Laurie reported how the missionaries in Mosul vilayet even employed violence to achieve this goal; among other measures, they persuaded the authorities to imprison all the males of the old Nestorian patriarchal family for long times and put them to forced labour on the basis of false accusations,[53] while Percy Badger

told how these same missionaries divided the Nestorians and spread bad feeling among them.[54]

Thus, in the middle of the nineteenth century, we find that the Catholic missionaries succeeded in converting the followers of the Church of the East throughout the plain of Nineveh, al Jezirah, and the surrounding regions. Southgate reported on the spot the ill treatment of the native Christians, whether Nestorians or Jacobites, by the Catholic missionaries with the full support of the French;[55] while Dr. Justin Perkins, who had resided in the region since 1834 and had closely monitored developments, affirmed that the Catholic missionaries spared no efforts to win over the Nestorians and even resorted to bribes, whether in Tiyari and Hakkari or in Urmia and elsewhere.[56] George Badger reported a Catholic missionary's attempt to bribe Mar Shimun, the patriarch of the mountain branch of the Church of the East. He wrote,

> Mar Shimoon was offered large sums of money by the Romanists, together with the Patriarchate over the Chaldeans, if he would submit to the Pope; in fact every possible artifice was employed to support the tottering power of Rome among the Chaldeans of Mosul. Fearing the defection of some of the Bishops of the Society of Lyons now consented to allow them a yearly salary to the following amount:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | The Patriarch, | 20,000 piastres, or £200 |
> | Bishop of Diarbekir, | 8,000 |
> | " Amedia, | 5,000 |
> | " Kerkook, | 4,500 |
> | " Sert, | 4,500 |
> | " Mardeen, | 4,500 |
> | " Mutran Elîa, | 2,500 |
>
> (Badger, 170)

Badger further explained that the Catholic missionary who offered the bribe was accompanied by Mar Yousif, Chaldean patriarch (1848–1878). Besides the offered bribe of ten thousand dollars, the missionaries expressed their commitment to elevate Mar Shimun to the rank of 'head of all Christians in the East'.[57] Despite these harsh circumstances, Mar

Shimun did not yield to the inducements. His reply echoes his strong attachment to the doctrine and traditions of the Church of the East:

> 'Tell your master' said the patriarch, 'that I shall never become a Catholic; and should you even induce my whole people, to the last man, to do so, I would sooner become a Dervish, or a Koordish Moollah, than degrade myself by and alliance with the people'.[58]

These events, however, only took place after his followers had suffered the horrible massacres of 1843–1846. The victims who had fled their home country and had taken refuge in the concentrated settlements of their Chaldean brethren in the plain of Nineveh had to join the Catholic Church if they wanted to eat.[59] After that, all Nestorians in the plain and the majority of those in al Jezirah and the Khabour region converted to Catholicism. They became a distinct *millet* under the name 'Chaldeans' and were officially recognised as a church and sect by the Ottoman sultan after the direct intervention of the French ambassador in 1844.[60]

Significantly, Rome made no attempt to unite the newly converted Nestorians and Jacobites into one body, even though they spoke the same language and lived in the same villages. On the contrary, each group was kept apart from the other.[61] The papacy had justified its campaign against both churches on the grounds of their heretical doctrine and the hereditary character of the office of the patriarch in the Church of the East; however, once it gained the upper hand, it tolerated the very hereditary system it had criticised.[62]

Although the patriarchal line of Mar Elia in Dair Rabban Hormizd came to an end in 1842 and the missionaries scored another triumph there, the case was quite different with the mountain branch of Mar Shimun, who continued to enjoy the support of his warlike followers. The inaccessible and rugged nature of the mountains of Tiyari and Hakkari helped the followers of his line to maintain their independence without interference from either the Ottomans or the Persians, and the envoys of the pope were also kept away. Thus the Dinkha line established in 1580, who had begun as Catholic Uniates but returned to the old doctrine, continued to represent the Church of the East after 1842, despite the tragic events that overtook their followers in the succeeding years.[63]

ENDNOTES

1. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 67.
2. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 70.
3. S. N. Fisher, *The Middle East: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 302–310.
4. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 95.
5. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 78.
6. Ibid., 139.
7. Ibid., 82.
8. Ibid., 81–82, 95.
9. Ibid., 89.
10. Ibid., 88.
11. Ibid., 82.
12. Ibid., 89.
13. Ibid., 99.
14. This charge was only partly true. The office of patriarch had been in one family in since the time of the patriarch Mar Timothy II (1318–1332), who had been officially elected by a church council. During the next two centuries, which were dominated by anarchy and massacres, four more patriarchs were elected from the same family. By the time of patriarch Shimun Basid (1437–1497), the church was merely a shadow of its glorious past and only possessed one metropolitan out of its former twenty-nine. Thus the existence of the church was threatened, and Basidi felt obliged to introduce the *Natir Kursi* (Guardian of the Office) system, by which he committed his family to serve the church, with the office passing from uncle to nephew. See Heleen H. L. Murre-Vandenberg, 'The Patriarch of the Church of the East from the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', *Hugoye* 2,2 (July 1999), and for further details see Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 2:75–78.
15. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 101.
16. Kurtz, *Church History*, 2:444–445.
17. See Heleen Murre-Van den berg, 'The Patriarch of the Church'; Rev. Dr. Yousif Habbi, *Le Couvent de Rabbann Hormizd* (Baghdad, 1977), 27.
18. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 126; Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 102; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 54–55.
19. Various sources give different dates for when the two successors of Sulaqa served, and the following note might elucidate this issue. Abdeshu, who

succeeded Sulaqa after eight years, was a monk at the monastery of Mar Ahi (مار أحي) and Mar Yokhanan (مار يوخنان) and was consecrated bishop by Sulaqa. He travelled to Rome as Uniate patriarch elect in 1562 and was confirmed in 1563 after the pope accepted his Catholic confession. According to some sources, he died in 1567, but others give 11 September 1570. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 102; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 54–55. Some sources state that Eth Allaha was consecrated as patriarch in 1572, but others, 1574. Murre-Vandenberg stated that due to his old age he was unable to travel to Rome to receive confirmation. One manuscript, written in the monastery of Mar Yacub al Habees in 1573, gives the name of Shimun (line of Sulaqa) as patriarch during 1572–1576. He took the monastery of Mar Khnanishu as his residence. Other sources again say that he died in 1575.

20. Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 2:151. Smith and Dwight stated that the priest of Khasrawa told them during their visit to Azerbaijan in 1831 that the Nestorians of Urmia had not joined Dinkha but had remained loyal to Mar Elia. *Researches*, 219.
21. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: George Bell, 1901), 5:261. Frazee mentioned that the pope ordered a prayer when Sultan Salem I died. *Catholics and Sultans*, 24–27, 57–58.
22. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:145. We believe that Fortescue was incorrect when he stated that Shimun Dinkha suffered from the war between Turkey and Iran and was obliged to flee to Persia, where he died in 1593. *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 101–102. It was the other way round: his revolt and his support gained him Persian appreciation for the political reasons previously mentioned.
23. Tisserant, *Kholasa Tarikhiya*, 112–115; Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall*, 5:261.
24. Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 2:147–148, 151; Etheridge, *The Syrian Churches*, 126; Perkins, *Residence*, 18; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 55.
25. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour*, 2:182.
26. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 101–103.
27. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, 171–173.
28. Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 2:182; Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 2:151; Smith and Dwight, *Researches*, 219.
29. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, 171–173.
30. Etheridge, *The Syrian Churches*, 166–167.
31. Petros Nasri, 'Asl al Nisatirat al-Haliyin', *Al Mashriq* 16 (1913), 491–504.
32. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour*, 2:102.

33. He moved his seat to the village of Khasrawa in Persian Azerbaijan from 1672 to 1700. He had some correspondence with Rome after 1670. Eventually the seat was moved to the village of Kochanis near Julamerk, where all relations were ended. See Dr. Helen article (n. 13).
34. His seat in Kochanis.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Eshai Shimun XXIII was the last hereditary patriarch of the Church of the East (mountain branch). His successor was elected by a church synod.
38. The following are some major centres of the followers of the Mar Shimun line:

    1. Kochanis, the seat of the patriarch
    2. Berwar—there are three districts with this name: the Berwar to the south of the country of Tiyari, who were *ra'aya*; the Berwar Sweni; and the Berwar Shwawootha, located to the south of the lake of Van, who were partly semi-independent and partly *ra'aya*.
    3. Gawar, a district on the border of Persian Azerbaijan.
    4. Upper and Lower Tiyari, both were independent, located to the west of Zab River, numerous in number and warlike tribe.
    5. Tkhoma, independent, located to the east of Zab River
    6. Jello, independent, located to the east of the Zab River.
    7. Baz, independent, located to the east of the Zab River.
    8. Dasan.

39. Petros Nasri, 'Asl al Nisatirat al-Haliyin', *Al Mashriq* 60 (1913), 501–502.
40. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *A History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, 1809–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); *Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280–1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 83–84; F.O.78/210 Constantinople, May 17, 1832, Canning to Palmerston; Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840–1861: The Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 48, 54, 72; Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 265–267.
41. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 107.
42. Ibid., 145.
43. Ibid., 147.
44. Ibid., 145, 147.
45. Bishop, *Journeys*, 224; Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 2:356.

46. Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 2:218–219.
47. Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 2:363.
48. Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia*, 85.
49. Perkins, *Residence*, 303; Coan, *Yesterday*, 98.
50. Coan, *Yesterday*, 149–151.
51. John Joseph, *The Nestorians and Their Muslim Neighbours* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 33–34; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 63.
52. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour*, 2:223.
53. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 54–55, 131.
54. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:161.
55. Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 237–238.
56. Perkins wrote, '[T]he papists'...first attempt—a daring one—was to bribe the Nestorian Patriarch. He [Catholic missionary accompanied by the bishop-patriarch Yousif Odu] went directly to his residence, in the Koordish mountains, and as a fully empowered legate, promised him, as I have elsewhere stated, four thousand *tomans* ($10,000), on condition that he would declare himself and his people subject to the Pope'. *Residence*, 278.
57. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:170–171. For the opposition of Mar Yohannan, bishop of Urmia, to these attempts, see 186, and American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 124–125.
58. American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 124.
59. Perkins, *Residence*, 22–30.
60. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 21, 25.
61. Rt. Rev. John Wordsworth, in Wigram, *The Doctrinal Position*, 17.
62. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:173, n. *.
63. Ibid., 1:145, 257, 263.

CHAPTER 5

THE KURDISH SETTLEMENT IN ANCIENT ASSYRIA

1. THE ORIGIN OF THE KURDS

Many historians, oriental scholars, and travellers refer to the obscure history of the Kurds and the lack of clear and detailed sources for that history. This has forced other interested scholars, mainly Kurds, to look for what they wanted in other nations' sources, mainly the Assyrian archives. In the middle of the nineteenth century, F. Fletcher, the envoy of the archbishop of Canterbury to the Assyrians, quoted the Arab historians' assertions of their Arabic origin.[1] According to Dr. A. Ghassemlou, historians and scientists affirmed that 'they are from the stock of the Zaggros tribes, like the *Futi* and *Lollomi*'. He added that some connected the name of 'al Akrad and Kurds' with the tribal name *Kardouchoi* used by Xenophon in his *Anabasis* for a warlike people living in the mountainous country on the left bank of the upper Tigris, most probably in the Zakho gorge.[2] (Modern studies refute this claim.) But Ghassemlou

concluded that the most plausible theory of their origin was that they were the descendants of the Medes who conquered Nineveh in 612 BC.[3] The Medes were an Aryan people closely related to the Persians, with whom they shared a largely common heritage and customs.[4] Xenophon called Assyria 'Media', which might suggest that Medes had settled there in significant numbers by 400 BC, and so his Kardouchoi may have been a Median tribe. If so, the grain of truth in Ghassemlou's view may be that these ancient Iranian settlers contributed their stock to the modern Kurdish nation; however, as we shall see, there is ample evidence that they were reinforced by later waves of Iranian settlers with whom they presumably merged.

Kathim Haydar stated that the Kurds' history is the most obscure of all nations',[5] and he was obliged to seek the assistance of historians and social scientists, admitting that libraries across the world lack detailed books on the subject. V. Minorsky and B. Nikitin tried to use anthropometric and anthropological studies to explain their true origin.[6] But the racial variation that these writers detected merely suggests that, like almost any other group of warlike nomads who moved across vast territories before eventually settling down, the Kurds absorbed elements of the local populations as they migrated.

The oldest Kurdish historian, Sharaf Khan al Bidlisi, wrote a detailed history of his people in the Persian language in 1596 and plainly stated that they came from Persia.[7] Another Kurdish historian, Mohammed Amin Zaki, agreed and stated that Malik Shah, the Seljuk sultan, during his fighting with his uncle 'Qa'rut', used the Kurds to establish his rule and awarded him a huge land. While the sultan, Mohammed Malik Shah, during his invasion of Syria, was accompanied by Ahamad Ibn Ibrahim Abu al Hayja, the chief of the Rawadia tribes from Maragha in Persia.[8] Dr. Shumaysani has also argued that the original homeland of the Kurds was Persia.[9,10] Moreover, modern philologists have proved that the Kurdish language is of Iranian origin and is connected with the modern Persian language, as well as with Zend, which is the mother of the Persian language.[11] Sir Charles Wilson referred to the Hassananli Kurds as being originally from Khuzistan,[12] but there is some reason to think

that even there they displaced or absorbed an older population who had been largely Christian and so, presumably, Syriac speaking: at least J. Stewart claimed that during the reign of the Sassanian King Shapur II (339–379), most of the inhabitants of what are now known as Kurdistan, Khuzistan, and Khorasan were Christians and were among those who fell victim to his massacres for forty years.[13] Indeed the Kurds themselves may descend in part from Persians, as mentioned by the Kurdish scholar Hassan Arafa mentioned earlier.

There is general consensus among scholars that the Kurds formed a pastoral society. Georgi Zedan described them as people of the pasture-lands, living in their tents, divided into tribes and subtribes. They were less disposed to adopt civilisation than the Persians, Turks, and other eastern nations that adopted Islam at its advance.[14]

2. The Kurds and the Advance of Islam

In discussing the Muslim conquest of Persian Azerbaijan, the historian Ibn Khaldun stated that Utoba ibn Nafi'a (عتبة بن نافع) conquered Shahrazur and Samghan after fighting and killing large numbers of Kurds, and imposed on them both *kharraj* and *jizya*. Omar Ibn al Khatab then assigned Otba Ibn Farqad (عتبة بن فرقد) as governor of Azerbaijan.[15] In the year 22 AH (AD 643), al Mughera Ibn Sha'aban (المغير ة بن شعبان) was appointed by Umar I as *Wili* (governor) for Kufa. Omar provided him with a letter of appointment to *Hothefa bn al Yamman* (حذيفة بن اليمان) as governor for Azerbaijan. He marched as far as *Ardabeel* (أردبيل), which is a city of Azerbaijan and was the seat of the *Mazirban* ruler, (مزربان). In Azerbaijan, the Muslim forces met with fierce resistance until they subdued the natives, who agreed to pay three hundred thousand dirhams on condition that none of them were killed or enslaved and that no fire temple would be demolished.[16] This suggests that the people of the region were then largely Zoroastrians and so presumably of Iranian stock, whether Kurds or Persians. The ancient historians of the Arab Muslim conquest agree that the conquerors met the Kurds in 'Bilad al Dailam' (Azerbaijan Iran), in the eastern parts of Persia, and fought

them fiercely;[17] Ibn Khaldun, for instance, attests that *al Hajaj* (الحجاج) fought the Kurds in the Persian territories.[18] Kurds clearly fought the Muslim armies in the region of al Dailam, which became known later as Azerbaijan Iran. They showed great resistance, and several campaigns were required to quell them, among which was one under the command of Amru Ibn Hani al Aesi (عمرو بن هاني العيسي) at the head of twelve thousand fighters.[19]

The Arab historians tell us that during the advance of Islam, the leaders of the conquering armies reached a peace settlement (صلح) in many provinces of Mesopotamia and Assyria with the church leaders, as, for example, al Balathiri recounts in his *al Fitohat* (فتوح البلدان). The treaty with Al Ruha (Urfa), and Nisibis for instance, was taken as a model for peace settlements with many other important cities and towns. In the year 19 AH (AD 640), when the provinces of Qirdu and Beth Zebdi (Jazirat Ibn Umar) were conquered, the patriarch of Zozan made peace on the same lines. The same was done in Ozon, which the Arab-Muslim armies conquered on the same conditions as 'Suluh' Nisibis.[20]

When the Bowahis (البويهيون) secured their hold on Iraq, they made far-reaching changes in the structure of society by replacing the old system of land tenure that the Abbasids had instituted with a new one based on the feudal system. Accordingly, they settled their alien soldiers in the agricultural lands that had been until then in the hands of their lawful owners. Thus Mesopotamia was to be governed by an administrative system based on feudalism,[21] under which the older populations were subjected but not displaced.

Ibn Khaldun confirmed that during the reign of Caliph *al Muttaki* (940–944), the Kurds were still living mainly in Azerbaijan.[22] However, as has been recorded, during the period from the advance of Islam until the establishment of Abbasid rule in AD 750, anarchy prevailed throughout much of upper Mesopotamia, and many pastoral Kurds took advantage of that situation to move in. Ibn Hawqal, the geographer of the tenth century, speaking about the miserable state to which the town and district of Shahrazoor had been reduced in his time, described it as 'a small town, which was overpowered by the Kurds, and whose environs as far

as Iraq had been enjoying prosperity'.[23] The state of the once famous region of Adiabene (the land between the two Zabs) was also mentioned by a nineteenth-century western resident, who described the sad state of the country and the damage that the Kurds had inflicted on it: '[T]he plain of Hadyab was entirely inhabited by the Nestorians but the Kurds have occupied it and depopulated it of its inhabitants'.[24]

3. The Centuries of Chaos and Disturbances (ca. 1055–1536)

Monasticism, which had dominated the vast majority of the followers of the Syriac-speaking churches in Mesopotamia since pre-Islamic times, had a marked effect on the future of the country. Since their adoption of Christianity, the people had become devoted to their religious belief. Large numbers of men chose to live a monastic life, and thus numerous monasteries housed increasingly large numbers of monks during each generation. Unfortunately, this otherwise commendable religious zeal tended to denude the country of the independent soldier-peasants who had once formed the backbone of the population, and so the fertile and prosperous land was left with little protection and was open to nomads' raids for looting and enslaving the defenceless people. Notable examples were certain monks who came to be regarded as saints, such as Saint Eshu Useran of Delam and Mar Yohana of Delam in the region bordering al Dailam, who were captured by Kurdish raiders and kept as shepherds serving their kidnappers.[25]

Many worship centres throughout the districts in what was northern and northeastern ancient Assyria experienced raids and attacks by the Kurds of Dailam (Azerbaijan), who killed, looted, and enslaved the indigenous population. Throughout these anarchic times, the Kurds were moving into various inviting regions in and immediately east of ancient Assyria from their original homeland in Persia. This appears to have been the district that Le Strange named as 'Kushistan', which he explained as meaning the mountain land, and which was part of Khorasan; Ibn Hawqal referred to its inhabitants as Kurds, describing them as nomadic and

pastoral tribes who kept herds and camels.[26] The turmoil that dominated Mesopotamia and Assyria during the eleventh century witnessed a general influx of various alien races from distant places, and the competing groups of invaders in their wars and inroads always recruited the Kurds for their campaigns, just as they did the nomadic Arabs.[27] The Seljuks were the first large wave to head to Mesopotamia and, while crossing Azerbaijan, they were joined by the Kurds, whom they used to the full and amply rewarded for their services.[28]

4. THE KURDS AND THE SELJUKS

The Seljuks' invasion and occupation of Mesopotamia in 1055 had far-reaching consequences for the country and its indigenous inhabitants. They were the first ruling dynasty to distribute agricultural land to their Kurdish supporters, both to keep them loyal and to induce them to join forces in subjecting the people.[29] Nonetheless the Seljuks, as the main invading power, had recurring disputes with their Kurdish followers—mostly, we might reasonably conjecture, about dividing the spoils, as for instance during their joint attack on Azerbaijan and al Jazirah, which was so fierce that the highways were closed.[30]

The contemporary Syriac historian of Urhai who became known as al Rahawi al Majhul (الرهاوي المجهول), in discussing the advance of the Turks in upper Mesopotamia, stated that in the eleventh century, they began occupying the strategic locations after adopting Islam. Each Turkoman centre occupied a fort and made that its headquarters for further campaigns.[31] Speaking of the events of 476 AH (AD 1083), Ibn Khalikan stated that during the reign of Malik Shahi Ibn Arsilan, the Seljukid Amir Artaq Ibn Aksab of Halwan marched to Diarbekir at the head of an army comprising both Turkomans and Kurds. The city surrendered to the attackers after a fierce assault and a long siege, while Artaq's father, Fakhir ul Dawla, conquered Miyafarqin after three months.[32]

The Kurdish historian Mohammed Zaki Amen recorded that Kurds had joined the Turkoman forces during their advance towards Mesopotamia, including Mohammed Malik Shah, the Rawadia, and other tribes.[33] He mentioned that 'Qaroot' had fought his uncle and had given

them huge lands in the district of Karman. During his invasion of Syria, he was accompanied by the head of the Rawadia tribe (the tribe of Saladin) and Amir Abu al Hayja, the ruler of Arbil, with their private armies.[34] Another modern scholar has stated that during the Seljuk storm, the Kurds were living in Persian Azerbaijan, and when they joined in the invasion of Mesopotamia, they destroyed whatever they encountered, whether plants or buildings.[35]

The competing invaders had all too many motives for sustaining their chain of invasions throughout the northern districts of Mesopotamia and ancient Assyria. Stripping the land from its owners, looting, and enslaving the women and young girls were common objectives that bound them together. Nasir al Dawla Ahmad Ibn Marwan Ibn Dostic, a Kurdish chieftain who at the head of his supporters invaded part of northern Mesopotamia, collected for himself a harem of 360 women during the fifty-one years of his control of one of the regions he occupied.[36]

Thus, during the Seljuk invasion, the Kurds received land for their services as an inducement to secure their support and loyalty to the Seljuks. Sinjur, the Seljuk sultan, divided the western part of the mountain district, particularly the region called Kirmanshah in Persia; gave it the name of Kurdistan; and assigned it to his nephew, Sulaiman Shah. The Persian historian al Mistawfi in his *Nuzhat al Kolub* (نزهة القلوب) stated that Sulaiman Shah took the city of *Bahar* (بهار), which is eight miles distant from *Hamadan,* as his capital.[37] In 1175 the Kurds' attack against Assyria was still at its height. It was during this period that Kurds occupied al Jazirah and upper Mesopotamia.[38] The Turkish incursion into Mesopotamia was directly prompted by the power vacuum that dominated the Abbasid Empire during its decline and was a reaction to the crusaders' campaigns, which lasted for two centuries. Thus the weakness of the Arab caliphate was a factor behind the caliphs' appeal to the Turks for assistance to counter the Christian crusaders; gradually, however, the Turks replaced the Arabs in authority, until after 130 years, their influence prevailed over that of the Arabs.[39]

Ibn al Ibri (ابن العبري), a contemporary historian of the thirteenth century, reported the sad fate of forty villages in the plains of Nineveh, and how Jazirah Ibn Umar had been attacked and how the monastery

of the Jacobites in that city had been seized and occupied.[40] The historian Ibn al Atheer (d. 1209) tells us that the Kurds had advanced during the last fifty years from the 'Dinor, Hamadan, Nahawand and Samghan and some regions of Azerbaijan to the region of Shahrazur located in the north-east of present-day Iraq'.[41] In 1260, during his journey to China, Marco Polo reckoned the nations inhabiting Persia as eight, among which were the Kurds in the southwest.[42]

Thus during these anarchic centuries, the natives of the land—whether followers of the Church of the East, Syrian orthodox, or Yazidis—were continuously subjected to raids and attacks by the alien peoples who rode the waves of invaders. Mosul, which was historically a major Christian centre in Mesopotamia, was repeatedly sacked.[43] Ibn Khaldun referred to its tragic fate after the Kurdish attacks, stating that 'the Kurds spoiled and spread horror everywhere'.[44] Dr. Faisal al Samir also mentioned the severe attack that the city suffered, stating that people were killed and pillaged everywhere, and the only ones who managed to escape disaster were those who accepted Islam. The Kurds and al Malik al Salih had organised this attack.[45]

Still, as followers of the Turks, the Kurds remained second-class players on the scene. The famed *Salah al Din*, known in the West as Saladin, is a clear example, in that, like his father and uncle, he began his career serving the Turkoman centre of Imad ul Din Zanki, the Attabik of Mosul, and Aleppo. Al Tha'habi (الذهبي) stated that in 581 AH (AD 1185), Salah al Din first unsuccessfully attacked Mosul, then turned his army to attack Miyafarqin to the north of Diarbekir (a region largely inhabited by the followers of the Church of the East and the Jacobites), but then returned once again to Mosul and put it under siege.[46] Many contemporary Arab historians tell us that he led wars and raids throughout northern Mesopotamia, attacking, looting, and enslaving the native inhabitants. Among his targets were the famous city of Urhai (Urfa), the capital of the ancient kingdom of the same name (Edessa, 127 BC–AD 226), and other major centres in northern Mesopotamia.[47]

The Kurdish role in the region was further enhanced during the rule of the Mongols, especially after the Ilkhanids converted to Islam in 1295, and all the more so once the Kurdish leader Nawruz emerged

as commander of their army. Thereafter the balance of power in the region gradually tilted towards the Kurds, and they continued consolidating themselves until they attained a permanent stronghold in Mesopotamia and ancient Assyria.[48] One historian spoke about the coordination between the Mongols under Ghazan Mahmud and the Kurds in their combined campaigns against the Assyrian settlements in northern Mesopotamia, and detailed the consequences for the indigenous people.[49] As the author of *Sharafnama* noted, this cooperation was based on mutual interest.[50] The pattern of aiding Turco-Mongol invaders was a normal practice for the Kurdish leaders.

Al Makrezi (المقريزي), speaking about the conditions that emerged after the Kurdish settlement in al Jazirah in 740 AH (AD 1339), stated that they were able to establish Kurdish centres as their shares for helping the Turkish race in their conquest.[51] A scholar described the historic changes in the demography of the region in simple terms: formerly, the Armenians had inhabited Armenia, the Assyrians had peopled Assyria. The Kurds filled the vacuum left by the depopulation of the land during the centuries of chaos. Thus Armenia and Assyria became "Kurdistan".[52] The author further stated that the Kurds' infiltration later extended even into the plains and described their role in bringing down various dynasties.[53] Many alluded to the expansion of the Kurds in the plains as well as their occupation of Armenia, which also suffered Turkoman raids. This took place afterwards in the time of Timur Lang, whom the Kurds loyally followed and who enabled them to occupy the land of the Armenians, who were forcibly expelled. Many Kurdish scholars admit their people's cooperation with Timur Lang during his storm over the land that is considered the cradle of civilisation.[54] He expressed his gratitude and appreciation for their help in his invasions and rewarded them by settling them in the devastated regions, which until then had been inhabited by the followers of the Church of the East.[55]

On the Eve of Chaldiran

Shi'ism was strengthened in the Middle East with Timur Lang's support and the encouragement of his successors during the period 1379–1508.[56] The movement was opposed by the emerging power of the Sunni state

of the Ottomans, who were trying to expand their territories as far as possible. The seed of Shi'ism that Timur Lang had sowed produced its fruit with the emergence of the Safavid movement. Thus, for several centuries, the history of the region was marked by the sectarian religious differences that the two conflicting states exploited to the full for their political interests.[57] This religious competition and the triumph of Shi'ism under the Safavids put an end to the rule of the Turkoman dynasty of *Ak Koyinlu* (the White Sheep) at the beginning of the sixteenth century and opened the region for dramatic changes. From then on, Persia was no longer ruled by a Sunni dynasty like that of the Turks.[58]

Ismael Shah Persecuted the Kurds

Ismael Shah, the grandson of Shaikh Safi al Ardabili, gave his name to the dynasty that affected the region until its fall in 1736. While still a young lad of sixteen, Ismael assumed power in Persia in 1499 with the title of shah and immediately implemented a vigorous policy of carrying his doctrine as far as he could—if necessary, by force.[59] The Kurdish Sunnis were one of the most targeted groups, but they fiercely resisted all attempts to convert them. So Ismael Shah adopted a policy of persecution: the Sunni Kurdish tribal leaders were imprisoned, even when they were trying to demonstrate their loyalty. Thus the Ottomans gained a powerful ally.[60]

For fifteen years, the Ottomans suffered from the agitation, hostilities, and raids of the Safavids in Anatolia, as well as from the enmity of the *Mamelukes* of Egypt. Thus war with Persia became inevitable once the Ottomans had consolidated their internal front with the Sunni Kurds. The hostile intentions of the Safavids became clear after Ismael Shah took Tabriz and forcibly converted two thirds of its three hundred thousand Sunni inhabitants to Shi'ism.[61] Another factor, which speeded the conflict between the two states, was his agitation among the Sunni Muslims in Anatolia. This, compounded with the occupation of Baghdad, Mosul, Kharbut, and Diarbekir in 1508, sparked the fire at Chaldiran in 23 August 1514.[62] To defend himself and survive the growing threat, the Ottoman sultan Selim I was obliged to act, and he correctly assessed

the persecuted Kurds as his most powerful and effective allies in his upcoming confrontation with the Persians.[63]

Among the centres of power that had established themselves in various parts of Mesopotamia and Assyria and had gradually extended their role in the military and political affairs of the region were the emirs of Bitlis, who, according to Basil Nikitin, were known by the nickname 'Sarsbix' and were dominating the city with a force of twenty to twenty-five thousand fighters. For obvious reasons, both the sultans and the shahs tried to gain their friendship and support. Their special position seems to have prompted Sultan Selim I to take advantage of the new anti-Sunni climate that the Safavids had created, inducing the emir to join forces with him against the Persian rulers.[64]

The family of Shaikh *Safi al Ardabili* was so powerful that even Timur Lang had given them special attention and awarded them prisoners of war as slaves.[65] Sharaf Khan al Bidlisi went to Timur's camp, at a location between Mush and Diarbekir, where Timur welcomed him and gave him gifts.[66] According to Longrigg, Shaikh Safi claimed that his ancestors went back to the twelfth Shi'a imam, and his son was a favourite of Timur.[67] Basil Nikitin stated that the emirs of Bidlis claimed a Persian origin, that is, that they were descended from the Persian Sassanians and that their tribe was called 'Rosaki'.[68] Among many other moves, Sultan Selim I succeeded in directing Idris al Bidlisi to rouse the religious feeling of the Sunni Kurds against the Safavid Shi'a. Idris was proud of his Persian origin and probably also alarmed at the threat posed to his fellow Sunni Kurds by Ismail Shah's policy, which, as has been mentioned, had led him to occupy Iraq and northern Mesopotamia as far as Diarbekir in 1508; so Idris responded to the sultan's call and rallied the Kurds behind him.[69]

5. Chaldiran: The Kurdish Gateway to Northern Mesopotamia

Thus war became inevitable, and the Ottomans, along with their Kurdish allies, set out to settle their account with the Persians. Twenty-five Kurdish leaders and their followers participated in the Battle of Chaldiran

on 23 August 1514, and the sultan rewarded them by allowing them to occupy the newly gained territories along the western Persian border of what is now northeastern Iraq, where the majority of the Assyrians lived.[70] Malik Shah of Husun Keef occupied Si'arat, Ahamad Beg occupied Miyafarqin, Mohammed Beg took Sasoom, and the other Kurdish leaders were each required to occupy a certain location. The outcome of the alliance secured the persecuted Sunni Kurds a safe haven in the newly annexed eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire. The alliance between the Ottoman sultan and the Kurdish leaders shows that for the next 150 years, the Kurds kept their commitment towards the Ottomans.[71]

6. THE KURDS AFTER CHALDIRAN

Following the Battle of Chaldiran, Sultan Selim I issued orders to Idris to form feudal centres of Kurds. Together they established the new eastern border where Idris started settling them, exempting them from all normal taxes and other commitments in return for their providing a permanent militia to guard the border and to make themselves available whenever the Ottomans needed them.[72]

Thus the official organised Kurdish settlement in Assyria started after Chaldiran in the newly occupied territories of what is today northern Iraq. The Kurdish historian Ali Sidu Qurani gave details of the many Kurdish tribes settled there after Chaldiran. Other historians confirmed that Sultan Selim's reign witnessed the eviction from the land of its indigenous inhabitants and its resettlement by the Kurds in return for their help in the wars against Persia.[73] Scholars agreed that the major factor in the Kurdish-Turkish alliance was a common religious doctrine, but, doubtless, the new fertile land offered a further inducement.

The nomadic Kurds, who were wandering between Persia and present-day northern Iraq, in particular those of *Bahdinan*, were observing the contest between the two foes (Turks and Persians) and intended to side with the victors. Only when he was convinced the Turks would win did their leader 'Hassan' give his loyalty to the Ottoman sultan, who in return awarded him the title of sultan and appointed him head of

Kurdistan.[74] Almost immediately after the Ottoman victory, the *Kalhur* tribe made an inroad into Baghdad, which was still under Persian occupation.[75] In 1537, after the sultan's renewed attack, the pro-Persian Kurdish leader Ma'mun Beg was subdued to Ottoman rule. In 1541 the Ottoman sultan sought the assistance of the emir of Hakkari and Bahdinan to subdue the Mirkuri, who were another tribe with dual loyalty.[76] At length, in 1554 Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent signed a peace treaty with Persia in Baghdad, making Mosul and Mardin the permanent boundary between the two states.[77]

As Kurdish historians have stated, after Chaldiran, the Ottomans continued to reinforce their eastern frontier with what they considered a loyal Sunni Kurd element.[78] Thus Gibb and Bowen affirmed that from the time of Selim I, the Ottomans endeavoured to clear the land of its lawful owners and settle the Kurds in return for their help in their wars against the Persians.[79] For instance, in 1583 Sultan Murad IV gave huge provinces to the Kurdish tribe of *Mokri* under its leader *Amiri Beg*, who claimed to be descended from Saif ul Din. These awarded provinces stretched from Mosul to *Shahrazur*, Arbil, and other towns, extending to 'Farghana' east of Lake Urmia.[80] Kinnoull stated that the Ottomans 'dared not to bring them out of their own country in a body, lest they should make great demands upon them, which if the Turks did not grant, the Kurds would certainly join with the Persians against them'.[81]

This tribe showed their wavering loyalties during the rules of Shah Abbas, Nadir Shah, and *Fatih Ali Shahh*, who all depended on the Kurds for their military campaigns. Without their help, Shah Abbas could not have accomplished any of his military victories. The Kurds formed a large part of the army with which he defeated the Ottomans in the battle of *Kery* in 1624 and reoccupied Baghdad until 1638.[82]

7. The Kurdish Settlement in Assyria

The Background

Throughout the period of Ottoman might, the Kurds had remained loyal to the Ottomans and honoured their commitment under their agreement

after Chaldiran. However, the Ottomans made their last show of strength in 1638, when Sultan Murad IV succeeded in recovering Baghdad from the Persians, who had occupied it since 28 November 1623.[83] The situation was quickly reversed when the decline of Ottoman power became clear. The emergence of Nadir Shah, with the aid of the Kurds, opened a new chapter in the history of the region.

The Kurds played a decisive role once more when they helped to bring down the Safavid dynasty, joining forces with the Afshar tribes of Turkomans under Nadir Shah.[84] Like Sultan Selim I, Nadir Shah rewarded them for their support both in bringing down the Safavid dynasty and in invading Iraq in 1743. But unlike the Ottomans, who had maintained the Kurds' nomadic social structure, Nadir Shah organised them into emirates and appointed a pro-Persian Kurd from the Baban tribe as chief of Kurdistan. In the absence of a real central Ottoman government able to defend its territories and their inhabitants, Nadir Shah was unchallenged in invading Iraq and settling and empowering various pro-Persian Kurdish groups. Many local Mamluk historians reported that the Kurds whom he settled served as an advance post for the Persian interest in Iraq.[85]

Nadir Shah's policy produced further drastic changes in the demography of both southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. Monsieur Tavernier, the traveller of the seventeenth century who toured Armenia, ancient Assyria, Persia, and Mesopotamia, mentioned in his *Persian Travels* the density of the Armenians in their towns. In the year 1662, he noted that Van and Urmia were purely Armenian; however, a century later, Carsten Niebuhr, during his stay in northern Mesopotamia, noticed that both Turkomans and Kurds were involved in spreading disturbances on the highways.[86] By 1840, when Horatio Southgate visited these same regions, the case was very different. He was astonished by the dramatic change that had befallen that country and by the decline in the number of the Armenians compared with the number of the new Kurdish settlers who then were still in the process of moving in. Southgate ascribed these dramatic changes to the Kurdish persecution of the indigenous people and provided *Salamis* as an example, stating that its inhabitants had

been forced to leave. *Mush* was another example given by this western observer, who stated that it contained six hundred villages and that the total number of the Kurds did not exceed five hundred souls, who lived as nomads moving from place to place between Urmia and Hadyab.[87] His contemporary, the Russian historian Minorsky, confirmed the process and further stated that the Kurds had occupied parts of Armenia permanently and were no longer living on their original land.[88]

Thus examining the history of the region clearly shows the changes referred to previously, by which many regions with numerous Assyrian and Armenian monuments and monasteries became completely populated by the Kurds after Chaldiran.[89] Even the Kurdish historians admitted that the land was cleared at this time, its indigenous inhabitants driven out by force. Speaking about *Sarsink* on the highway between Dohuk and Amadia, the Kurdish historian Ali al Qurani affirmed that it had been an Assyrian town and that the Kurds who settled there were immigrants from Persian Azerbaijan.[90] Many local and foreign observers and historians attested to and described the process by which the racial, religious, and linguistic map of ancient Assyria was changed. Phebe Marr noted that 'in the north too, many of the Kurdish tribes of Persia migrated to Iraq, including the large powerful nomadic tribe of the Jaf, who made their home at *Halabjah*'.[91] During his two years' residence in northern Iraq, Rich also observed the rapid influx of Kurds from Persia, including the *Jaf*, and that their advance never ceased.[92] Southgate also observed the rapid advance and settlement of the Kurds from Persia into northern Iraq.[93]

The Emirate of Baban

On the eve of Nadir Shah's invasion of Iraq in 1743, the Ottoman Empire was suffering general weakness, which was closely watched and observed by the Persians and particularly the Kurdish groups on the border. Meanwhile the Baban Kurds were consolidating their position and, according to Sulaiman Beg, a Turkish historian of Baghdad, they succeeded in gaining control of the district that later became known as the emirate of Baban. According to Longrigg, the Baban first came

to prominence in 1721, when they settled in *Qara Cholan*. Al Azzawi also wrote that the emirate began as a very small border protégé state and at first had little effect in the region.[94] Hadi Rashid al Chawooshly, a Kurdish author, wrote that the emirate lasted for one century and that its population consisted of *Kirmanj* (کرمانج) Kurds, although others believed that they stemmed from the *Makry* Kurds. While speaking about the Jaf tribes, he affirmed that they had moved from Iran to the region of Sulaimaniyah and Kirkuk, and that they were strongly supported by Persia.[95]

Under the leadership of Khalid Pasha and his son Sulaiman Pasha, and in the absence of effective Ottoman government, the Baban rapidly expanded westwards, bringing both the districts of *Kwesinjaq* and *Harrir* (کویسنجق و حریر) in northern Iraq under their control. It was during their lifetimes that Nadir Shah invaded Iraq, and according to Sulaiman Beg, it was in return for their support that Nadir Shah appointed Khalid Pasha as the leader of Baban and later elevated him to leader of all Kurdistan. This, however, was done on condition that the Baban Kurds give their allegiance to the Persian state:[96]

> [T]he birth of a pro-Persian party with their own family, the shah and his frontier vassals became the refuge and hope pretenders to the Baban government...Nadir Shah received Selim Pasha of Baban and appointed him for *Qara Cholan* in 1743, and for some time it was a Persian district.[97]

An Iraqi historian observed that, right from its establishment, the Baban emirate served as an advance post for Persia on the Iraqi border.[98] Selim Pasha, whom Nadir Shah appointed as its ruler after his father Khalid, was always following the footsteps of the Persians and was keen to join with them in treaties and agreements. He continually rebelled against Ottoman rule and refused to give his allegiance to the pasha of Baghdad. He even concocted with the governor of *Koisinjaq* a scheme for declaring their independence, and to that end, each endeavoured to annex as much as he could from the surrounding territories.[99] Sulaiman Fa'eq (سلیمان فائق) tells how Sulaiman Beg of Baban attacked the districts

of *Kowaysinjaq* and *Harir* in northern Iraq in open rebellion against the pasha of Baghdad. Meanwhile Persia and Baban acted jointly to occupy Baghdad. This illustrates how Persia was able to intervene in the affairs of northern Iraq and Baghdad, using Baban as a cat's paw.[100] Another Turkish historian during the Mamluk dynasty of Baghdad reported that the Mamluks were constantly at war with the Baban for being allies of Persia.[101] Carsten Niebuhr, who closely observed the existing conditions and the hostilities against the authorities, found that there was chronic hostility between the Baban and the pashalic of Baghdad.[102]

A few decades later, Rich wrote about conditions in the region of Sulaimaniyah in 1820–1821 and mentioned that its Kurds had been chiefly pastoral nomads, and he was informed that four out of five were still living as such. He also noted that some ten thousand families, comprising seventy thousand souls, were constantly moving across the border. Those *Kirmanj* tribes, which had settled in northern Iraq, were the *Nooreddin* and *Shinkees*.[103] Rich also observed that the tents of the Jaf tribes were pitched near the town of *Penjaween*, which was a halting place for those Kurds who were constantly crossing the border from Persia into Iraq before they resumed their journey west towards Shahrazur, and that the men were well armed.[104] Speaking of *Shahrazur*, Rich was astonished to find that even Afghanis were settling there. This took place after the killing of *Azad Khan*, and they were maintaining their own language. There were also *Afshars* of Persia, who were from the same tribe as Nadir Shah, among the waves of constant migrants, and Rich met their leader *Essa Agha*.[105] This movement was also observed and reported by the missionary Southgate, who wrote,

> A more unusual encounter was with a party of emigrating Kurds. They have with them all their possessions, and the ease with which they carried them showed how well adapted to each other are their domestic and their wandering habits.[106]

The *Hirkiya* were another nomadic tribe that was moving to Iraq, as Wigram reported.[107] Longrigg went further, stating that the nomad Kurds kept crossing the Persian border westward, among them the Jaf tribe and

the *Pushdor*, while the *Hamawand* tribes were continuously raiding the region between Kirkuk and *Hamadan*.[108]

This state of affairs continued with Baban, whose rulers were devoted supporters and followers of Persia and who maintained their alliance against Iraq.[109] For their part, the Mamluk dynasty of Baghdad continued their campaign of countering Persian designs towards the territories of Iraq and tried to use of Baban to support this policy. However, Baban, ever since its creation, had been considered a hostile Persian outpost,[110] and the extent of the Persian protection for it appears from the fact that until 1834 there was a military Persian unit stationed in Sulaimaniyah.[111] The Persian sympathies of the emirate were attested not only by its alliance but also by the fact that its official language was Persian, as Rich noted.[112] During their domination, the Persians were always ready to offer military protection to the Baban.[113]

However, the emirate did not enjoy its status as a pro-Persian buffer state for long. The comprehensive Ottoman policy of centralisation that was initiated in 1831, combined with internal rivalries and deeply rooted customs and traditions, prevented Baban from dominating the other Kurdish centres, and, as we shall see, it was brought to its end in 1850.

ENDNOTES

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5. Kazim Haydar, *Al-Akrad: man hum wa-ilJayn? Mansh ur at al-Fikr al-Hurr* (Beirut, 1959), 9.

6. Basil Nikitin, *Al Akrad, Asluhum, Tarikhahum, Motinahum, Aka'edahum*, etc. (Beirut, 1967), 3–22; Minorsky, *Al-Akrad*, 35.
7. Sharaf Khan al Bidlisi in his *Sharafnama*, translated from the Persian into Arabic by Mohammed Awni (Cairo: Dar Ihya'a al Kutub al Arabiya, 1958) 4, 21; Hassan Shumays an i, *Madinat Sinjar min al-fath al-'Arabi al-Islami hatta al-fath al-Uthmani*, (Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1983), 248; Abdul Aziz Nawwar, *Tarikh al-'Iraq al al-Hadith min Nihayat Hukm Da'ud Pasha il Nihayat Hukm Midhat Pasha* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1968) 1:99, 196.
8. Zaki, *Kholas Tarikh al Kurd*, 151.
9. Hasan Shumaysani, *Madinat Sinjar: Min al-Fath al-'Arabi al-Islami hatta al-Fath al-'Uthmani* (Beirut: Manshurat Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1983).
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12. Wilson, *Handbook*, introduction, 63.
13. Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise*, 24.
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15. Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh, Dewan al Ebar wa Dewan al Mubtada wa al Khabar* (Beirut: n.d.), 2:119.
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19. Al Balathiri, *Fituh*, 319.
20. Ibid., 180.
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33. Zaki, *Kholasa Tarikh al Kurd*, 151.
34. Ibid.
35. Mohammed Al Khithari Beg, *Al Dawla Al Abbasiya*, (Beirut, 1986), 465.
36. Al Thahabi, *Al Ibar*, 2:300.
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38. Longrigg and Stoakes, *Iraq*, 63.
39. Al Rahawi al Majhul, *Tarikh*, 201.
40. Nasri, *Tha'kherat*, 1:570–571.
41. Ibn al Atheer, *Al Kamil*, 5:388.
42. Marco Polo, *The Book of Marco Polo*, trans. and ed. Colonel Henry Yule, 2nd rev. ed. (London: John Murray, 1875), 1:34–35.
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CHAPTER 6

THE OTTOMAN REFORMS

1. THE OTTOMAN DECLINE AND ITS EFFECTS

The Ottoman Response to External and Internal Developments

For five centuries, the history of Europe was bound up with that of the Ottoman Empire, whether during its might and expansion or during its decline and humiliating defeats. Both periods affected the social, economic, and cultural life of Ottoman subjects and in particular the non-Muslims. During the second period, conditions were deteriorating and gradually turning the whole structure of the state towards corruption. The rise of the Western powers paved the way to direct intercourse between the two parties, which gave the European powers a steadily enhanced role in Ottoman affairs. Consequently, Ottoman reformers sought to reverse the decline and restore past glory, but they could not escape the fact that existing conditions by themselves presented a fierce challenge.

> A vast empire in times of poor communications had meant accepting much local control. A system of powerful provincial governments,

> allowed to function as long they sent in taxes, provided soldiers when needed and did not revolt, was an effective response to the Ottoman provinces.[1]

As the Ottoman Empire steadily declined, its basic duties towards its citizens—such as protection of life, honour, property, and land—were put in ever-greater jeopardy, especially for the non-Muslim minorities. The reformers throughout the period in question were confronted with this reality and made repeated efforts to address the problem.[2]

How Did the Ottomans Rule Their Subjects During Their Decline?

To maintain their rule, the Ottomans, during their decline, depended on force and the use of hired troops. Soldiers had to pay their own expenses, which led to corruption, tyranny, and oppression throughout the empire.[3] Consequently the fate of the *Ra'aya* (subject non-Muslims) came to rest in the hands of powerful, corrupt rulers, whether in the central government or in the provinces. Putrus Abu Manneh cited a vivid example of this state of affairs: '[O]ne morning a vali put to death a most trusted person', and when the *kadi* (judge) asked why, the pasha answered, 'I had a dream last night in which he frightened me. I don't trust him any longer'.[4]

When a state acts as a tyrant against its own subjects, then it is no wonder if that state begins to decay. The government's need for money led the rulers to adopt harsh measures to secure it, such as seizing the possessions of its wealthiest subjects:

> [When the]...Government and *muteslims* [a local governor—متسلم] in towns and cities happened to recognise a rich man, they, because of a minor offence, or merely through unbased fabrication (*iftira*), would threaten him with severe punishment, such as death or exile, and exact a fine on him or confiscate his wealth and property.[5]

The Decline Turned the Empire Into a Second-Class Power

The Ottoman Empire fell from being a great power into a condition of decline and weakness. In the 1500s, it was one of the most powerful

in the world, surpassed perhaps only by China, but by the eighteenth century, it had become the 'sick man' of Europe. This decline was reflected in its population, which, during this period, slipped from being one-sixth that of western Europe to only one-tenth, and from about one-eighth that of China to one-twelfth.[6]

In Europe, the empire suffered huge territorial losses, beginning with the treaty of Carlowitz on 26 January 1694 and peaking with the treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji on 21 July 1774. These turned it into a puppet for one or more of the European powers, which in exchange undertook to fight for or protect it. The loss of the Crimea, which, unlike the territories lost earlier, was inhabited mainly by Muslims and had secured the Ottoman control of the Black Sea, was an alarming signal of the scale of the decline.

The decay of the Ottoman Empire was also attested in the Asiatic provinces, including Mesopotamia and Syria. As has been mentioned, many strong dynasties—notably the Mamluks of Baghdad, the Abdul al Jaleel of the Mosul pashalic, various Kurdish emirates, and the Syrian Orthodox tribes of Tur Abdin—took advantage of this and emerged as autonomous centres, distancing themselves from the central government. The decline of the empire meant that a local pasha 'no longer needed money to buy his appointment from Istanbul...[although] he had sometimes to bribe certain officials in the Porte' in return for the title.[7] These centres consolidated their hold and managed to survive and further enhance their power after Nadir Shah's invasion of Iraq in 1743. For more than a century, they enjoyed complete autonomy, until they were subdued during the reform campaigns of Sultan Mahmud II and his son Sultan Abdulmecid between 1831 and 1847.

The Desire to Bridge the Gap With Europe

As early as 1630, Sultan Murad VI entertained hopes for reforms and issued a memorandum containing various recommendations and proposals; however, half a century later, the Ottoman defeat on the walls of Vienna in 1683 signalled an urgent need to reform the military structure.[8] At this stage, the Ottomans were confident that their past could provide them with a solution to their dilemma[9]—namely, to strengthen their fighting machine

and to reform their army, whether by introducing new equipment or by education and training and replacing its non-Muslim elements.[10]

It has been observed that the Ottoman rulers usually tried to adjust to the changes in the tactics of the European military powers; for instance, they equipped their forces with muskets almost as soon as their European enemies.[11] But concerned Ottomans were watching with much apprehension the rapid advance of European technology beginning in the sixteenth century, as well as the growth of the European economy and military capability beginning with the Renaissance, which sparked changes at all levels, all of which contributed to Europe's power. In contrast to this, the Ottoman Empire was experiencing retreat and tangible decline in its military and administrative systems and even in manpower. The standing army, which consisted mainly of Janissaries, helped to perpetuate this situation and to entrench the status quo, serving as a formidable obstacle to any change.

Selim III (1789–1807) was the first sultan to make effective reforms to the army, which was followed by more active and fruitful measures under Mahmud II (1808–1839).[12] However, the conservative elements, in particular the *ulema* religious class and the Janissary corps who formed the military establishment, opposed all reforms as likely to undermine their privileges and their special position. They represented a serious obstacle and challenge to the reformist programs of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[13]

2. SULTAN SELIM III, CREATOR OF REFORMS

History gives credit to Sultan Selim III as the first initiator of serious reforms who sought to copy European examples as a way to revive the ailing health of his empire. However, he and his entourage were not considered radical reformers, since they were all raised in the traditional system. For them, the reform was to be limited to the army, without attempting to change the structure of society.

The humiliating defeat at the hands of Austria and Russia in 1792 convinced the sultan to hasten his army reform, and accordingly, in 1792 and

1793, he published a wide range of new instructions and regulations that became known as the *Nizam-I Cedid*.[14] The post of *Sar Askar* (commander-in-chief) was created, and the name of the army was changed from *Mansure* to *Askiri Muntazama* ('the ordered troop'—الجيش النظامي).[15] The new army was in bad need of financial resources, training, and equipment, so instructors were brought in from France to train the soldiers. The navy was also targeted for reform and remained under a distinct command, while the imperial treasury was abolished.[16] Thus the first reforms were to create the new army corps and a new treasury called *Land-I Cedid* (the New Fund Treasury) to finance it.

These measures, however, proved quite inadequate to deal with the accumulated burden of so long a decline or to empower the empire to withstand the advance of Russia and its other enemies.[17] The new military units followed the historic pattern of all earlier challenges to Janissary power. The opponents of the reforms initiated a counterattack directed against the sultan personally, who proved unable to use his new army at his time of need and especially to deal with the revolt of the Janissaries.[18] They were quick to resist and were encouraged by the widespread dissatisfaction among the masses, which were agitated by the *Ulema* class. The antireform elements proved so powerful that the sultan's reforming Grand Vezir was thrown to the mob and torn to pieces; the *Nizam-I Cedid* was repealed, and attempts were made to eliminate all those who had tried to reform the old order.[19] Thus Selim's efforts proved premature, and consequently he paid for his dream with his life.[20] In May 1807, armed with a *fetwa* (فتوى) from the chief *mufti*, his opponents managed to depose and then kill the reformer sultan, who was replaced by his cousin, Mustafa IV (1807–1808). The Janissaries easily crushed a countercoup headed by *Bayrakdar Mustafa*, who supported the reforms and desired to revive what Selim had begun.[21] A widespread disturbance broke out at the heart of the empire on 14 November 1808, when the traditionalist mobs revolted against Bayrakdar. Once again, the spearhead of the reaction was the Janissaries, who were so outraged 'that they came to their barracks and raised the entire corps in rebellion'.[22]

Thus the Janissaries regained complete control of the Porte.[23] For the reformers, the lesson of Selim's abortive reform was that the power of the traditional elements must be destroyed before reform could be introduced. Clearly this required an army and reformers who had the courage and determination to challenge the traditional elements.[24]

3. SULTAN MAHMUD II, THE CAUTIOUS REFORMER

Bayrakdar Pasha, who had failed to save Selim III,[25] succeeded with his cousin, Sultan Mahmud II, who shared the same vision of reform, when he defeated the rebels and overthrew Mustafa IV in a *coup d'état* originally intended to restore Selim.[26] Selim's reforms served as pattern for Mahmud, and the latter's success can be attributed to his cautious approach to his aims, his long reign, his strong personality and determination, and his realisation that any attempt to address the problem must fit within the framework of the Muslim past. To avoid direct friction with his opponents, he 'reached a rapprochement with his leading provincial magnates and state officials, allowing them to preserve their privileged positions in the restored financial order'.[27] His calm and steady policy took him more than eighteen years until he was ready and able to assault his enemies and their bulwark, the Janissaries, who were supported by a religious group of the *Baktashi Order* and the *khalidi sheikhs.* In the end, he succeeded so well that the Turks called his reign *vakyi hayriye* (Happy Occurrences—الوقائع الخيرية). He concealed his intention to introduce other reforms until the critical army reforms were accomplished and he had stealthily filled all high positions, particularly in the army, with his supporters. Then, on 4 June 1826, he was at last able to crush the Janissaries: on 16 June, he issued a decree that abolished the Janissary corps and laid the foundation for new army units to be called *Ordu* under the command of the revived post of *Saraskar*.[28]

Reforming the Army

Once he had established a firm hold on power, the sultan began to introduce his vision for reform, with the army as the main priority. The first

measure was to impose recruiting quotas on the provinces to supply their share of soldiers; every province was required to provide three battalions instead of one, bringing the total force to one hundred thousand men divided into 120 battalions.[29] Both the *Saraskar* and the new minister of war were usually appointed from palace circles.[30] The new force was known as *Asakir-I Mansure-I Muhammediye* (the Victorious Muhammadan Soldiers—العساكر المحمدية المنصورة).[31] The sultan also reinvigorated the Army Engineering School and the other military schools (*Mekteb-I Ulum-u Harbiye*—مكتب العلوم الحربية) to provide modern training.[32] A *firman* fixed the length of service at five years in the regulars (*Nizam*) and seven more in the reserves (*Radif*).[33] Even the seminomad tribes provided another source of recruits, which the government exploited, while the minority groups, which had long been exempted from serving in the army, no longer enjoyed that privilege. Thus the sultan concentrated on organizing various new military units and modernizing existing ones with foreign aid.[34] At the end of his reign, provincial cavalry amounted to six thousand officers and men.[35]

As has been stated, the prime objective of the reform was to establish an army capable and strong enough to defend the empire against its many foreign enemies. However, another primary task for the newly established *Nizam-I Cedid* would be to eliminate the autonomy of the many centres of power spread all over the various Asiatic provinces inhabited by non-Turkish ethnic and religious groups, which were seen as a threat to the authority of the central government. We might add to these motives the resolve of the sultan and the majority of his subjects to oppose the power of the infidels who were humiliating the guardian of the Muslim world.[36]

Nevertheless the reforms once again proved inadequate. The total military force still amounted to only twenty-four thousand in 1837. The term of service was very long; for example, during most of the nineteenth century, conscripts served for twenty years.[37] This had dire consequences for society and led to widespread evasion of military service. In his *Hatt-I Serif of Gulhane*, Sultan Abdulmecid (1839–1862) criticised the unjust conscription system, describing it as harmful and ruinous, and

laid down the rule of recruiting for five years only.[38] Thus the reform of the army failed to meet the hopes and expectations of the reformers:

> [D]espite Mahmud's great efforts to build up his new force, the army remained largely deficient and in fact suffered some decisive defeats on the battlefield. It was badly defeated by the Russians and in the Greek war of Independence in 1828–9, and over the issue of Mohammed Ali of Egypt.[39]

Ottoman reformers observed that Muhammad Ali had successfully reformed his army and managed to defeat theirs at *Nazeb* in 1839. The officials then sought to copy their foe's experiment by adopting western methods and styles of formation and training army units.[40]

Attempts at Centralisation

Mahmud II also sought to establish a strong centralised administrative system throughout his empire. He saw himself as merely reviving what he held to be the source of every kind of authority.[41] Hence the reformers were keen to appear as acting in their new program with fairness in running government affairs as well as commerce.[42] In 1834 he modified, and later eliminated entirely, the traditional system by which the high administrative and scribal official posts were distributed in response to political and social pressure. He went on to establish a regular system in place of the conventional one.[43] Although his reign witnessed a long list of military defeats, he began the imposition of centralisation on all autonomous Asiatic provinces that was achieved over the years following 1826. This he achieved despite the challenges he faced, among which was Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt, whose army advanced to the very walls of the capital.[44]

Administrative Reform

The sultan and his reformers realised that reforming the military machine required huge financial resources. This in turn demanded a 'rationalized system of taxation and reformed provincial administration to collect revenues'.[45] To identify the manpower at his disposal and to assess correctly

the potential revenue for his treasury, he ordered a general census of the whole empire.[46] In 1838 he established the 'High Council of Judicial Ordinance' (مجلس الأحكام العدلية) under the direct supervision of reformer M. Husrev Pasha, who, in January 1837, had been dismissed from his post as *Saraskar*. The council was to meet with other government officials to draft laws to ensure the security of life and fortune and to assess taxes.[47] In the same direction, the sultan neutralised the arbitrary practice of *masadera* (مصادرة, confiscated), the confiscation of the property of a deceased high functionary.[48]

Among other measures to reform and improve government function was the appointment of *mukhtars* (mayors) in every quarter, whether inhabited by Muslims or Christians. This was done under the authority of *ihtisap* in Istanbul, which aimed at counting the population and also enforcing the sumptuary laws, and formed the foundation for the real municipalities created during the Tanzimat era after 1839.[49] A new Ministry of Religious Foundations, *Nezaret-I Evkaf* (نظارة الأوقاف), was also established, which aimed at 'turning all surplus funds over to the treasury for general purposes'.[50]

According to Ottoman historians, the Tanzimat era was signalled by the promulgation of the Gulhane Rescript, which Mustafa Rashid Pasha drafted.[51] The policy of reform was in harmony with aims contained in the rescript and was intended to deal with all elements of society. The non-Muslim *Ra'aya* were theoretically raised to equality when all the subjects of the sultan were declared equal before the law:

> The Muslim and other peoples [*ahli-I islam ve milel- saire*] who are among the subjects of our imperial sultanate, shall be the subject of our imperial favours without exception. This proclamation, which indicated a radical break with Islamic tradition, reflected perhaps the most acute problem of Ottoman reform.[52]

Dina Khoury believed that 'the sense of regional identity reflected in the administrative, economic, and political development of the eighteenth century laid the groundwork for the geographic and administrative readjustment of the reform period'.[53] But while they had correctly diagnosed

their weakness and its source, in attempting to cure it, the Ottoman reformers created an additional problem when they pressed their subjects to meet their needs for money. By doing so, they neglected the needs of the people in general.

Fiscal and Land Reform

Reforming the tax system was an essential step to financing the reforms, since the state could collect more money only by imposing new taxes on its subjects.[54] Accordingly a new tax system was developed during the Tanzimat period to exploit the wealth of the empire. In fact, though, the roots of this system went back to the sixteenth century and indeed to Islamic fiscal traditions of the seventh century.[55]

Ever since the rise of the Ottoman state, both the land and the peasants had been considered as property belonging to the sultan.[56] In the sixteenth century, under pressure of the increasing needs of the state for cash, the *Timar* system gave way to tax farming: 'The state bureaucracy was becoming steadily larger...because the empire itself was bigger and also because of changes in the nature of the state'.[57] In 1685 the sultan had issued a decree establishing 'lifetime tax farm (*malikame*), a grant of the right to collect the taxes of an area in exchange for cash payments to the treasury'; however, as might have been expected, this system had severely limited the revenue flow to the central government, while it discouraged the primary producers, the peasants, from making any efforts to increase their production, since any enhanced profit went straight to the tax farmers.[58] The reformers were quick to address this all-important issue, which demanded action to revive the productivity of the land and generate badly needed revenues: 'The Tanzimat involved efforts to supplant the indirect type of tax collection through tax farmers and fief holders with direct collection by salaried state agents so that all the revenue would go to the treasury'.[59]

Throughout the period, Ottoman society was taking sides for or against the reforms, and the struggle lay especially between the reformers and the conservative, traditional urban centres in the provinces. There, land was the most sensitive issue, since the powerful classes of feudal

landlords, who under the old system had made up the great majority of the tax farmers, were directly affected. Most of the Ottoman population lived in rural areas and, as peasantry, were directly affected by the new laws, since they were the main taxpayers and providers of soldiers. These considerations basically determined relations between the state and the rural population. The government on its part introduced a series of land laws to meet its needs for revenue, but these reflected continuing vacillation about the right policy to follow and so tended to cancel one another out. Some reformers were troubled about conceding additional 'proprietary rights to land renters at the same time that they were expressing opposition to the permanent alienation of the peasantry from rights of usufruct'.[60] Others argued for maintaining the government's grip on the land through the existing law, in order to secure the definite revenue that the state badly needed. This, however, could only be done at the expense of the peasants' rights to their products. Moreover, these measures created a new challenge when they spawned a new class of corrupt officials whose interest lay in obstructing any genuine land reform.[61]

Recalling the era of Caliph Omar I, who, in his *sawad al Kufa*, had ordered a land survey to assess the total taxes, known as *jizya*,[62] and had imposed *kharaj* on the 'People of the Book', Mustafa Rashid Pasha, on 8 August 1838, did the same. He ordered a survey of property values aimed at matching taxes to taxpayers' income. Various new taxes were introduced, among them one on shops and markets to support the new army. All traditional taxes imposed according to Islamic *shari'a* were abandoned except for the sheep tax (*aghnam rasmi*—رسم الأغنام) and the *jizya* (*cizye*—جزية). A tithe called *oshur* (one-tenth of the value of the product عشر) was imposed as the only tax on the produce of the land.[63] However, this, like other aspects of the reforms, was to suffer from the corruption of the collectors, who were basically businessmen who had a monopoly on collecting tax for profit.

Since the structure of tax collection was carried over from the traditional past, the tithe revenue failed to meet expectations; indeed, it fell so seriously short that by the end of 1840, the treasury was obliged to restore the tax-farm system, although on a shorter-term basis: 'In auctions held

in the provincial and *sancak* capitals, two years' rights to collect taxes in specific *mukata* were given to those tax farmers who promised the highest return to the treasury'.[64] Real new sources of revenue for the treasury only emerged after the rising commercialisation of agriculture began to generate an economic surplus, which was provided by the production of goods for sale.[65] Even then, the land revenue remained the main source of income, and in 1840 the tax collection was greatly simplified, with the tithe being imposed on Muslims and the *jizya* retained as a poll tax on non-Muslims.[66]

The Religious Class and the Reform Process

Nonetheless the reforms known as Tanzimat lacked popular support. Reformers formed a small portion even among the élite of principal officials, while the conservative elements, *Ulema*, and religious class represented a spearhead of fierce opposition. They constituted the most powerful section in society, since they occupied high offices of trust.[67] While the Ottomans were suffering military defeats and getting quickly weaker, these groups were growing ever more apprehensive and tightening their grip on the various institutions. Their influence was entrenched at all levels of society. They were particularly keen to guard the classic Muslim teaching and concept of education, which was hardly calculated to produce graduates who could challenge their European enemies.[68]

Moreover, faced with continual 'defeats...in wars with non-Muslim powers, many Ottoman Muslims began to emphasize the needs for the Islamic character of the empire'.[69] In tandem with the general decline of the Ottoman Empire and society, many heretical sects emerged, and Sultan Mahmud found himself obliged to eliminate their growing influence among the masses. Thus we find him issuing a *firman* that portrayed the *Bektashi* order as 'atheists' and 'heretics' and suppressed their *Tokkes*, the houses where they met to consolidate themselves and propagate their heresy.[70] This action roused Muslim religious scholars who already disagreed with the introduced reforms to voice their disapproval. Even the religious leaders of the Christian and Jewish communities grew concerned about the changes, which they saw as threatening their own

special position in society. Thus all attempts to introduce western-style reforms provoked reaction and serious challenges from all segments of the powerful traditional class.[71]

Evaluation of Mahmud II's Reforms

Mahmud II's reforms were clearly directed towards the element that could change the old system, and the same reforming cadre that had shaped the earlier reforms assisted him.[72] His goals and aspirations in fact exceeded what was contained in the Gulhane Rescript and reflected his determination to exercise the power of an absolute monarch throughout the whole empire.[73] But he also had to execute and supervise these ambitious reforms, and his officials, whom had been trained up under the old system, mostly had no idea what the reforms meant. In the end, the reformers proved unable even to maintain their own position, let alone see through the dramatic and essential changes that the structure of their ailing society required. It should be remembered that they were themselves products of their society, which had inherited all the traditions that they sought to reform. They were also keenly aware of the power of the provincial notables, which they could not ignore.[74] Moreover, as Stanford and Ezel Shaw pointed out, 'The men of the Tanzimat were not particularly good economists or financial leaders'.[75] The Tanzimat reforms were well calculated to reach only two targets: first, to gain the acceptance and support of the European powers to strengthen the position of the reformers and weaken their opponents' leaders, and second, to enhance the general development of the empire's fighting machine.[76]

4. Western Pressure for Further Reform and Its Motive

Once the balance of power between Europe and the Ottomans began to tilt towards the West, the European powers spared no opportunity to keep their once powerful foe weak. While they might and often did quarrel among themselves, on this one policy they achieved a consensus. But given their complex rivalries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

one need hardly be surprised to find certain European powers fighting the Ottomans at the same time as others were giving them the support they needed to survive. Apart from Russia, no European power that took an active interest in the Middle East wished to see the ailing empire disappear completely, and it was the other powers' support that enabled the empire to maintain itself as it did against such powerful challengers as Russia and Muhammad Ali Pasha.[77]

But the European powers that demanded reforms from the Ottomans were by no means altruistic in their demands and pressure. They continued to keep the Ottomans in check and were keen not to see them adopt any measures that would effectively reform the military and that might give them the upper hand again.[78] The last thing the Western powers wished to see was Muhammad Ali seated on the Ottomans' throne in Constantinople and reviving the power and glories of the Turkish Empire. Still, as Shaw and Shaw noted,

> [As] the Sultan had hoped, the other powers, for fear of being left out responded with their own offers of help. In 1835 Britain began to supply industrial and military equipment, including blast furnaces and steam drills...British officers arrived in 1836 to redesign and rebuild fortifications, though Mahmut's suspicious limited their contribution. He still was seeking help from a state having no previous interest in the Middle East...From 1835 to 1839 several Prussian missions advised the Ottomans providing them with far superior and receiving therefore much more respect and attention than had ever been the case...By far the most skillful of the Prussians helping the Porte at this time was a young lieutenant, Helmuth Von Moltke, who later in his career was to become one of the most prominent military men in Europe.[79]

Concessions to Europeans

As we have seen, the Europeans' continual victories in their wars with the Ottoman Empire were rewarded with concessions, mainly in the rich provinces of Asia. These privileges included the right to protect native Christians and the right of foreigners to be tried in their own courts, although the ultimate legal authority remained with the Ottomans. Moreover, 'the capitulations of the nineteenth century awarded the Europeans the right

to customs dues averaging 5 percent. This was often less than the taxes paid by Ottoman merchants'.[80]

The plight of the sultan's Christian subjects served as a lever that the powers could use to secure their increased demands. Beginning with Kuchuk Kanarchi, the concessions were embedded in state treaties. Thereafter many native Christians, especially merchants, became more commercially involved with western business partners than their fellow Muslim merchants. The Ottoman Christian business class gained powerful tax exemptions in the form of *barats*, which allowed them to undersell their Muslim competitors—in stark contrast to the situation before the reforms, when the authorities had discriminated against the Christians, whether in the field of employment, occupying high offices of trust, or the military and other functions of the state.[81] In the eyes of the rulers and the Muslim majority, these new and fast-growing relations turned the Christian merchants into protégés of the Europeans.

Beginning in 1839, the victorious European powers once again pressed Sultan Abdulmecid, the successor of Mahmud II, to carry out the reforms that they deemed necessary. The sultan and his supporters were themselves convinced of the need for further reform and had no way to refuse the demands of their protectors. Thus a series of further measures were initiated, which went through two stages:

> A: The reforms were applied on the technical level while emphasising the supremacy of the sharia and the Islamic fundamental of the state.
>
> B: In the second stage western political and legal measures were adopted and applied despite the fact that they contradicted the sharia and were inconsistent with the Islamic basis of the state. The second stage took place following the Crimean war and not without pressure from the western powers, the allies of the Porte in that war.[82]

5. The Reforms of Sultan Abdulmecid and Their Objectives

When power passed to Sultan Abdulmecid in 1839, the Ottoman sultanate had come a long way in restoring its authority over the autonomous

regions and had managed to impose centralisation on most of the Asiatic provinces. Like Mahmud II, he embraced the concepts of justice and equality before the law between Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

On 17 July 1839, the sultan issued an *irade* (decree—إرادة), which he commanded to be read to the ministers who were meeting at the office of the *Shaik ul-Islam*. He urged them 'to follow the law of justice and equity in all matters' and to observe constantly 'the application of honoured *seri'at* in all the affairs of the exalted Sultanate'. He called upon all officials to keep to the ways of uprightness and honesty and to avoid 'bribery...and repugnant and oppressive acts...and to be extremely careful not to give room to the rise of unacceptable methods'. He further stressed that 'all the inhabitants of our protected lands, rich and poor... should enjoy tranquillity and repose'. He declared that 'in my exalted sultanate, property, soul, dwelling, and place should be secure and safe from...offence and aggression'.[83]

The reforms have been divided into three categories, dealing with administration and government, the welfare of the Ottoman subject and the status of the non-Muslim citizens, and the legal basis of the empire.[84]

Hatt-I Sherif and Hatti-I of Gulhane

Certain leading persons presented a petition to the sultan, who expressed his satisfaction with its contents and ordered it proclaimed to the public as a *hatt-i sherif*. While the petition was not dated, it evidently preceded the first great reforming edict of the Tanzimat era, which was the *Hatt-I Sherif of Gulhane* (the Imperial or Noble Rescript of the Rose Chamber), promulgated on 3 November 1839.

The rescript was signed by the sultan and read by the great reformer Mustafa Rashid Pasha. Its chief aims were to guarantee subjects' security of life, honour, and property; to establish a regular system to assess and levy taxes; and to develop new methods to assure a fair system of conscripting, training, and maintaining the army.[85]

The Tanzimat reforms sought to bring to an end the absolute rule of the sultan by arbitrary decrees and to enforce the rule of law, whether

shari'a (Muslim law) or the *kanun*, which had suffered a long neglect in the preceding centuries. On this subject, Lutfi wrote to justify the dismissal of Husrev Pasha as Grand Vizier in 1840.[86]

Although the demand for a strong military machine was the prime motive for introducing the reforms, the social and political conditions contributed an additional pressing factor. Some scholars have gone so far as to state that it constituted a redistribution of power among the different social groups that comprised the élites in various provinces of the empire.[87] This had its effect on both the rulers and the *Ra'aya*, because 'each invested in their own interest and aspirations'.[88]

Educational Reforms

These fundamental reforms demanded for their implementation thorough educational reforms, which in turn required state support. The Tanzimat proposed three new types of schools. Qualified teachers were to translate schoolbooks from French; science teachers were to be recruited from abroad until native teachers were trained and ready. Church authorities were to draw up courses in religion, subject to state inspection. The new primary and secondary schools were to be financed 25 percent by the state and 75 percent by the local authorities. Pilot projects tried in Istanbul were eventually to be extended nationwide.

As with other areas of reform, here, too, on paper, the reform created a system intended to mirror that of Europe. In practice, however, only about 20 percent of the imperial schools came to follow the modern curriculum, while more than 70 percent were still tied to the old teaching system of *madrasa*. It is also important to note that none of the levels of education instituted during the reform period were introduced among the independent Assyrian tribes, since the Ottoman authority was not established among them until late 1847.

6. Reforms in Iraq

The Mamluk dynasty of Baghdad, which had seized power in 1747 and ruled Iraq completely detached from the central government, had to face

the new Ottoman plan of centralisation. As has been mentioned, Sultan Mahmud II was determined to restore his authority over the various autonomous centres. The Mamluks at Baghdad had been able administrators and had enjoyed almost a century of political stability supported by a relatively successful economy, because they gave Baghdad several great reformers, most notably Sulaiman Pasha II (1780–1802), who initiated an ambitious program of modernisation including remodelling and cleaning out the canals, which were the nerves of the irrigation system that made the *sawad* a source of wealth and prosperity. He was also a pioneer in establishing industrial projects, training an army of twenty thousand, and introducing a printing press.

Mahmud II imposed his authority over Iraq in the summer of 1831, and thereafter a succession of capable pashas were appointed to Baghdad. However, it was only in 1869, well after the period under study here, that Iraq experienced the real thrust of reform under the great reformer Midhat Pasha, who was determined to modernise the country on western lines. His reforms echoed the Tanzimat and seriously improved the quality of the provincial administration. He was also famous for his remarkable plan for settling the nomad tribes, a step by which he extended the rule of the Turkish central government over them for the first time.

Arguably the most effective reform introduced in Iraq during the late Ottoman period was the *tapu* (land law). This made a dramatic change in the social structure of the countryside when the long-lasting feudal system was reformed and replaced by one that responded to the spirit of reform. As we have seen, tax farming had been introduced to the country for the first time during Ottoman rule, and by this new law, the Ottoman authority was able for the first time to collect taxes effectively. Conscription was also imposed on the people, who had to register for it in each community. However, as elsewhere in the empire, the old landlord class known as *shaikhs* was able to get round the new laws and regulations thanks to their accumulated influence over the peasants and the Ottoman government's need for money. They continued to buy the right to hold the land and control the peasants in return for fixed payments to the treasury. Hence these tribal leaders were the class who benefited most from

the reforms, while their fellow tribesmen were reduced to poverty. The *ayan* class resembled 'those of Syria in certain essentials...*ayan* élite of composite origin military, *ulema*, merchant controlled a large part of the surrounding countryside through various mechanisms'.[89]

As has been mentioned, the Ottoman reformers implemented measures by which they hoped to keep the empire intact. However, when the theory was put into execution, contradictory factors came into play that prevented the new policies from achieving their goals. This was to be expected, since changing a whole society from well-rooted practices and convictions to modern, western-style ways was no easy task.[90] The Tanzimat reforms had no direct impact on the independent Assyrian tribes during the period under study because, as we have seen, the tribes' location in their remote and inaccessible country and their tradition of sturdy, armed independence both operated to keep the influence of all outside forces at bay. Ultimately, however, both the impulse to impose the effective control of the central government on all parts of the empire that flowed from the Tanzimat and the modernisation and reinvigoration of the army that emerged as its main achievement were to prove decisive factors in deciding the fate of the independent tribes and the whole Assyrian nation, as the following chapters show.

ENDNOTES

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3. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 46.
4. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 76.
5. Ibid.
6. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 48, 73, 94.
7. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 4, 64–65.
8. Although the Ottomans' first serious defeat occurred in 1583, their siege of Vienna was their first disastrous failure. See Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 1.
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17. Douglas A. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 56.
18. McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples*, 11–13.
19. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:1, 6; Howard, *The History of Turkey*, 58.
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21. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 2.
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26. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, 57–58.
27. Ibid., 58.
28. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:1 and 22–23; Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 38.

29. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:44.
30. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 116.
31. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 3.
32. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:7, 48; McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples*, 14–15.
33. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 48.
34. Shaw and Shaw, *History*, 2:7.
35. Ibid., 2:43.
36. Quataert and Inalcik, eds., *An Economic and Social History*, 766.
37. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 63.
38. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 47.
39. Ibid.
40. McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples*, 14–15.
41. Ibid., 15.
42. Ibid., 16.
43. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:39.
44. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 64.
45. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 34.
46. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, 59.
47. Shaw and Shaw, *History*, 2:61.
48. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 79.
49. Shaw and Shaw, *History*, 46–47.
50. Ibid., 8.
51. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 73.
52. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 22–23.
53. Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire, Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 14.
54. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:60.
55. Ibid., 2:95.
56. Quataert and Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History*, 105.
57. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 29.
58. Ibid., 48.
59. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:95.
60. Khoury, *State and Provincial Society*, 159.
61. Ibid., 159.
62. Ibn al Jawziya contended that the *jizya* had originally been imposed to humiliate the infidels. It could not be removed except by embracing Islam. See al Shaikh Shams ul Din Ibn al Kayim al Jawziya, *Ah'kam ahl u al Thimma*, 4th impression (Beirut, 1994), 1:56–57. It should be remembered, however,

that the *jizya* was only imposed on adults, and children and women were exempt. Ibn al Kayim al Jawziya, *Ah'kam*, 1:42. To Ibn al Kayim al Jawziya, *al Kharaj* is *jizya* on the land as the *jizya* is *Kharaj* on the *dhmmi*; both were legitimate practices imposed upon the infidels and their land for the benefit of the Muslims. *Ah'kam*, 1:100.

63. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:95–96, 46–47.
64. Ibid., 2:95–96.
65. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 129.
66. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, 61.
67. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 24.
68. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:47.
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72. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:36.
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74. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:1.
75. Ibid., 2:154.
76. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 21.
77. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 146.
78. McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples*, 20.
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CHAPTER 7

THE REFORMS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

1. THE TREATMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

The *Ahlul Dhimma* (أهل الذمة) or 'People of the Book' had an integral place in Ottoman history, since their status was a subject of concern to the rulers and foreign powers during both the heyday and the decline of the empire.[1] This involvement did not emerge from a vacuum, but had deep roots in the beliefs of Muslim society, since the status of Christians and Jews was addressed in the Qur'an and, since the time of Caliph Omar I, they had been subject to the *jizya* and *kharraj* taxes. They were socially segregated as being *Ahlul Dhimma* in the eyes of Arabs and *Koffar* ('infidels') for other non-Arab Muslims. Under Ottoman rule during the period of decline, Muslims enjoyed by law a superior status to their non-Muslims neighbours. Although some historians have denied this, the history of the Ottoman Empire shows that Muslims continuously

maintained their superior status in the administrative establishment and in their social privileges over Christian and Jewish subjects.[2]

At the same time, the non-Muslim populations were separated from the general structure of the state, especially the major establishments such as the military services, the judicial system, and the administration. Exceptions were made for some rare individuals who were taken into the army for their high qualifications, which the authorities could not afford to ignore. On the other hand, and due to the general decline in the rules and principles governing the system, purchase of exemption was widely practised and eventually became so recognised that it was institutionalised as a special tax.[3]

Since the advance of Islam, the People of the Book had received varying treatment from various Muslim dynasties. They enjoyed certain privileges and lenient treatment from many Caliphs and rulers who governed them as the Qur'an demanded. However, during the centuries of the Ottoman domination (1514–1917), their treatment varied according to the status of the empire. While they continued to enjoy a certain privileged treatment under the great sultans, they experienced hard times during the period of decline. According to one historian,

> Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire had always lived under conditions of simultaneous official state toleration and official state discrimination, community life among Jews and Christians evolved into a symbiotic relationship between community religious and commercial leaders and Ottoman State officials much as it did among Muslim communities. Christian and Jewish Peoples related to the Ottoman state and its officials through the semiautonomous institutions of their *millet*, their religious-national communities. There was freedom of worship, the sacred texts were copied, read, and studied, weddings, baptisms, and funerals were conducted; and the like. Christian and Jewish communities in the major cities operated their own schools and courts of law. These communities or millets were organized only very loosely at the empire-wide level, and Christian and Jewish communities in the far-flung corners of the empire evolved with a fair degree of independence, and some regional variety, establishing their own set of traditional rulers and relationship with local Ottoman officials, and Muslim community leaders. In this way, the Christian and

> especially the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire had flourished during the period of greatest Ottoman power.[4]

Until well into the nineteenth century, the legal system rested on differentiation between each sect and religion. The various religious communities maintained their own courts, judges, and legal systems: 'Muslim courts thus held sway in cases between Muslims and non-Muslims'.[5] This gave the People of the Book rights that were not available in their own courts, and so they usually appealed to Muslim courts 'to gain access to the provisions of Islamic inheritance laws, which absolutely guaranteed certain shares of estates to relatives'.[6] However, being the weak groups among the population, the Christians and Jews were always eager to be seen as loyal *Ra'aya* by their successive rulers, from the advance of Islam to the Tanzimat. As was already noted, many Arab and Ottoman rulers showed them tolerance and treated them fairly,[7] and during the period of Tanzimat, the political Ottoman élite and the reformers sought to include them in an overriding citizenship.[8] Thus it is safe to state that many attempts were made to secure and protect the rights of the sultan's Christian and Jewish subjects, who enjoyed

> fuller rights and legal protection in the Ottoman lands than, for example, subjects of the French king or of the Hapsburg emperor. It is also true that Ottoman inter-communal relations worsened in the eighteenth and nineteenth century...One's religion—as Muslim, Christian, or Jew—was an important means of differentiation in the Ottoman world.[9]

However, the Ottomans, who were heavily engaged with wars on both external and internal fronts, were under great pressure for financial resources. This situation forced the rulers to raise continual taxes on the *Ra'aya*, among which were the Christians and Jews—a treatment that played a crucial role in the history of the empire during the period of reforms. As long as the empire lasted, non-Muslim subjects were a major source for cash to fund the military machine. Accordingly the Ottomans revived the famed historic taxes *al jizya* and *al kharraj*, which had been demanded from the People of the Book during the advance of Islam and

imposed on both Christians and Jews.[10] Naturally the old justification was also revived of imposing the taxes in return for protection.[11] During the Ottoman period, the claim was represented as a return for allowing the Christians and Jews to exercise their religion.[12]

Variation in the Treatment of the Ahl al Kitab

Islam was founded on the concept of holy war, which called on believers to wage *Jihad* (holy war) for conquering the land of nonbelievers (*Fitoh-Dar 'ul Harb*—دار الحرب). This was the pattern for spreading the message of Islam from the beginning. Conquest established the absolute control of the Muslim authority over the land and its inhabitants, who were officially turned into serfs to cultivate their own land for their new masters.[13] It has been claimed that the '*immam* was free either to eliminate or enslave the defeated or to keep them as tenants on the land in exchange for the regular payment of a fixed amount of ransom [*jizya* and *kharraj*—جزية و خراج]'[14]; however, the consultations made by *Omar Ibn al Khatab* on the subject reveal the consent of all *sahaba* (الصحابة) to leave the land in the hands of the conquered and to impose on them the *jizya*[15] and *kharraj*, because that was more beneficial for Muslims. Thereafter both types of levy were imposed on the People of the Book, and this was firmly regulated by direct instruction of the caliph Omar.[16] Arab Muslims invented many terms to describe the *Ahl al Kitab. Fay al Muslimeen* was one, which made the conquered land the inalienable common property of the Muslim state and its Muslim subjects. These types of lands were known also as '*baraci* lands, or those lands [subject to] taxes'.[17]

As was previously remarked, generally speaking, during their might, the Ottoman rulers treated their Christian subjects with leniency and even favourably, whereas during their decline, the Christians suffered oppression and discrimination. Under the early Ottoman rulers, the testimony of a non-Muslim 'was accepted in the Muslim courts except in those cases where a ruling of guilt would result in the imposition of criminal sanctions against a Muslim'.[18] During their decline, however, the Ottomans adopted a social and political policy of 'divide and rule' based on fomenting discord among the various ethnic and religious groups making

up their subjects and treating both Christians and Jews as second-class citizens.[19] During the latter period, a call for prayers from Muslim mosques was normal daily practice in Ottoman society, while ringing the bells of the churches or chanting was forbidden because it was considered a disturbance to the tranquillity of true believers. These discriminatory measures established the 'social inferiority of non-Muslims in the Muslim community. The non-Muslim were required to pay the humiliating tax of the *Jizya*'.[20] During the period of decline, certain Ottoman Muslim scholars in the region hurled many *fetwas*, which denounced the Christians as infidels who ought to be curbed even in neighbouring provinces. With the introduction of the Tanzimat reforms, the social separation between the various religious communities was theoretically abolished. Equality of obligation was supposed to apply even to military services for all *Ra'aya*.[21] But given the mounting opposition to such progressive measures from conservative Muslims, true equality was still a distant goal. Indeed, non-Turkish ethnic and religious groups continued to suffer from discrimination right to the downfall of the empire.[22]

2. The Western Powers and the Reforms

As we have seen, foreign countries, especially the great powers of Europe, exerted strong efforts to reform Ottoman society, but only to an acceptable degree. Increasing pressure was put on the sultan and his governments with every war and defeat. The concept of *millet* was reintroduced as a response to that pressure, on the one hand, and on the other, to the Ottoman rulers' conviction that without the modernisation of their state, defeats and decline could not be halted. Thus the nineteenth century witnessed the wide use of the term 'reform' and the introduction of new formulas in international relations, as the great powers of Europe claimed for themselves the right to protect their co-religionists in the lands of the Ottoman Empire. Many Ottoman Christian minorities sought the Europeans' offered protection to escape the harsh treatment and discrimination that they were suffering during the decline of the ailing empire, and they did so mainly by joining the Europeans' churches. This brought the Western

powers right to the doorstep of the sultan and his government. But this development had a dire effect on the native Christians' relations with the Muslim majority, who viewed such moves as acts of treason against the caliph.[23] The sultan and his government sought to place the non-Muslim minorities in a less privileged position and saw the Tanzimat as a way to neutralise their peculiar status and bring them into a national Ottoman citizenship. But these measures failed to solve the problem, since it was deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Muslim society and its attitude towards non-Muslims, who were widely considered infidels (*Kawir*), a concept that Tanzimat attempted to reverse and correct. Thus the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a counterattack by the traditional conservative Muslims against all forms of Tanzimat and its reforms.[24]

3. The Reforms and Equality With Non-Muslims

In theory, both the reforms of Sultan Mahmud II beginning in 1826 and those of his successor Abdulmecid in 1839 aimed at bridging the differences between their Muslim and non-Muslim subjects in matters of privileges and equality.[25] All subjects were supposed to enjoy equal treatment and rights. These proposed changes were radical, since they altered the very function of the state and society. The sultans' intention was to treat all their subjects equally, whether in taxation, appearance, military service, or eligibility for the civil service. While it aimed at bringing Christians, who were viewed as protégés of the foreign powers, back under the joint dominion of the sultan's government and its legal system, this policy also sought to eliminate the embedded concept of Muslim legal superiority.[26]

The *Millet* System

During the period of reform, the Ottomans organised various non-Muslim groups such as Armenians, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Syrians (Catholic and Orthodox), Rum Orthodox, and a small group of Protestants in the system of *millets*.[27] The largest *millets* were the Orthodox, who comprised the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Bosnian Serbs, and the Christians of southern Albania.

According to Donald Quataert,

> Stereotypes present distorted pictures of Ottomans subjects living apart, in sharply divided, mutually impenetrable religious communities called millets that date back to the fifteenth century. In this incorrect view, each community lived in isolation from one another, adjacent but separate. And supposedly implacable hatreds prevailed: Muslims hated Christians, who hated Jews, who hated Christians, who hated Muslims.

He further contended that 'the term *millet* as designator for Ottoman non-Muslims in not ancient but dates from the reign of Sultan Mahmut II, in the early nineteenth century. Before then, millet in fact meant Muslims within the empire and Christians outside it'.[28] In fact, however, the term *millet* was not new but derived from the Qur'an, which recognised both Jews and Christians as distinct *millets*, continually referring to them as (ملة اليهود والنصارى).[29] The Qur'an contains verses prescribing the proper Muslim attitude towards non-Muslims, which guarantee them security of life and justice. This was embodied in the concept of People of the Book, Ummatu al Nasara wal Yahud أمة النصارى (واليهود).[30] Hence the concept of *millet* (nation—أمة) was defined with the advance of Islam.

The term was revived during the era of the Ottoman reforms,[31] and the reformers were keen to make it function within the framework of Islam.[32] Gibb and Bowen saw it as a traditional mechanism for dealing with the non-Muslim communities.[33] Unlike the Qur'an, which labelled all Christians as *millet al Nasara* (ملة النصارى 'the nation of the Christians'), the Ottomans distinguished various *millets* or nations corresponding to the various Christian churches existing within their empire. During the late Ottoman period, the number of recognised *millets* mounted to thirteen, each headed by its *millet Bashi* (رئيس الملة), who was accountable directly to the sultan and was responsible for collecting the tax from his followers.[34]

Thus each *millet* was a hierarchically organised religious body with a decidedly political function.[35] The reforms gave priority to those Christian

nations that were more influential and sought a greater role in the internal affairs of the empire, such as the Armenians, Georgians, Greeks, Syrians, and Chaldeans.[36] Thus many Christian minorities gained recognition under the guidance of the Armenian patriarch, including the patriarchal line of Mar Elia at the monastery of Rabban Hormizd near Alqush.[37] A *firman* of recognition confirming a patriarch specified both the civil and religious authority of the *millet*, which should be controlled by an elected council of laymen and a larger *millet* assembly.[38] In 1860 a series of Tanzimat known as *Ethnikoi Kanonismoi* (National Regulations) marked a further attempt by the reformers to integrate the churches into the Ottoman bureaucracy.[39]

The Jewish communities in the empire suffered from the same discriminatory practices as the Christians, sometimes even more severely than other sects.[40] The Jews were at last recognised as a distinct *millet* throughout the empire in 1835, and the office of *Haham bashi* (حاخام باشي) or head of the Turkish Jews was established after the settlement with Muhammad Ali of Egypt in 1840–1841, but there is little evidence to show how the Jewish *millet* governed themselves internally throughout Syria and Iraq before the Tanzimat. Donald Quataert believed that 'Ottoman Jewish-Muslim relations' were better than those were between Muslims and Christians.[41] Awakening national awareness could take advantage of the Tanzimat to improve the condition of various non-Muslim minorities, including the Jews. A group of French Jews formed the famed Alliance Israélite Universelle to regenerate their inherited traditions and cultural heritage.[42] The Ottoman government and the religious leaders of the non-Muslim minorities tended to cooperate in various fields in which the Ottomans were keen to secure their support, and this trend helped to crystallise the *millet* system.

4. DID THE REFORMS PRODUCE EQUALITY BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS?

Although one scholar has stated that 'differing religious groups had lived together in relative peace and had not threatened the stability of

the government',[43] in reality, the *millet* system failed to create a homogeneous population of loyal Ottoman citizens, since it only further institutionalised the old social and ethnic structures. The various religious and ethnic groups remained detached from each other and isolated in their internal affairs. In fact, the Tanzimat only served to upset a social equilibrium that had lasted for centuries. The Muslim majority, who rejected the concept of equality, reacted with hostility, and so, during the period of reform, Christians and Jews were to experience cruelty over and above what they had ever experienced before. Many, particularly Christians, were forced to embrace Islam, and 'only a small proportion of these returned to their original faith after intervention by the Pasha'.[44]

Some historians have argued that the Christians and Jews were the prime beneficiaries from the Tanzimat because of the role played by their financial houses and the interference of the Western powers. Clearly both Jewish and Christian merchants living in the major cities did benefit financially from the reforms; they invested in commercial relations with the western countries and used their contacts, whether internal or external, to build up very profitable businesses. However, it should be remembered that these people represented only a small portion of their communities. The Ottoman capitulatory regime was the prime factor facilitating this process, in that it officially recognised the privileges, known as 'capitulations', that successive sultans had awarded to several European countries as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As was explained earlier, King Francis I of France, who sided with the Ottomans, exploited the inter-European rivalries and the enmity between the Persians and Ottomans after the Battle of Chaldiran of 1514. In return, France received a series of concessions, beginning with those of 1535, which were given by Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent. Louis XIV obtained further concessions in 1668. England obtained similar concessions in 1578 from Sultan Murad IV, who allowed English merchants to enter the Ottoman domain and to enjoy the same privileges as those of France.[45] During the nineteenth century, the connections established by the capitulations enabled the powerful home governments to exploit the old agreements to the limit for their own interests and political advantage and to back

the merchants and their consuls. This further weakened the Ottomans, on the one hand, and, on the other, served to strengthen the influence of the European powers and their protégés, who remained almost detached from the direct political control of the Ottomans.[46]

The Tanzimat reforms were supposed to secure the rights and religious freedom of all sects of non-Muslim *Ra'aya* subject to the sultan, and all edicts dealing with this subject were carefully phrased to emphasise that freedom.[47] Yet, like Caliph Omar I when he instructed his governor in Iraq in the early 640s regarding the issue of *Ahlu al Kitab*, 'the People of the Book', and the term to be applied to them, the sultan too required all non-Muslim adult men to pay *jizya*.[48] Furthermore, we are told once again that the reason for imposing this additional tax was in return for their protection, without specifying from whom. This question became especially relevant after Muslim authority was firmly established in Iraq and elsewhere. After some twelve hundred years of Islamic advance, the Ottomans attempted, under the slogan of reforms, to treat their Christian subjects on the same lines as had Omar I. They were keen to represent these new/old measures and ways of dealing with their non-Muslim subjects as a return for the privileges that they could enjoy, such as exercising their own laws and customs and exemption from military services. Hence efforts were exerted to supplement the rules and regulations that replaced the old system of collecting farm taxes. Those changes required a new method of collection, but this only opened new opportunities for corruption when the task of collecting 'farm tax' fell on influential individuals known as 'fief-holders', who exacted far more than the official rate from their victims.[49] Hence, during the early period of Tanzimat, both Christians and Jews experienced no serious changes in their old status. They remained unequal before the Ottoman law and state institutions. The payment of the humiliating *jizya* was a clear practice of discrimination against the non-Muslims, who suffered from cruel methods of collection. Eventually this harsh treatment was replaced by another set of regulations, doubtless under western pressure. On 7 May 1855, the *jizya* system was abolished along with other discriminatory measures,

while others were modified in a way that was designed to benefit the state, such as demanding a lump sum of money from the People of the Book in return for their exemption from conscription.[50]

Moreover, as was mentioned earlier, the reforms encountered severe opposition from a society that had grown used to traditional practices of discrimination. Even the non-Muslim leaders opposed changes in the rules that ran counter to their personal interest: 'Non-Muslims in general were willing to accept the benefits of equality, they opposed its price'.[51] However, this situation had its exceptions; for instance, the Jewish *millet* during the nineteenth century was significantly divided between the orthodox rabbis and the rest of the sect, who demanded a more secular and progressive system on many levels, such as education.[52] Some *Ra'aya* said that they were willing to pay *jizya* and maintain their freedom to develop their own careers rather than serve the empire, especially as conscripts in an army that was fighting endless wars.

5. Islamic Attitudes Towards Christian Privileges

The more conservative school of Tanzimat reformers sought to build on what tradition had to offer, while the radical reformers viewed reform as a concept that had 'nothing to do with *Shari'a*'.[53] These diverse views were reflected in *kanun* (law), which embodied the classical Ottoman concept of the dual authority of the sultan as a head of both the state and the church, who was looking somehow to integrate them in the process of reform. This was evident from his continual orders to his grand vizier and ministers to abide by *shari'a* rules as a way to attain justice and equality and to protect the state and society.[54] This clearly appeared in the meeting that Sultan Abdulmecid called in the summer of 1839 at the Sublime Porte, where he sought to lay the foundation by which the *shari'a* laws would be enacted and the government would act according to the spirit of Islam.[55]

It is not possible to separate the impact of the Tanzimat reforms on the People of the Book from the concept of Muslim majority. Insofar as the reforms addressed the status of the People of the Book, they were

bound to provoke a Muslim reaction. The belief in Muslim superiority had been enforced ever since the advance of Islam; hence, in the minds of ordinary Muslims, the Tanzimat and its equality slogans abandoned a pious tradition. In their view, the impulse for the reforms did not come from within Ottoman society but from foreign powers, which were considered *Kawir* (infidels) who humiliated the Muslim state. Hence, whenever the sultan committed himself to guaranteeing religious freedom and protecting his non-Muslim subjects, the Muslim majority did not feel themselves bound by such decrees. The overwhelming consensus was that the *Ra'aya* were entitled to protection in return for *jizya*, as originally established with the advance of Islam.[56] Thus it was no easy task for the reformers to remove from the minds of local rulers and their subjects the view that Christians and Jews were inferior to Muslims, and the attempt to raise their status to equality with Muslims proved to be unacceptable.[57]

A further complication was that western interference in the internal affairs of the empire reached the level of dictating to the sultan and his government the terms on which they ought to deal with their non-Muslim subjects. During the nineteenth century, the European powers' involvement in the affairs of the sultan's Christian subjects reached its peak. It has been claimed that these minorities within the Islamic state lived more comfortably than the Muslim majority and were in less fear of persecution even than religious minorities in European states, thanks to the protection offered by the concerned powers.[58] But in the eyes of the majority Muslims, Tanzimat made Christians and Jews protégés of the Western powers, if not a fifth column, which only worsened their reputation. Thus the capitulatory regime became a benchmark of the limits of European involvement and the Muslim reaction to such involvement, with the Christian subject population bearing its negative consequences.

The Reforms and Ethnic Pride

Before the introduction of western-style reforms and modern political theories, *Asabiyya al kabaliya* (ethnic pride—العصبية القبلية) was

embedded both vertically and horizontally in Ottoman society. That was one main reason why the nationalists who were spreading modern political thinking throughout the Ottoman Asiatic provinces in the nineteenth century failed to push through their intended reforms.[59]

One of the devices to which the Ottomans resorted during their long involvement with the Western powers was using the religious factor to move the feelings of their Muslim subjects to withstand the threat posed by the infidel Christians. During the Greek War of Independence, for instance, the Ottomans 'made the liberal and tolerant attitude of the *Bektashyya* towards the non-Muslims seem to be out of time and place'.[60]

Among other things, reform in the Western powers' style was intended to give the *Ahl al Kitab* the basic rights to enjoy and practise freely their religion and traditions. In fact, the measure only served to delude the Christian communities in the Asiatic Ottoman provinces, who seem to have thought that an edict on paper could remove practices accumulated over centuries that had reduced them to second-class citizens. Accordingly Christians who were deceived by the *Hatt-I Sharif* of Gulhane began to practise their religious customs openly as a silent way of challenging the majority Muslim population, ringing church bells, carrying crosses in processions, opening alcohol shops in public places, and having

> corpses carried by men instead of animals. Such deeds strongly irritated the Muslims almost everywhere, and in some places they provoked anti-Christian outbreaks...many Christians were killed and their houses and churches sacked and burnt.[61]

The reforms aimed at guaranteeing political and civil equality between all subjects, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, but conservative Muslims viewed this as breaching the basis of *shari'a*, which roused much resentment throughout the Muslim communities.[62] The entrenched discrimination could not be removed without resistance. The multinational pot of the Ottoman Empire was always ready to boil over, especially during periods of intense reform. Many Arab Muslims

> felt disquiet at the direction and increased pace of change in the nineteenth century. But their unease was fuelled as much by fear of European military expansion as it was by anger at the Tanzimat reforms.[63]

Sectarian violence erupted first in the Ottoman Arab provinces and then in other parts of the empire,[64] until, 'on May 2, 1854, Mosul was the scene of massive rioting. The mob attacked the Christians and Jewish communities in the streets and the bazaars, even breaking into houses and shops'.[65]

Although more than twenty years had elapsed since Sultan Abdulmecid's reforms had sought to bring equality and justice to his non-Muslim subjects, further bloody massacres broke out in 1860 in Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, and elsewhere against Christians, who where hunted through the streets and into their quarters. Their crime was to have believed in the edict of the sultan, which had given them, theoretically, the same rights as their Muslim countrymen. The massacres of 1860 were a clear indication of how the mass Muslim population regarded any measures aimed at achieving such equality.[66] In Bruce Masters' words,

> The ambition of the Ottoman sultans to reform their empire and to consolidate the concept of citizenship was reflected in the constitution of 1876. However, despite the slogans of equality for all citizens, the constitution could not drive out the well-rooted urge of the Muslim society to establish the Islamic religion as the official one.[67]

As we shall see, this same urge furnished a powerful impetus for the treatment that the Assyrians endured at the hands of their neighbours, with the full connivance of Ottoman officials, in 1840.

Endnotes

1. Quataert and Inalicik, *An Economic and Social History*, 605.
2. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 141.
3. Ibid., 175.
4. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, 62–63.
5. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 175.
6. Ibid., 176.
7. Youssef Courbage and Philippe Fargues, *Chrétiens et juifs dans l'islam arabe et turc*, translated into Arabic by as *Al Masihiyun wa al Yahud fi al Tarikh al Islami, al Arabi wa al Turki* (Cairo: Librairie Arqèthme Fayard, 1994), 136–137, 185.
8. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 18.
9. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 173.
10. Theoretically, Islam did not permit discrimination between different races. Therefore,

> [i]t consider both Jews and Christians as sharing many beliefs and values with Muslims, and that the Islamic term *Ahl al-Kitab*, (the People of the Scripture or the Book) is a definition for those who were subject to jizya and kharraj. The Qur'an warns against taking Jews and Christians as friends. Nonetheless, non-Muslim is guaranteed his freedom of faith, but in return he should pay the tribute to Muslims readily and submissively, surrender to Islamic laws, and should not practice his polytheistic rituals openly'.

Muslim scholars justified the imposition of both *jizya* and *kharraj* as being tax which was '[k]nown by the Persians and Romans and it is imposed on non-Muslims as substitute for military service. Islam confirmed this practice and exempted the Dhmmi who is subject to conscription'. Ibn al Qaim al Chawziya, *Ahkam Ahlu al Dhima*, 1:91. Al Immam al Hafith Ibn al Hanbali affirmed that *al Kharraj* is 'the sum that is imposed on the Dhmmi for a limited time'. *Kitab al Kharraj, Al Istikhraj Li Ahkam Al Kharrag* (Beirut, n.d), 4.

The *jizya* was a poll tax levied from those who did not accept Islam but were willing to live under Muslim rule. The tax varied in amount, and there were exemptions for the poor, females and children (according to Abu Hanifa), for slaves, and for monks and hermits. It was in a sense a commutation for military service. Jews and the Christians were forced to pay *jizya*, and

it was justified as being a means to put an end to their independence and supremacy, so that they should not remain rulers and master of the land. These powers should be wrested from them by the followers of the true faith. Thus the People of the Book became *dhmma* of Islam, paying *jizya* to the Muslim state, and could not be allowed to remain supreme rulers. Therefore it is the duty of the true believers to bring them under a righteous order. Consequently, the non-Muslims became worse off, since they were not considered 'good, law-abiding citizens'. Unlike with Western taxpayers, payment of *jizya* did not grant equality and liberty to the payees, but rather merely permission to live for another tax period, while failure to pay it resulted in death. With the *jizya*, the tax itself was considered a punishment, and the payee lived in the permanent condition of being punished for his faith until he converted.

11. Ibn al Qaim al Chawziya contended that 'the essence of the matter is that *Al Jizya* is imposed as punishment, but it is limited to the People of the Book and its not applicable on others, and that the *Jizya* is in return for permitting the dhmmis to reside in Dar [Dar ul Islam]'. *Ahkam Ahl al Dhima*, 1:17. Yihya Ibn Adam claimed that '*al Ghanema* (Loot) is subject to *Khomis* (1/5) for Allah'. *Kitab Al Kharaj* (Beirut, n.d.), 1:17.
12. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 130.
13. Abu Yousif, in his reply to the question of the Caliph Harun al Rashid regarding the proper treatment of the People of the Book, advocated—among other things—that their necks must be stamped during the period of collecting *al jizya*...none of them should be permitted to behave like Muslims in his dress and daily practices...they must wear distinct clothes, and special girdles around in their waists, they were not to erect any new churches without explicit permission...no crosses were to be displayed in the cities. Abi Yousif, *Kitab al Kharaj* (Beirut, n.d), 127.
14. Quataert and Inalicik, *An Economic and Social History*, 103–104. Abu Yousif informs us that Omar I desired to distribute the al Sawad between the Muslims and he ordered a census, where he found that the share of each Muslim fighter would be thirty-two local peasants. Asked by Omar for his advice on the subject, Ali Ibn Abi Talib replied, '[L]et them be a source of profit for the Muslims'. Thus a certain sum was imposed on *Ahl u Dima* according to their social class. The rich were to pay forty-eight, the middle class twenty-four, and the poor twelve dirhams. Abu Yousif, *Kitab al Kharaj*, 36. Ibn al Chawziya justified the motive behind imposing these taxes as aiming at 'humiliation when they pay it as submissive people'. *Ahkam Ahl al Dhima*, 1:23, 108.

15. 'Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued'. S. 9 A. 29–30. The derived meaning of *jizya*, which became the technical meaning, was a poll tax levied from those who did not accept Islam but were willing to live under its protection and were thus tacitly willing to submit to having its ideals enforced in the Muslims state.
16. Abi al Hassan al Balathiri, *Fituh al Buldan* (Beirut, 1978), 279–1; Abu Yousif, *Kitab al Kharaj*, 25–27. Ibn Al Hanbili, however, affirmed that Omar did not divide al Sawad between the invaders because the land was not gained and seized by force. *Kitab al Kharraj*, 30.
17. Quataert and Inalicik, *An Economic and Social History*, 103. On the issue of the land after Muslim conquest, scholars, or Al Sahaba (الصحابة), advocated dividing the conquered land into two categories: first, *Sulh* (peace), and second, *inwatan* (forcibly—عنوة). For the former, the tax was considered *jizya* by the Sunni scholars and would drop with conversion to Islam, while Abu Hanifa advocated the *Kharaj* of land which was gained forcibly, while Ibn Adam belived that the *Kharaj* on the *dhmmis* in his land should be considered as rent tenancy. Ibn Hanbali, *Kitab al Kharraj*, 39.
18. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 23.
19. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 69; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 42.
20. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 23.
21. Quataert and Inalicik, *An Economic and Social History*, 103–104, stated that '[under] The Islamic Law from the Prophet's time...The Imam was free either to eliminate or enslave the defeated or to keep them as tenants on the land in exchange for the regular payment of a fixed amount of ransom (*cizya* [*jizya*] or *harac* [*kharraj*])'.
22. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 42.
23. In 1517 when the Arab-Muslims of the Arabian Peninsula were experiencing the invasions of the Spaniards and Portuguese, the *Sharif* of Mecca sent to Sultan Selim I the key of the Holy City of Mecca, recognising him as caliph. This gave a boost to the Ottoman presence in the region, which led to the occupation of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.
24. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:128.
25. Burchard Brentjes, *The Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurds: Three Nations, One Fate*? (Comp bell Varanasi: Rishi Publications, 1997), 30.
26. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 65.

27. Sir Harry Luke, *The Old Turkey and the New: From Byzantium to Ankara*, rev. ed. (London: Bles, 1955), 9.
28. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 173.
29. Ibid.
30. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 1. For details, see also Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, 1:ii, 208.
31. Luke stated that the *millet* system could be 'traced back to the practice of its Byzantine predecessors of guarantying autonomy to groups of people within the borders'. *Old Turkey and the New*, 9.
32. Many verses in the Qur'an recognised the People of the Book and called on Muslims to treat them as such: '[W]as the story of Moses Reached thee' (S. 20 A. 7–10). [Allah] said, 'Granted is thy prayer, O Moses' (S. 20. A. 36). S. 19. A 54–58 stressed that 'also mentioned in the Book (is the story of) Moses: For he was a messenger and a prophet'. As for Christians, many verses mentioned them and the message of Jesus Christ: '[W]hen Jesus came with clear Signs, he said, "Now have I come to you with Wisdom, And in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute; therefore, fear Allah And obey me"'. (S. 43–63).
33. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, 2:ii, 220.
34. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 63; Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, 1:ii, 234. The Greek Orthodox subjects of the Porte were recognised as a *millet* as early as 1454, and the Armenians and Jews in 1461. See Nasim Sousa, *The Capitulatory Regime of Turkey, The History, Origin and Nature: A Survey From 1535–1923* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1923), 90; Courbage and Fargues, *Al Masihiyun wa al Yahud*, 185–188.
35. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 61. The Protestant *millet* was recognised on 15 November 1847, after the British ambassador succeeded in obtaining a *firman* of recognition from the sultan; see Rev. H. G. O. Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey: A Narrative of the Protestant Reformation in the Armenian Church* (London: J. Nisbet, 1854), 291, 178.
36. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 20. See also Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 80.
37. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:125.
38. Ibid., 2:155. Nevertheless many heads of *millet*s were hierarchies, and the patriarchs enjoyed civil and ecclesiastical authority over their followers.
39. Tsikaloudaki, *The Ethnokoi*, 1–2.
40. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 5.
41. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 177.

42. Masters, *Christian and Jews*, 54; Yosif Rizqallah Ghanema stated that the Iraqi Jews established in 1865 'The Society of Israili Union' as well as a successful school in Baghdad. See Yousif Riziq Ghanema, *Nozhat al Mustaq fi Tarikh Yahud al Iraq fi al Qarin al Ishren*, 2nd impression (London, 1997), 305–306.
43. McCarthy, *The Ottoman People*, 9.
44. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 189–190.
45. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 79, 84. See also Sir Ryder Bolard, *Britain and the Middle East*, translated into Arabic by Hassan Ahmad al Salman as *Britania wa al Sharq al Awsat Minthu Akdam al Isur hata 1952* (Baghdad, 1956), 14.
46. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, 63.
47. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 189.
48. *Al Balathiri* in his *Fitooh al Boldan* mentioned that Omar's instructions to *Sa'ad* were to put the tax on every male head of *Ahl al Kitab* whom he nicknamed 'علوج', who were shaving their beards. Women, children, and the elderly were exempt. *Fituh al Buldan.*
49. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:95.
50. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 194–195.
51. Shaw and Shaw, *A History*, 2:127–128.
52. Ibid., 2:127.
53. Ibid., 2:62.
54. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 90.
55. Ibid., 87.
56. For the Muslim attitude, see Ibn al Chawziya, *Ahkam Ahl al Dhima*, 1:15.
57. Ibn al Chawziya stated that the belief of the People of the Book became null and void with the coming of the Prophet. *Ahkam Ahl al Dhima*, 1:68.
58. Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 111.
59. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 11.
60. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 67.
61. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 190.
62. Abu Manneh, *Studies*, 125.
63. Ibid., 156.
64. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 7.
65. Sarah D. Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 86.
66. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 191.
67. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 140.

Chapter 8

The Beginnings of Centralisation

1. The Ottomans and the Foreign Powers

After the growing weakness of the empire was exposed in the Russo-Turkish war that ended with the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji in 1774, the Ottoman state, up to its downfall, came increasingly to depend on the support of one or more of the European powers. The effect of this was to secure it against final collapse from external as well as internal threats. But those powers extended their interests to the internal affairs of the now weak empire, particularly in the Asiatic provinces, where there were many disaffected power centres. In doing so, the powers were very anxious to preserve the Ottoman state from any developing new threats. The affair of Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt in Syria and its outcome gave a clear indication of both the motive and the effects of European intervention.[1]

The powers most concerned to safeguard the empire after 1831 were Great Britain, Russia, and France. Colonel Taylor, the British resident at

Baghdad, reported that 'the Pasha and his adherents are delighted with the interference of the European powers and look upon it as the saving of their empire'.[2] The Ottoman officials were pleased with the Russian and British interference to protect their empire and to prevent its downfall. These powers exerted themselves to assist the Ottomans in their task of re-establishing their hold over all the Asiatic provinces and facilitated the plan by every means to ensure its success.[3] The obvious reason for this reversed attitude towards the weakened empire was to enable the Ottoman state to withstand any possible development that might counter their own interests in the Asiatic provinces, which they continued to pursue.[4]

The deteriorating conditions in the Ottoman Empire opened up the whole of the Asiatic territories to European activities. From 1831 onwards, the region became open ground for the westerners, in which each individual acted in accordance with the designs and interests of his home country. Consuls were established in every important city alongside military attachés. A succession of travellers, missionaries, and adventurers toured all over the region, observing every detail of the land and its inhabitants.[5]

The Ottomans not only allowed the European powers to penetrate their Asiatic provinces but also even gave them a free hand to do what they were interested in. They also assisted those powers in their objectives by every means at the disposal of their state. With regard to the missionaries, for instance, the Ottomans assisted many mission bodies and their agents in evangelizing their Christian *Ra'aya*—sometimes even by force, as Patriarch Akhejan experienced during the establishment of the Catholic Church among the Orthodox Syrians. Thus they were subjected to cultural and political ideas and influences quite different from those to which the Muslim majorities, or even Christians elsewhere in the Middle East, were accustomed.[6]

An immense body of evidence establishes that the Ottoman rulers, compelled by their general weakness, were primarily responsible for allowing the establishment of various forms of interested European presence in the region. They were also the fundamental factor enabling

the Western powers to sow the seeds of western influence there, taking advantage of the ill treatment by the Ottoman rulers and their supporters of non-Turkish people.

This policy of concession by the Turkish Ottoman rulers during the period of centralisation had far-reaching and lasting consequences for the region. It influenced events throughout the Asiatic provinces right down to the downfall of the Ottomans, and their successor states in the Middle East have continued to bear the effects of this Ottoman-aided European intrusion ever since.

2. Interrelations Between the Non-Turkish Subject Peoples and Their Effect on the Ottoman Plan of Centralisation

The people who bore the brunt of direct Ottoman efforts at subjugation belonged to different categories; there were the non-Turkish Muslim majorities, but there were also a wider range of differing minorities belonging to many races and religions. There were Arabs and Kurds, the majority of both groups being Sunni Muslims. Then there were many minority groups: Armenians, various sects of Syriac-speaking people (Assyrian 'Nestorians' and Chaldeans, Syrian Orthodox, and Catholics), Yazidis, Turcomans, and others. These minorities belonged to different races and religions and had different beliefs and cultures; they had nothing in common to bring and bond them together. Even the Ottomanising identity, which was applied nominally to them all, could not establish even a minimum sense of citizenship. They were '[l]ess like a country than a block of flats inhabited by a number of families which met on the stairs'.[7] But these inhabitants were not only stranger neighbours; hostilities and rivalries dominated their relations during the long period of their Ottomanisation. The Ottoman design for subjugating the people of the outlying regions was greatly aided by these divisions, which served to compensate for any weakness on the Ottoman side. The only factor helping to draw the non-Turkish people together was their common hatred of the Ottoman Turks.[8]

Over a long period of decline, intolerance and attitudes of dominance also marked relations between majorities and minorities. The majorities, in particular the Kurds, rejected any form of coexistence with the non-Muslim natives, who were gradually transformed into minorities, the most affected groups being the Christian sects and the Yazidis. The result of this attitude was a gradual but dramatic change in the demographic map of the regions of ancient Assyria and upper Mesopotamia. For instance, the Yazidis, who had been numerous during the early Ottoman occupation of the sixteenth century, were reduced to a minority during the seventeenth century,[9] and their numbers were sharply reduced again during the following century. Despite their warlike habits, they could not withstand the constant pressure exerted by the annual campaigns of extermination of the advancing Turks, Kurds, and Arabs, as both British diplomats in the region and the Turkish historians reported.[10] The Christians, who were viewed as infidels, were even worse affected by developments during the Ottoman decline, especially from the eighteenth century to the eve of centralisation at the beginning of the fourth decade of the nineteenth.[11] The members of the Church of the East suffered a series of massacres and deportations from their ancestral homeland. Their tragedy reached its peak during the carnage inflicted by Bedr Khan Beg on the Assyrian independent tribes in 1843–1846, by which they game to share the fate of those who had been turned into *Ra'aya* during the preceding centuries.[12]

On the other hand, over a long period, relations between the various non-Turkish peoples making up the Muslim majority were also strained and revealed an ingrained mutual disdain and antagonism that spilled over on the members of the Church of the East and other minorities. This increased during the period of Ottoman decline and Persian invasions. Wars waged to gain power and expand their respective domination marked relations between the various ethnic majorities, particularly the Kurds and the Arab tribes.[13] Among certain races, the rivalries went so far as to provoke wars and widespread destruction, as they did, for instance, between the Kurdish centres of power that had emerged between the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 and Nadir Shah's

invasion in 1743. After 1747 these centres managed to consolidate their hold and found many emirates such as Baban, Soran, Bohtan, and Bahdinan. Much the same happened among the Arab tribes. The hostilities between the Kurdish factions developed with the emergence of power centres under ambitious leaders who showed a lack of national feeling towards their follow Kurds, each leader trying to enlarge his holding at the expense of the natives or the other Kurdish centres. This also affected the existence of the Christians of the Church of the East.[14]

It is safe to state that intolerance and unwillingness to coexist among the various peoples characterised the region. This led to continual hostilities and enmity, rooted ever more deeply in the consciousness of each sect. The Ottomans exploited this situation all too cleverly to achieve their objectives during the period of centralisation.

3. The Ottomans' Determination to Establish Their Authority Over the Asiatic Provinces

After the extensive losses of territory in Europe and Africa during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, further losses were also threatened in Asia. Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839), shaken by his earlier losses, took serious measures to restore his authority over the remaining nominal Turkish dominions in Asia.[15] These regions, which now attracted the direct interest of the sultan and his officials, had hitherto been '[p]erfectly independent and were considered by the Porte as enemies whom they attack whenever there is an opportunity'.[16]

Helmuth Von Moltke, a Prussian officer lent to Turkey to reorganise its army during the period of centralisation, later to be famous as the chief of the Prussian general staff, wrote about his own experience while he was serving with the Ottoman army during the period of centralisation in Asia, stating,

> It was a well known fact that the Ottoman Empire comprised vast regions in which the Porte exercised no real authority. It was certain that the *Padishah* (Sultan) had to re-conquer widespread regions within the territory of his own state.[17]

Mahmud II spent two thirds of his reign tied up with such serious issues as the Greek War of Independence, the Wahabi movement, and the Turco-Russian war of 1828–1829. Immediately after concluding the Treaty of Adrianople with Russia, in 1829 he stepped up his drive to restore his authority over all the disaffected centres in Asia.[18] Within two decades, he and his successor succeeded in putting an end to all the autonomous centres and replacing the local rulers with loyal Turks.[19]

The main disaffected centres that the two sultans successfully sought to subdue were as follows:

1. The Mamluk dynasty of Baghdad.
2. The local ruling family of Abd-ul-Jalil of the pashalic of Mosul.
3. Various Kurdish emirates spread over many regions of ancient Assyria and upper Mesopotamia, notably
   a. The emirate of Baban (region of Sulaimania),
   b. The emirate of Soran (Rawanduz),
   c. The emirate of Bahdinan (Amadia),
   d. The emirate of Botan (Jazerah),
   e. The Kurdish section of the emirate of Hakkari and many other centres in present-day southeastern Turkey.
4. Many powerful Arab tribes, in particular the Shammer Jarbah.
5. The Yazidi tribes of *Sinjar* and *Shaikhan.*
6. The independent Syrian Jacobite tribes of Tur Abdin.
7. The independent Assyrian (Nestorian) tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari.[20]

Despite their weakness in the whole region in terms of both military capability and financial, political, and cultural presence, the Ottomans did achieve many of their goals. Many centres that had long maintained their authority by force were subdued, and Turkish officials appointed directly from Constantinople replaced their rulers.[21] Some of these elements had more military followers in the region than the Turks.[22]

Apart from European support, the main factor that enabled the Ottomans to achieve this goal was the conditions that circumscribed the

various races and religious groups inhabiting the region. To restore their authority, the Ottomans exploited these mutual antagonisms to the limit. They did everything in their power and employed every available measure to achieve their aims, regardless of the consequent destruction and human suffering.

So, not surprisingly, the more the Ottomans sought to strengthen their hold over these territories, the more they alienated their subjects. This treatment by the Turkish officials during the period of their decline directly assisted the growth of western influence among the victims. The consequence of this Turkish policy was to force the oppressed and persecuted people, especially the minorities, to turn to the Western powers for protection from their rulers, on the one hand, and to help those powers establish their influence by imposing on various Christian sects their doctrines and forms of belief, on the other. They did so in response to the claims of those powers to be able to protect them, in particular the Christians of the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church.[23]

It is important to focus on the interrelations between the non-Turkish peoples and on the political effects of the strained relations between them as major factors assisting the Ottomans in their policy. The Ottomans callously exploited the conflicts between the various races and continuously encouraged the conflicting elements to carry through their policy.

We have to examine how those conflicts helped to destroy the political and administrative structure of the autonomous centres, among which were the independent Assyrian/Nestorian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari and the Jacobites of Tur Abdin. The Ottoman plan eventually succeeded in restoring the sultan's rule and supplanting all non-Turkish hereditary rulers.

4. Kurdish-Assyrian Relations Before the Era of Centralisation

As Sharaf Khan al Badlisi (شرف خان البدليسي), the oldest Kurdish historian, revealed, the Assyrians and the Kurds were two partners sharing the privilege of the common emirate of Hakkari and enjoying equal tribal rights. This state of affairs went back to the late fifteenth century,

when eastern Anatolia was dominated by the Turkoman dynasty of the White Sheep (*Ak Qoinlu*, 1469–1508). In his *Sharafnamah* (شرفنامة), Al Badlisi described in detail the cooperation and the role of the Assyrians in defending and determining the future of the emirate. He provided a particularly interesting account of the role of the 'Assori' (Assyrians, as they had been referred to by the Kurds, Persians, and Armenians—آسوري) tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari in installing the emir of Hakkari. He tells us how, when the Ak Qoinlu occupied the town of Dizza near the Persian border, killed the resident emir, and overran the district, the Assyrian tribes were able to liberate the place, defeating the invaders and installing Asad-ul Din Zen Jink (أسد الدين زين جنك), whom they brought back from his place of exile in Egypt to Tiyari. This liberation of Dizz was documented poetically in the Persian language, which seemingly was the common *lingua franca* among the Kurdish settlers in the district after Chaldiran 1514: 'On Saturday the deacon of the monastery pitched his tent [i.e., reclaimed his people's land]...'[24]

Relations between the Hakkari Kurds and the Assyrian tribes continued to rest on mutual understanding and recognizing each other's rights. Badger referred to the rights of the Assyrians in the emirate, including the right to participate in the election of its emir. On this subject he wrote,

> The emeer of Hakkari granted to the Nestorians the right of clanship, which freed them from tribute, and gave them a voice in the election of the emeer, and in all the councils of the tribes on condition that they supplied a certain contingent of armed men for the common defense of the state.[25]

These rights confirmed the Assyrians' rights in their ancestral homeland, including freedom from paying tribute or taxes and the right to participate in the election of the emir of Hakkari. It seems that from Chaldiran until the period under study, relations between the two parties rested on these principles, binding both parties together.[26]

When the territory surrounding the tribes' homeland came under Ottoman occupation after Chaldiran, the Ottoman victory affected both the ethnic and the religious conditions in the region. The Ottomans benefited

from their alliance with the Sunni Kurds during their struggle with their archenemy, the Shi'a Safavids. By planting the persecuted Kurdish Sunni from Persian Azerbaijan as a loyal Sunni human barrier along the newly won eastern border, the sultan secured the eastern frontier of the Ottoman Empire. This development produced dramatic changes in the ethnic and religious map of ancient Assyria and northern Mesopotamia. By a well-documented agreement between Sultan Selim I (1512–1520) and Mulla Idris al Badlisi, the newly settled Kurds in Assyria were freed from all commitments and were to enjoy autonomy in their administration on the condition that they acted as a guardian force for the eastern border. The arrangement freed the Ottomans to pursue their design to expand in Europe—a task that kept them busy for three successive centuries, advancing and retreating, without seeking an effective role in their Asiatic non-Turkish provinces.[27]

Assyrian-Kurdish Relations in the Emirate of Hakkari

When the Ottomans annexed the new territories of Assyria after Chaldiran, relations between the two parties were still based on mutual understanding of the need for cooperation and maintaining their freedom. This fostered workable relations between the Assyrian tribes and both the old groups and the newly well-organised and settled Kurds. However, after Chaldiran, the Kurdish presence in the region was continuously increased and consolidated.

As has been explained, after overthrowing the Safavid dynasty with effective help from the Kurds, Nadir Shah invaded Mesopotamia in 1743. He organised the Kurdish tribe of Baban on the border into an emirate and appointed its leader as head of Kurdistan. In the absence of any form of Ottoman government in northern Iraq, the occupation forces set the course of events according their own interest. Thus further Kurdish autonomous centres emerged in the regions of ancient Assyria. Unlike those that had emerged after 1514, these were more organised and directly supported politically and militarily by Persia, which left them alone as long as they served its interest. The senior centre was the border emirate of Baban. By this time, the pro-Persian Kurdish centres

had become consolidated. This served to strengthen the presence of those who had settled in the region during the anarchic centuries following Chaldiran, but these Kurdish settlements seem to have gained the acceptance of the independent tribes, owing to the confused conditions that prevailed throughout the region. When Rich recorded his observations in 1821, the Assyrians were still an important element in the affairs of the emirate. This was the status of the tribes until the Hakkari Kurds began to reverse it after 1831.

In 1840 Ainsworth reported during his visit that Patriarch Mar Shimun was acting as deputy for the emir during his absence. Ross informs us of similar practices, which were based on a mature understanding of the rights of both partners. He wrote,

> Mar Shimun, the Nestorians' Patriarch, lived at Kochanes in Hakkary territory, and had always seemed on good terms with the Meer of Julemerik, Noor Allah Bey. So much so that on one occasion, when Noor Allah went to Arzeroom to tender his allegiance to Hafiz Pasha, he delegated his authority to the Patriarch who administered the district until his return.[28]

In fact, the relations between the patriarch and the leaders of the Hakkari Kurds continued on a solid basis so long as the traditional accord remained in force. But this essential factor in maintaining good relations was completely reversed by Emir Noor Allah Beg, a change that coincided with the rapid Ottoman advance in eliminating the independent and autonomous centres surrounding Hakkari and their determined policy of imposing centralisation. There is no record to show that some Kurdish chieftains attempted to replace their friendly relations with the independent Assyrian tribes before Noor Allah Beg took the office of the joined emirate of Hakkari.

Endnotes

1. William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors, 1801–1922*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1923), 146–149; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) 24–39; Fisher, *The Middle East*, 297–298; Luke, *The Old Turkey and the New*, 25; British Naval Intelligence Division, *Geographical Handbook* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1942), 1:294; Sousa, *The Capitulatory Regime*, 97–99; David and Joan Oates, *The Rise of Civilization* (Oxford: Elsevier Phaidon, 1976), 27; J. Carlile McCoan, *Our New Protectorate: Turkey in Asia* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879), 2:116–117; Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia*, 1:167, 234, 332; Bruklman, *Tarikh al Shub al Islamiya*, 547–548, 558–560.
2. F.O. 95/113 Baghdad, May 1, 1833. Taylor to Canning; F.O. 195/113 Baghdad, July 29, 1833, Extract of a Letter to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bombay.
3. F.O. 195/113, Baghdad Feb. 15, 1833, Taylor to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bombay. On 1st May the resident reported that Ali Ridha Pasha had expressed his friendship and requested the Porte to offer Great Britain navigation concessions in the Euphrates River; see F.O. 195/ 113, Baghdad May 1, 1833, Taylor to the Chief of Secretary of the Government of Bombay; Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:294, 299–301; Fisher, *The Middle East*, 298.
4. Henry Layard gave an account of the reaction of the local people and their views on European penetration. In his *Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh*, he stated that 'the opinion of the *Qadi* [Judge] of Mosul is that the Frank had formed a design of buying up the whole of Turkey', 13.
5. Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 255; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 42.
6. Pitcher, *An Historical Geography*, 101–141; J. Joseph, *The Nestorians*, 37; Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 3–4; Abdul Aziz al Shannawi, *al Dawla al Othmaniya Dawlatun Muftra Aleha*, (Cairo, n.d.), 96–98.
7. Luke, *The Old Turkey and the New*, 8; Sir Wallis Budge, *By Nile and Tigris: A Narrative of Journeys in Egypt and Mesopotamia on Behalf of the British Museum Between the Years 1886 and 1913* (London: J. Murray), 1920), 2:47; Cutts, *Christianity Under the Crescent*, 80.

8. F.O.195/113, Baghdad July 24, 1833, Colonel Taylor to Chief Political Secretary, Government of Bombay; Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 2:47; Constance M. Alexander, *Baghdad in Bygone Days, From the Journals and Correspondence of Claudius Rich, Traveller, Artist, Linguist, Antiquary, and British Resident at Baghdad 1808–1821* (London: J. Murray, 1928), 72, 77, 137, 226, 243–244; Philips P. Graves, *Britain and Turkey* (London: Hutchinson & Vo. Ltd., 1941), 146.
9. Dr. Nawwar stated that the persecution and massacres of the Yazidis started in the reign of Sultan Sulaiman (1520–1560). *Tarikh al Iraq al Siyasi al Hadith* (Cairo, 1968), 1:101. During the seventeenth century, they were subject to widespread massacres; see Hassan Shumaysani, *Madinat Sinjar: Madinat Sinjar min al-Fth al-Arabi al-Islami Hattá al-Fath al-Uthmani* (Beirut, Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1983), 266–269. Further massacres were committed against them during 1749–1762; see al Karkukli, *Dawhat al Zawra*, 225–256; al Saigh, *Tarikh al Mosul*, 1:294, 307; Sami Said Ahmed, *al-Yazīdīyah, ahwāluhum wa-mu'-taqadātuhum*, 1:44 (Baghdad, 1971). For the dramatic fall in the numbers of the Yazidi population in their homeland, see Ma'amun Bega Beg, *Mothakirat*, 8–27; Nawwar, *Tarikh al Iraq*, 1:75; Fa'eq Beg, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 39–40.
10. Fa'eq Beg, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 38; al Karkukli, *Dawhat al Zawra*, 124–125, 245–246.
11. Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia*, 2:243–244; Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia*, 193, 221; Ali Sultan, *Tarikh Syria 1908–1918* (Damascus, 1987), 38.
12. Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 2:50–53. Hostility towards the Christian subjects was not limited to those in Mesopotamia and Assyria. In Syria and Lebanon, too, general massacres were also committed as part of majority reaction and opposition to the reforms. See Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 103–107. He also stated that despite the reforms, the Christians 'had still to pay the discriminatory poll-tax', 194.
13. Fa'eq Beg, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 55.
14. Longrigg and Stoakes, *Iraq*, 71; Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East*, 125–127; al Azzawi, *al Iraq Ben Ihtilalen*, 6:302.
15. Fisher, *The Middle East*, 152; H. M. Stationery Office, *Geographical Handbook*, 1:197; Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 31; al Azzawi, *Iraq bena Ihtilaleen*, 6:323–328.
16. Wayne S. Vucinich, *The Ottoman Empire: Its Record and Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1965), 153. Sulaiman Fa'eq Beg, a Turkish historian from Baghdad, refers to the threat posed by the independent centres

to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. See *Tarikh Baghdad*, 16; Longrigg and Stoakes, *Iraq*, 71; Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 170; al Azzawi, *Al Iraq*, 6:308–311; Nawwar, *Tarikh*, 1:22–23.

17. Helmuth von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1877), as quoted by Arshak Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan* (London: Harvill Press, 1948), 49–50.
18. Longrigg and Stoakes wrote that his 'first goals were to restore the authority of the central government in the virtually autonomous provinces of the Empire and to re-establish his hegemony over the machinery of administration'. *Iraq*, 2. See also Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 31; Nawwar, *Tarikh al Iraq*, 1:20; H. M. Stationery Office, *Geographical Handbook*, 1:294; Fisher, *The Middle East*, 276.
19. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Middle East*, 125–130.
20. F.O.78/2698, Erzeroom July 2, 1840, Brant to Palmerston; Fraser, *Travels*, 59; Smith and Dwight, *Armenia*, 218–219; American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 99–100; Maclean and Browne, *The Catholicos of the East*, 10; Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:209, 253; Rev. Père R. Janin, *The Separated Eastern Churches*, trans. C. P. Boylan (London: Sands & Co., 1933), 201.
21. F.O.78/210, Constantinople, May 17, 1832, Canning to Palmerston; F.O. 195/113, Baghdad, November 26, 1834, Colonel Taylor to the Secret Committee. Stevens, the British vice-consul at Samsoon, reported to Consul Suler that Ismael Pasha had lost Amadia for ever; see F.O. 78 /533, Samsoon, March 15, 1843, Stevens to Suler. Ma'oz stated that the Ottoman military power in Syria amounted to fifteen to twenty thousand men and in Arabistan, another fifteen thousand. *Ottoman Reform*, 45, 48; see also Nawwar, *Tarikh al Iraq*, 75. The missionary Thomas Laurie wrote, 'Baghdad was in commotion, so was Sulimanieh; and Turkish authority was very weak in the whole region'; see Grant, *The Nestorians*, 110–113; Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 265, 286; Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, 57. Ainsworth, in June 1840, found Turkish rule well established in Amadia. *Travels*, 2:199. See also Layard, *A Popular Account*, 20; Fisher, *The Middle East*, 277–278; Wilson, *Handbook*, 298.
22. F.O.195/113, Baghdad May 14, 1833, Taylor to Secret Committee; Taylor to British Minister in Constantinople. Fraser mentioned that Mir Koor of Rawanduz possessed an army of more than fifty thousand fighters. *Travels*, 64–67. Badger stated that if the Kurds ever united, they would represent a serious threat to Turkey. *The Nestorians*, 1:x.

23. F.O.195/113, Baghdad, November 26, 1834, Taylor to Canning; Graves, *Britain and Turkey*, 146; Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 200–208. A. Safrastian mentioned that many Kurdish leaders joined the Turkish campaign of subjection of the Kurdish centres in return for receiving the title of pasha, without mentioning that the hostilities among the leaders had been deeply rooted over a long period; see *Kurds and Kurdistan*, 50; Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East*, 126; Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 46–48; Alexander, *Baghdad in Bygone Days*, 243; al Azzawi, *Al Iraq*, 6:311; Nawwar, *Tarikh al Iraq*, 1:75; Munthir al Musili, *Al Hayat al Siyasiya wa al Hizbiya fi Kurdistan* (London, 1991), 232.
24. Al Bidlisi, *Sharafnama*, 91.
25. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:258–259.
26. Ibid.
27. Gibb and Bowen wrote, 'The Ottoman policy was to re-people the vacant lands with Kurds; ...This was to favour the Kurds, who had aided Selim against Ismail'. See *Islamic Society and the West*, 2:227.
28. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 64–65; Rich, *Narrative*, 1:275–276.

Chapter 9

Beirakdar and the Achievement of Centralisation

1. How the Ottomans Carried Through With Establishing Their Authority

As has been noted, the Ottoman officials cleverly exploited the rivalries between the various independent centres of power during the period when they were restoring and establishing their authority in Mesopotamia. The Yazidis of the Sinjar and *Shaikhan* districts were among the first to be subdued. During 1831 and 1833, they faced repeated fierce attacks by combined forces of the Turks, the Arab tribes of *Shammer*, and the Kurds under Mohammed Pasha 'Mir Koor' of Rawanduz; when Hafiz Pasha headed the northern campaign during 1834–1838, the people were fiercely attacked and slaughtered. Although all the non-Turkish population of the region suffered under the Ottoman campaign for centralisation, the

centres that were considered disaffected were the most targeted. Under these conditions, the minorities bore the brunt of the continual wars and destruction. Ali Ridha Pasha of Baghdad, Mohammed Ince Beirakdar of Mosul, and the former al Sadir al ahdam (Prime Grand Vizier—الأعظم الصدر) Rashid Pasha were particularly distinguished for their roles in restoring the sultan's authority. Both the Kurds under Mir Koor and the Arab tribes participated in the Ottoman campaign to eliminate the minorities, particularly the Syrians of Tur Abdin and the independent Assyrian tribes.[1] The British resident at Baghdad reported on the subject, stating that '[t]he *Jerbah* Arabs under their Shaikh *Safoog* [the famed Safoog al Faris], and aided by Yahyah Pasha of Mosul, are progressively reducing the Yazidi districts of Sinjar; the Rawandooz chief cooperates in these affairs'.[2]

The Rise of Beirakdar

Pursuing their policy of restoring the sultan's authority over the independent and autonomous non-Turkish ethnic and religious centres, the Ottomans in 1835 appointed Mohammed Ince Beirakdar as pasha for the vast pashalic of Mosul.

To appreciate the effects of the devastating policy that Beirakdar inflicted on all the subjects placed under his rule, and in particular his ill intentions towards the followers of the Church of the East along with other non-Muslim minorities, we need to understand his character and personality. Reliable contemporary sources provide us with precise information about him, including foreign diplomats, missionaries, travellers, and local inhabitants. Rassam, the British vice-consul at Mosul, wrote from his first-hand experience, 'I have no doubt from some experience of Mohammed Pasha's character, that [his conduct] is intended as an act of disrespect, ...and that it has an evasive style'.[3] Badger, who had many channels to the *sarai* (government court) of the Mosul pashalic, described him as '[a] man of cruel and grasping disposition and a perfect adept in intrigue and cunning'.[4] Southgate, who toured the region twice and resided in Mosul during Beirakdar's rule, wrote, 'The Pasha of Mosul is severe, but his rule is too exacting and oppressive upon

the property of his subjects'.[5] The local *mullah* in the city of Mosul expressed his opinion to J. Fletcher, saying that 'Mohammed Pasha is in one respect a just man; he robs Jews, Christians, and Moslems alike'.[6] Yet, paradoxically, the foreign missionaries and other westerners in the region mostly viewed Beirakdar's appointment as completely satisfactory, because his harsh rule produced a climate of 'law and order' in which they could work more effectively. According to Badger, '[W]hat gradually opened Coordistan to the researches of the travellers and to the labours of the Christian missionaries was the appointment of Mohammed Pasha surnamed Inje [Ince] Beirakdar to the government of Mosul Pashalic'.[7]

Beirakdar was in fact a perfect specimen of the corrupt Turkish official during the period of Ottoman decline, but in a sense, that made his appointment to rule the pashalic of Mosul a perfect fit: '[T]he Osmanlis, fully bent upon establishing Turkish rule over the whole Coordistan, found in Inje Beirakdar a fit instrument for effecting the object aimed at'.[8] At the same, however, he ruthlessly pursued his own aspirations for wealth and power. His character also reveals his clear perception of the political situation existing among the people he would successfully subdue. He was able to turn all the contradictory factors rooted among the people themselves to advantage for imposing Turkish rule on the non-Turkish population in the Mosul vilayet.

The city of Mosul, with its large Syriac-speaking Christian population,[9] was the first place to experience his qualities. He disarmed the city, punishing severely all who refused to surrender their weapons. At the same time, he put hundreds of the leading men to death and confiscated their property. This policy enabled him quickly to crush the power of the various rival factions. As one foreign observer noted, '[T]he city is now more completely under the authority of the Sultan than it has been for a century past'.[10]

Every field of economic life was heavily taxed and put under Beirakdar's direct monopoly, which severely drained the livelihoods of the people. Gradually he extended his policy to the surrounding regions of the pashalic where the intensive settlements of non-Muslim minorities were.

This policy of pacification, however, brought no relief to his subjects, because Beirakdar exploited his office to the limit and soon began to milk the resources of the whole pashalic. Each village and hamlet was taxed to the uttermost, until it was rendered as desolate by the tax gatherer as it ever had been by bandits. Whole villages fled from an unendurable oppression, but even flight was punished so severely that the miserable victims quickly learned to flee singly, and at night, as their only hope to escape. Everywhere in the plains round Mosul, in the valleys of Kurdistan, or among the hills of Mesopotamia were roofless houses and deserted fields. Beirakdar's campaigns made him notorious for introducing new methods of killing his victims. He was

> [f]amous for his vigorous effort to reduce to order the unruly tribes within the limits of his jurisdiction, as for his grasping ambitions, and the tyranny with which he oppresses all subjects of the Sultan placed under his immediate authority.[11]

Beirakdar lost no time in crushing the structure of the former national administration of Al Abdul Jaleel in Mosul and carefully followed his design to bring to order all semi-independent groups in the pashalic, including the Yazidis, the Arab tribes, the Kurds, and the independent Assyrians of Tiyari and Hakkari.[12] His cruelty revealed itself particularly in his dealings with the Yazidis: 'Several hundreds were totally massacred and the ears of a large number were cut off, and hung up before the gates of Mosul'.[13] Having thus strengthened his hold over the territories west of the Tigris in the region of Sinjar, he next turned towards the eastern territory, where other Yazidi settlements and the Chaldean towns and villages were spread over the fertile plains of Nineveh. He summoned all their leading figures to Mosul and executed them,[14] ruling the inhabitants with an iron fist.[15]

Then, in 1836 the Ottoman Turks scored further success when they crushed the power of Mir Koor, the Soran chief of Rawanduz. This could be considered as a turning point in the Ottoman plan for restoring the sultan's authority over the disaffected centres, among which Mir Koor was considered the most powerful chief.

2. The Ottomans' Continued Success in Carrying Through Their Policy of Centralisation

As has been mentioned, during the early decades of the nineteenth century, various competing Kurdish centres had emerged in the region. The competition between the Soran Kurds and Baban caused much internal feuding, which escalated into wars as each sought to impose its domination on the rest of the Kurdish tribes. Mohammed Beg of Rawanduz represents a typical example of the Kurdish leaders of this period.[16] He succeeded in crushing most of the surrounding Kurdish centres, notably Baban, Bahdinan, and Bohtan, as well as the Yazidis of *Shaikhan* and *Sinjar* and several Christian centres in the plain of Nineveh and Jazirah. During his domination in 1826–1836, he was the unchallenged leader and no other centre in the region could stand up to his power. Thus, in the words of Longrigg, he established an empire extending from Mardin to Persian Azerbaijan and was able to shake the power of many established dynasties, such as the Bahdinan Kurds, Bohtan, al Abdul Jaleel of Mosul (1727–1835), and, naturally, the Baban. The only regional centre to challenge his power successfully was that of the independent Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari. When in 1834 he tried to subdue them, he was humiliated and defeated in the battle, which took place on the banks of the Zab River near the village of Lezan, in the country of Lower Tiyari.[17]

His defeat led the Ottomans to reconsider their assessment of his exaggerated power and to form a plan for his immediate subjection. A little over a year later, Mohammed Rashid Pasha, the former *al Sadr al Adam* (الصدر الأعظم) who had been actively and successfully involved since 1834 in eliminating the autonomous centres in the upper regions of Mesopotamia, headed southward to Sinjar, the stronghold of the Yazidis. After a fierce attack, he took their stronghold and then headed to Rawanduz, where he was joined by other Ottoman forces under the pashas of Baghdad, Mosul, and *Erzeroom.* Many loyal Kurdish tribes joined forces with him in laying siege to Rawanduz in the summer of 1836, which eventually left the Soran leader Mohammed Pasha no alternative but

to surrender on Rai ve'Aman (safety of life) after most of his Kurdish supporters had abandoned him. He was sent to Constantinople, and on his way back to his native town of Rawanduz, he was killed by poison. Thus the emirate came to an end in 1836, and from 1850 a Turkish pasha appointed from Constantinople ruled the city of Sulaimaniyah as well.[18]

The Kurds' tendency to fight among themselves had always helped their enemies to subdue them, and now it played into the hands of the Ottomans, who used the *Khoshnaw* tribe, which abutted on Rawanduz, in their campaign against Mir Koor, who during his domination had persecuted that tribe and killed its leader. *Shaqlawa* was one of their centres, where the Assyrian majority had given way to the Kurds; by then, however, only three hundred persons were living in the town.[19]

The Ottomans' success in subduing the powerful emirate of Rawanduz was a decisive move for establishing their authority in northern Mesopotamia and Assyria. After that, steps were taken to extend Turkish rule to the remaining disaffected centres, among which were the already debilitated emirate of Bahdinan, whose power Mir Koor had been able to crush earlier. Still the most powerful centres were the Kurdish emirate of Bohtan under the leadership of Mir Saif al Din with Bedr Khan Beg as his assistant, the Kurdish (northeastern) section of the emirate of Hakkari under Noor Allah Beg, and the independent Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari. There were also other less significant centres in the region of the pashalic of Mosul, which the Turks had long sought to subdue.[20] The chief Turkish officials who carried out the campaign of centralisation in Mesopotamia were Ali Ridha Pasha of Baghdad and Beirakdar of Mosul, but Hafith Pasha of Erzeroom also assisted on several occasions.

The Emirate of Bahdinan and the Assyrian Tribes

The Kurdish emirate of Bahdinan could be considered the oldest one to last until 1842. During 1835–1842, Dr. Grant maintained close relations with its rulers, particularly Ismael Pasha of Amadia, and stated that they claimed to be the descendants of the Abbasid caliphs.[21] Some believe that Amadia is the ancient *Amat* mentioned in the Assyrian archives.

Both Imad ul Din Zanki in 1225 and Badr ul Din Lulu occupied Amadia, but in 1339 a leading individual of the competing groups prevailed under the name of Malik Khalil al Abbasi and established the Abbasid emirate of Bahdinan.[22] Mahfuth al Abbasi (محفوظ العباسي) affirmed that from 1339 until Beirakdar Pasha of Mosul occupied it in 1842, Amadia remained under the unbroken rule of the Abbasid dynasty, which the Assyrian tribe of Diz had assisted in installing as its emir.[23]

As a response to the rapid developments in the region, Mar Shimun seems to have sought the friendship, or at least the satisfaction, of the determined pasha of Mosul, while Beirakdar, in accordance with his general strategy, made several contacts with the patriarch to facilitate his own plan. However, the British diplomats in the region who monitored these developments observed that they had dire consequences for relations between Mar Shimun and Noor Allah, the chief of the Hakkari Kurds.[24] This development was only exacerbated by the activities of the American missionaries, who were supported in their labours among the tribes by Noor Allah Beg and the Ottoman officials.[25]

When Beirakdar took over the pashalic of Mosul in 1835, the emirate of Bahdinan formed the weakest link in the chain of centres that the Turks sought to bring under their rule. It also occupied a strategic location in relation to the homeland of the Assyrian independent tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari; its northern border formed the southern border of the Tiyari country, while its northwestern border marched with the southeastern border of the emirate of Bohtan, which shortly afterward emerged under Bedr Khan Beg as the most powerful Kurdish centre, succeeding Soran. The emirate of Bahdinan contained many settlements of Assyrians, both followers of the Church of the East and Catholics, particularly in the districts of Zakho, Amadia (*Sapna*), *Akra*, Zebar, and Dohuk, where there were many pre-Islamic monasteries and monuments.

Bahdinan was ruled by hereditary families and was officially under the jurisdiction of the pasha of Baghdad.[26] It was still weak from the many attacks of Mir Koor, of which the most devastating were those of 1831 and 1833. The scale of the destruction that he had inflicted on this Kurdish emirate can be gauged from the ease with which Beirakdar occupied

its capital Amadia. As is explained in more detail subsequently, he led the Turkish forces towards the town and easily neutralised Mar Shimun and his Assyrian troops, whom he had stationed along the approaching road. When Beirakdar found his way blocked by Assyrian fighters, he warned Mar Shimun to withdraw from the contest, otherwise he would be considered as fighting the sultan. Mar Shimun expressed his loyalty to the Porte and declared that he had no intention of fighting against the sultan. Accordingly, he withdrew his forces, who the next day returned to their homeland. Thus the Turkish forces easily occupied Amadia, which has ever since remained under Turkish rule, and its Kurdish ruler became a fugitive wandering among various Kurdish centres, hopelessly struggling to regain his lost authority. The territory of the emirate became an integral part of the Ottoman Turks' Asiatic dominions ruled by officials appointed from Constantinople. After finally settling its account with Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt in 1840, the Sublime Porte rewarded Beirakdar by placing the whole territory of Bahdinan under his direct rule.[27] This added further strength to what the Turks had already possessed in the region after the occupation of Rawanduz and Amadia and also further enhanced Beirakdar's power. Now the most powerful remaining centres for subjection were the independent Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari and the Kurdish emirate of Botan under the leadership of Bedr Khan Beg.

After several successful campaigns against the Yazidis and Arab tribes in the region, Beirakdar's next move was to concentrate his efforts on dealing directly with the remaining two independent centres. Among other measures, he placed a Turkish garrison in Amadia and stationed Turkish forces along the border between Tiyari and Berwar, bringing the Turkish military presence to the doorsteps of the Assyrian independent tribes for the first time in Ottoman history.[28]

As a further reward for his services, Beirakdar received the titular post of ruler of the territory of the emirate of Bohtan. This placed one of the most powerful Kurdish centres officially under his administration, and he was not slow to use his new authority to subdue the Assyrian tribes, who now were also encircled from the west. He officially informed Bedr

Khan of the Porte's *firman* (فرمان) annexing Bohtan to the pashalic of Mosul and demanded his submission to his authority.[29] Thus Beirakdar was very close to rallying more potential resources to deal with the warlike 'infidel' Assyrian tribes. These independent Christian tribes were the subject of discussion between Beirakdar and Dr. Grant, who requested protection from the pasha during his intended visit to Tiyari in the autumn of 1839. Beirakdar addressed the American missionary by saying,

> 'To the borders of their country' said the vigorous Pasha of Mosul 'I will be responsible for your safety; you may put gold upon your head, and you will have nothing to fear; but I warn you that I can protect you no farther. Those mountain infidels [Christians] acknowledge neither Pashas nor Kings, but from time immemorial every man has been his own king'.[30]

3. The Turkish Design for Subduing the Independent Assyrian Tribes

Having established their authority over the territories of Amadia, as well as many Arab tribes, and subduing the Yazidis, the Ottomans had come close to their final target of restoring their control over most of Mesopotamia and ancient Assyria. The Turks and Kurds promptly turned their attention to the remaining independent Assyrians, and the *Ra'aya* suffered further losses as the scene of warfare came closer to Tiyari. Dr. Grant gave an eyewitness account of the effect of these campaigns on the native Christian people:

> *Beth Garmae* (the region of Arbil-Kirkuk) appears to have once contained a large population of Nestorian Christians, as it is mentioned by Amrus and Elias of Damascus. The Nestorians are now reduced to a few scattered villages in the northern border of the district, and this fertile plain is still desolated by the savage war. Within the last six years the Koords of Ravandoos and Amadia have successively swept over it, and the present year the finishing stroke in its desolation has been given by the Turkish army under the Pashas of Mosul and Baghdad.[31]

The continual wars and attacks against the settlements of the followers of the Syriac-speaking churches had grave, far-reaching consequences, putting their very survival in jeopardy. As Dr. Grant continued,

> The ill-fated inhabitants sought shelters in the adjacent mountains during each successive storm; and when I passed a miserable remnant of them had just returned to repair their dilapidated dwellings, and prepare for approaching winter. In answer to our inquiries for food, some of them said they had not bread to eat themselves and begged us to supply their necessities.[32]

Similar accounts were given by many other contemporary westerners who witnessed the event of these years, such as the Anglican missionary G. Badger (1842–1844). He wrote on the fate of another region predominantly inhabited by Assyrians:

> There are many Christian villages still remaining in the *Supna*, the region of Amadia, but a great number have been destroyed within the last few years. Half a century ago all these villages were inhabited by Nestorians.[33]

Militarily, the independent Assyrian tribes formed the backbone of the Syriac-speaking Christians in the whole region. They acted as the counter weight, both ethnically and religiously, to the Muslim majority. With the loss of their independence, the Christians in the surrounding regions would also lose the support for their own continued existence,[34] and the last phase in the history of the relations between the Muslim majority and the Assyrian Christians in the region would take a different course. The power of the tribes was crushed soon after the subjection of Amadia, and they could no longer keep up their role of maintaining the ethnic and religious balance.

4. The Tribes After the Ottoman Occupation of Amadia

Having succeeded in eliminating the rule of Ismael Pasha, the Kurdish leader of Bahdinan, whose repeated attempts to regain his power ended

in failure, Beirakdar then turned his focus north towards the country of the independent Assyrian tribes. The fall of Amadia opened wide the way to Tiyari,[35] and to facilitate his plan, Beirakdar appointed the Kurdish leader Abdul Samad as *mutasalim* of the district of Berwar, who was famous for his enmity to the Assyrians and notorious for his oppression there. Rassam, the British diplomat at Mosul, reported on many occasions about the actions of Abdul Samad; for instance, he reported the killing of twenty shepherds from Tiyari and the capture of others, who were then sent to Mosul. Beirakdar ordered them imprisoned in a castle near Amadia until they paid to be set free.[36] After several further hostile acts, the enmity between the Kurds of Berwar and the Assyrians of Tiyari became so intense that Layard in 1846 found his Kurdish companion refusing to escort him any further towards Tiyari than Berwar.[37] Despite his preoccupation with the affairs of Amadia, Beirakdar continued submitting hostile reports to the Porte, portraying the Assyrians as the enemies of the sultan, a rebellious race who were acting against Ottoman interests. On the same lines, we are told by official sources that he asked Abdul Samad Beg to submit a detailed report about the building that Dr. Grant was erecting in Asheetha, the capital of Tiyari. His instructions were to impress upon the concerned Turkish high officials that the building was more like a military barrack than the missionary station for which the Assyrians were receiving financial aid from a 'European'.[38] On receiving the report, Beirakdar immediately sent it to the Porte.

The Political Role of the Missionaries

Meanwhile Dr. Grant, a member of the first American mission to Assyrians, became the first westerner to enter the tribes' country in the autumn of 1839. He came to play an active role in the internal affairs of many Asiatic regions, particularly the Ottoman Empire. He maintained strong relations with leading and influential individuals both there and in Persia, especially those who were closely connected with the Assyrian tribes, such as the Kurds and the Afshars. He was present at the controversial visit of Noor Allah to Persia and his meeting with twelve of the Kurdish leaders there in the presence of the Persian governor of Azerbaijan. Noor Allah greeted Grant with respect as an old friend and reaffirmed to

him his sincere friendship and his readiness to protect him, giving him permission to build his mission building in Tiyari.[39]

Grant became part of the modern history of the Assyrian tribes, both because his name was associated with the motives behind the Kurds' general massacres of 1843 and for his political role among both Assyrians and Kurds during his labours in the region from 1835 to 1844. Among the prime Kurdish and Turkish accusations against the tribes were that an 'Englishman' was building a castle in their country, which represented a threat to the sultan and the Muslims in general. Before Noor Allah Beg assumed the office of emir of Hakkari, there is no evidence to show the existence of enmity between the Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and their Hakkari Kurd partners in the emirate. On the contrary, relations were based on mutual understanding of the need to maintain the independence of the emirate and to respect it in running its affairs. These friendly relations, which lasted for centuries, were to start cracking with the advent of effective Ottoman authority in the surrounding regions and the cautious penetration of various western missionaries soon after 1831. Ross, a former British vice-consul who continued to live in Mosul during the period under study as a partner merchant to Rassam, wrote that relations between the two peoples changed dramatically after Dr. Grant visited Noor Allah Beg in the fall of 1839. The enmity between Noor Allah and the patriarch increased further when the issue of the independence of the emirate arose. 'An English individual' (actually the American missionary, Dr. Grant) compounded this, especially after a visit and private negotiation with the patriarch. What further inflamed relations between the Assyrian tribes and the Kurds was the competition and rivalry between Noor Allah and his cousin Sulaiman Beg, who was claiming the leadership of the emirate of Hakkari. Sulaiman Beg was openly supported by Mar Shimun, who undertook to install him as emir if he would recognise the independence of his people—a condition to which Sulaiman Beg gladly agreed.[40]

Noor Allah did not bend to his opponents, but instead sent a messenger to Mar Shimun, ordering him to pay the notorious *dhimmi* tax of *jizya*. According to Ross, on the advice of the tribal leaders and his

western friends, the patriarch refused. This took place while Dr. Grant was busy building his controversial 'castle' at a commanding strategic location overlooking the valley of Asheetha, which was the largest village of Tiyari, was considered the backbone of the Assyrian tribes' strength, and served as a capital for the region. The pasha of Mosul, on his part, had a stake in all that was going on, and among other measures, he was doing his best to stir up strife between the Assyrians and the Kurds by urging the patriarch not to yield to Noor Allah's demands. At the same time, however, Beirakdar was reporting all developments to the Porte, trying to portray the Assyrian tribes as rebellious troublemakers who would not recognise the sultan's authority. He reported that 'an Englishman' was building a large castle in their country using huge stones, with openings along the walls like those used by musketeers and capable of housing five thousand fighters. To all these accusations, Grant replied that he had secured permission to build his station in Asheetha from Noor Allah Beg, who had also provided him with protection.[41]

As the atmosphere between the Kurds and the Assyrian tribes became increasingly tense after the Amadia affair, and the enmity of Mar Shimun came to be openly discussed in the meetings among the concerned parties, especially the Kurds, Grant acted as the most prominent representative of the missionaries. He attended and actively participated in the general meeting chaired by Bedr Khan to discuss the plan to attack the tribes, which took place at Bedr Khan's headquarters in Dair Quli كلي (دير) on the eve of the massacres. Noor Allah Beg took advantage of the situation and applied to Bedr Khan Beg for military assistance to subdue the Assyrian tribes. Meanwhile the pasha of Mosul repeatedly declared his readiness to join forces with the Kurds for the same purpose.[42]

5. Hostilities With the Hakkari Kurds

In their efforts to subdue the Assyrian tribes, Noor Allah and his Hakkari Kurds employed every means at their disposal, including breaking their alliance with the sultan and giving their allegiance to the shah of Persia.[43] Noor Allah, however, then became alarmed by internal developments

among his own Hakkari Kurds, especially his rivalry with his cousin Sulaiman Beg. As the Turks advanced their program to establish their authority, Noor Allah found himself threatened, which obliged him to take a sharp turn towards submission to the sultan and cooperation in executing the plan of centralisation. Accordingly, when the heat of the Turkish operations reached Hakkari, he broke the historic coexistence that bound the Kurds with the Assyrians when he surrendered the independence of the emirate without consulting with the Assyrians as his legitimate partner. Even Sulaiman Beg, who claimed to be a descendant of the caliph Omar, headed the opposition party of Hakkari Kurds, and was supported by Mar Shimun, regarded Noor Allah's action as dishonourable. This development had grave consequences for the Assyrian independent tribes, since their support of Sulaiman Beg only increased Noor Allah's hostility towards them and accelerated his anti-Assyrian campaign. Meanwhile the Turkish pashas in the region were stirring up trouble and even openly supporting Noor Allah.

In the midst of these developments, certain *maliks* who were jealous of the patriarch's power turned against him and began to side with Noor Allah to counterbalance those Kurds who supported Sulaiman Beg against his rival. Encouraged by the strife among the Assyrians, on the one hand, and strengthened by active cooperation with the Turkish authority, on the other, Noor Allah took an openly hostile stand against Mar Shimun and his people. In this he was supported by the most powerful Kurdish leaders, in particular the Bohtan, Khan Mahmud, Abd ul Samad of the Berwar Kurds, and Ismael Pasha, the former leader of the Bahdinan Kurds.

This move was highly gratifying to the local Turkish authorities in the pashlics of Mosul, Erzeroom, and Diarbekir. Noor Allah made it to secure his own interests and privileges, hoping 'for an appointment under the Pasha of Erzeroom and to be officially recognised by the Sublime Porte'.[44] By doing so, he sought to destroy a powerful ethnic and religious group that represented an obstacle to Kurdish domination of the region, as well as to serve the Ottomans' intention to end the autonomy of all non-Turkish centres in the Asiatic provinces. The experiences

of Mohammed Pasha Mir Koor, Ismael Pasha, and others in earlier years had convinced him that he must strike first and avoid the fate of those other Kurdish leaders.

The Political Conditions

As has been mentioned, relations between the emir of Hakkari and Mar Shimun had rested on the emir's acceptance of the patriarch's de facto power. Like previous Kurdish rulers, Noor Allah was forced to accept the power of the Assyrians and to live with them, since he could not change the status quo with his own resources. This situation changed only when the Ottomans began to erode the independence of the ethnic and religious centres. The earliest sign of Noor Allah's changed outlook appeared when he felt the determination of the Turks to impose their central authority. This factor, combined with his strained relations with the Assyrians and their patriarch, led him to do everything in his power to subdue the Assyrians.

Meanwhile Beirakdar's policy was to exploit the differences and enmities between the various ethnic and religious groups and make them serve the general Turkish plan to establish the sultan's rule. Badger wrote that

> the Pasha [of Mosul] itched to have a finger in the affairs of Coordistan, and intrigued to widen the breach between the two contending parties, in hope that he himself would eventually succeed to the government of the mountains. I have in my possession the copies of twenty letters which he sent to Mar Shimun about this time of which show the exquisite cunning of his deep-laid schemes.[45]

Although Beirakdar's contacts with Mar Shimun and others were aimed at furthering the Ottoman plan of centralisation, they also had side effects in more than one direction. The first reaction to his plot came when Ismael Pasha of Amadia applied to Mar Shimun to support him in regaining his lost offices. As Ainsworth reported in 1840, Beirakdar had occupied Amadia and stationed a garrison of three hundred soldiers

there.[46] Ismael Pasha managed to rally his supporters, who helped him retake the castle, but his defiance only made Beirakdar more determined to expel him from office. Beirakdar's intentions were well known to the Kurdish-Assyrian united front, which resolved to reinstall Ismael and not allow the Turks to establish their direct rule in Amadia. So Mar Shimun responded according to the tribal customs and traditions that had prevailed among the Kurds and Assyrians alike: he led out three thousand Assyrian fighters and stationed them at Dawoodia, a strategic point between Dohuk and Amadia, to prevent the Turkish troops from advancing northeast to occupy Amadia and evict Ismael.

Beirakdar's action was fraught with far-reaching consequences. He realised that he could not challenge the power of the fighters of Tiyari and Hakkari, who in 1834 had inflicted a humiliating defeat upon Mir Koor of Rawanduz. Instead, Beirakdar resorted to political intrigue. He sent a message to Mar Shimun informing him

> that it was the intention of the Pasha of Mosul to take Amadia, and consequently, if the Nestorians followed up their design of re-installing Ismael Pasha in the government of the Province, they would be fighting against the Osmalis.[47]

Mar Shimun's position then became critical, since he was forced to choose between the sultan's authority and his Kurdish neighbours. In his predicament, he decided to take the sultan's side and replied to the pasha of Mosul, assuring him that 'they never wished to oppose the Sultan's authority and that as affairs had taken such a turn, he would contrive a scheme to withdraw from the contest'.[48]

These dramatic developments had far-reaching implications for the tribes' relations with both the Ottoman government and the Kurds, and called for swift resolve and action. The situation demanded profound knowledge of the *realpolitik* of the time, which the primitive Assyrian leadership simply did not possess. Mar Shimun and his tribal council of advisers could not comprehend the larger picture of the region and the pattern and scale of events, especially how the foreign powers were involved in helping the Ottomans to reestablish their authority over these

warlike autonomous centres. Rassam, the British vice-consul at Mosul, who was himself an ethnic Assyrian, further complicated the issue. Many Assyrians were misled by this and could not transcend their inherited tradition, which viewed all Christians as brothers; but, of course, most westerners no longer shared that attitude. The Assyrians misjudged their relations with the vice-consul and could not understand that he was representing the superpower of the time, which had a stake in the outcome of the Ottoman campaign of centralisation. Thus Mar Shimun was caught up in events that apparently he could not understand.[49] Foreign residents who rushed to the region were closely observing developments and stated that Rassam had prompted Mar Shimun's decision to abandon Ismael Pasha. He withdrew from the battle, giving some weak excuses, first to Dawoodiya and finally to *Aradan*, an Assyrian town which was a gateway to Tiyari.

If the Assyrian fighters had kept their position in Dawoodiya, Ismael Pasha might have kept his authority—and he understandably felt betrayed, since the Assyrians' sudden retreat enabled Beirakdar to occupy Amadia permanently. Their withdrawal ended the good relations that they had enjoyed with the Kurdish chieftains, and from then on, the Kurds reversed their policy of opposing the Ottomans to fight the Assyrian tribes; after 1842 the two peoples were sworn enemies.[50]

Inevitably, the winner was Beirakdar and his government; the losers were Mar Shimun and his independent people, and the Kurds, since both were targeted by the Turkish authority. Naturally enough, the Kurds viewed the withdrawal of the Assyrian forces from the contest as a betrayal, which gave their ambitious leaders the ammunition they needed to use against the Assyrian tribes. This merely sped up the pace of reshaping the ethnic map of emerging alliances, as the Kurds in both Turkey and Persia became eager to form a united front against the Assyrians.

Ismael Pasha did not blame his fellow Kurds for the loss of Amadia; on the contrary, he put the blame squarely on the Assyrians, apparently thinking that it was their responsibility to defend the emirate, not the Kurds'. Thus the issue of Amadia was added to his already

strained relations with the Hakkari Kurds under Noor Allah. This new development paved the way for all Kurdish elements in Turkey and Persia to sink their differences and unite against the Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari.

Noor Allah Beg of Hakkari also increased his hostility to Mar Shimun and took advantage of the isolated location of his residence to attack the village of Kochanis and to burn the patriarch's house.[51] After that, it was decided to move the patriarch's seat to Diz, where the tribe could offer him better protection.[52] Laurie reported that his family was living in poverty, as Dr. Grant also testified.[53] Badger wrote that if help were not immediately given to the Assyrian tribes, 'the outlaw Kurds' would soon subdue them. After Mar Shimun's house was burnt, the Anglican bishop Horatio Southgate mistakenly reported to Canning at Constantinople that a Kurdish leader had subdued the Nestorian tribes and that Mar Shimun had been detained. He added that the Catholic missionaries were anxious to bring the Nestorians under their control and urged the British government to oppose their attempts, because with Ottoman support, the Catholics would achieve that goal.[54]

The hostile attitude of Noor Allah Beg towards the Assyrian tribes was all Mar Shimun could bear, and accordingly he appealed to the pasha of Mosul for protection.[55] However, the Hakkari Kurdish leader only escalated his attacks and oppression against the tribes and their patriarch, among other acts, killing shepherds, taking away flocks of sheep, and seizing a merchant caravan of the Jello tribe.[56] Badger reported that Noor Allah Beg was continuing his attacks against the tribes and by 1842 had inflicted so much damage on them that they were almost broken and subjugated.[57] The hostility against the independent tribes was not limited to Hakkari Kurds but seemed to pervade both the Ottoman and the Persian Kurds throughout the region. On the border, Kurds were raiding Assyrian villages, which could not defend themselves, and their herds and flocks were being carried away, leaving only a grim future for the people. The Assyrians of Tekhoma and Jello were also attacked.[58]

Noor Allah's Weakness Exposed

Unlike his predecessors, Noor Allah showed consistent enmity towards the tribes. His attack on the patriarch's residence was one of a chain of many hostile acts. But his own forces were insufficient to subdue the tribes, and the deep division between his Hakkari Kurds and his cousin Sulaiman Beg further weakened his position. Accordingly he sought other ways to strengthen his position against Mar Shimun and his people, notably by begging the sultan to appoint him as his official in return for surrendering the independence of Hakkari. This move showed that he understood the Ottomans' determination to crush the independence of all non-Turkish centres, but apparently at the time, his offer did not fit with the Ottoman agenda. Hence in 1842 he turned for help to the Persians, proposing a united front against the Ottomans. The leaders of the new front met in *Charreh* near *Salamas* in the Persian territories, in the presence of twelve other Kurdish leaders; Dr. Grant was also among the participants. In this gathering, Noor Allah swore allegiance to the shah.[59] Noor Allah concluded that Bedr Khan, his brother-in-law, was the only one who could help him carry out his wishes.

Mar Shimun and the Westerners

Apparently Mar Shimun's attitude towards the Hakkari Kurds was once again influenced by the recommendations of western advisors. As a response to Noor Allah's hostile act, he ordered the demolition of the strategic bridge of Lezan on the Zab River, which joined Tiyari with Hakkari. Many regarded this action as a virtual declaration of war on Noor Allah Beg.[60] Mar Shimun only climbed further into the trap when he chose to side with the Ottoman authorities in their scheme to eliminate the autonomous centres. To show his loyalty, he led his fighters into the district of Berwar, to the south of Tiyari, and attacked Zaynal Beg, the Kurdish leader who shortly afterwards became commander-in-chief of Bedr Khan's army. British official records show that on 9 April 1843, Mar Shimun sent a message to Beirakdar and Rassam, seemingly as a gesture of goodwill and loyalty to the sultan, informing them that Bedr Khan Beg was actively preparing

to attack his country and his people. Meanwhile, to show his allegiance to the sultan, the patriarch affirmed that he and his people were not trouble-makers as they had been portrayed by their enemies and assured the pasha that he was keen to keep him informed of developments.

On 9 May 1843, shortly before the massacre began, Mar Shimun sent a further message to Beirakdar and Rassam, warning them of Bedr Khan's activities and his military preparations, in concert with Noor Allah Beg, to attack his people. Beirakdar found in Mar Shimun's message a golden opportunity to deepen the enmity and to arouse the hostility. He sent the patriarch's message on to Bedr Khan Beg, which of course only strengthened his determination to attack the Assyrians.[61]

The Ottomans' success in occupying Amadia in 1842 brought them directly to their next target and enabled them to station their army along the northern border of Berwar on the southern frontier of the country of Tiyari, where Beirakdar's jurisdiction ended. At the same time, Beirakdar both openly and secretly sowed conflict and hostility between the Assyrians and the Kurds, in particular those of Berwar and Bohtan, while he continued his agitation among the Hakkari Kurds.

Thus the Turkish authorities' attempt to impose centralisation on their Asiatic territories created many contradictory factors to influence events throughout the region. The Kurds also had their own calculations and designs regarding their future relations with their Syriac-speaking neighbours, whether they were followers of the Church of the East or Syrian Orthodox. This became clear during the early months of 1843 after the formation of the Kurdish confederation, with its aim of establishing an independent Kurdish entity and overthrowing Turkish rule. The fall of Amadia reversed the Kurds' attitude from opposing Turkish rule to fighting the Assyrian tribes. Ross explained the outcome of these developments when he wrote,

> Bedr Khan Beg has called a meeting of all the Koordish Chiefs, but whatever he may consider will be useless, for if necessary a corps of 40,000 regular troops can be brought to bear against him besides irregulars.[62]

6. The Kurdish Motive for Eliminating Assyrian Independence

In the eyes of the Kurds, the presence of the homeland of the Assyrian tribes in the midst of their own intensive settlements represented a serious challenge to their dominance of the region. Even those Kurds who were settled in northern Iraq after Chaldiran had failed to change the existing demographic distribution and the strategic location of the tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, which blocked the Kurds on the border from expanding further and prevented their settlements from forming a cohesive, homogenous ethnic block. The country of Tiyari and Hakkari formed an obstacle preventing the Kurds in Persian Azerbaijan from communicating with their countrymen in the regions west of Tiyari and similarly blocked the Kurds of Bahdinan to the south from communicating with those in Van and Erzeroom to the north. The Kurds' aspirations remained unfulfilled over many centuries during which they could not challenge the power of the tribes. But the conditions changed dramatically once the Ottomans initiated their policy of centralisation.

Those conditions resulted from the deeply entrenched hostility and conflict between the different races and religions. Mutual suspicion and hostility between the more powerful majorities added to the regional disorder, and the conflict was not limited to the regions surrounding the homeland of the Assyrian tribes. The Mamluks of Baghdad, for most of their history, were waging wars against the Arab tribes, the Yazidis, and the Kurds. The Kurds, for their part, were in continual war with the Mamluks of Baghdad, especially the Baban.[63] At the same time, they were at war with other Kurdish elements as they pressed for expansion. In the midst of such disorder, the minorities were to suffer greatly. Rich observed the anarchic conditions throughout the region during his journey from Baghdad to Constantinople and his return to his residency:

> The plains from the mountains of Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf and from Syria to Persia were like an ocean, and even in its calmness, a continual scene of depredation and violence. Kurds, Yazidis and Arabs all contributed their quota.[64]

7. BEDR KHAN BEG AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE KURDISH FEDERATION OF 1842 AND ITS GOALS

For reasons that the following developments reveal, the Ottomans left the emerging power of Bedr Khan Beg to gain momentum. The Kurdish leader received a free hand to consolidate his power and grasp over the region of Jazirah, including the district of Tur Abdin, the historic homeland of the Syriac-speaking followers of the Syrian Orthodox Church as well as the Chaldean sect. Following their successive defeats at the hands of Mir Koor and the former *al Sadr al Adham* (الصدر الأعظم السابق), Mohammed Rashid Pasha, Bedr Khan, and his supporters were forced to take refuge in the rugged and inaccessible mountains. After the elimination of the hostile Kurdish centre of Rawanduz in 1836 and the death of Mohammed Rashid Pasha in 1839, Bedr Khan returned from the mountains to Jazirah. He emerged as the most powerful leader to inherit the role of Mohammed Pasha of Rawanduz, filling the vacuum in the midst of the Kurdish movement in the region of ancient Assyria. The final chapter in the history of the emirates of Soran and Bahdinan enabled him to take advantage of the circumstances that were to emerge during and after Beirakdar's occupation of Amadia in 1842. In the autumn of 1842, the Kurdish leaders formed a united federation, which was mainly directed against the independent Assyrian tribes rather than their original Turkish oppressor.

Thus the Turkish presence and operations in the region surrounding the homeland of the independent Assyrian tribes produced a new alliance among the Kurdish centres. On the other hand, the Kurds' alliance with their Assyrian Christian neighbours, which had originally been formed to defend the autonomous status of the Kurds as well as the Assyrians and to fight Turkish attempts to crush their independence, had collapsed. Accordingly, the Turkish officials no longer treated Bedr Khan as a rebellious chief, as they had in 1840; instead, he received a free hand to consolidate his position in the neighbouring regions inhabited by the various Syriac-speaking sects. The Turks adopted this policy because

Bedr Khan maintained his enmity to the other disaffected centre of the Assyrian independent tribes, whom they viewed as disloyal to the sultan and were anxious to subdue to their rule.

The Turkish officials had assessed the emerging power of this ambitious Kurdish leader quite correctly, for he showed an extraordinary ambition to expand and enlarge his domain, particularly at the expense of the Christians. The Turks used the power of Bedr Khan and his Kurdish federation for their own benefit, all the while meaning to eliminate it once it had served their turn against the Assyrians. Beirakdar's success in implementing the sultan's plan for restoring his authority earned him credit and was highly rewarded.

ENDNOTES

1. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 228.
2. F.O. 195/113 Baghdad July 24, 1833, Taylor to British Minister in Constantinople.
3. F.O. 19/228 Mosul August 13, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
4. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:75–76.
5. Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 169.
6. Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 1:286–287.
7. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:x–xii.
8. Ibid., 1:xi–xii.
9. During the period under study, the Christian population of Mosul was estimated at 25–30 percent of the total. Badger, who resided in the city during the period, gave the following figures: Muslims, 2,050 houses; Christians, 1,100; Jews, 100. *The Nestorians*, 1:82.
10. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:74; Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 1:248–249.
11. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:126, 298; Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 1:187–189; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:74–75.
12. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:xii–xiii; Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 282–283.
13. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 1, 277–278; idem., *Popular Account*, 171–178, 196–198, 201–203. See also Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:75; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 205; Rich, *Narrative*, 1:124, 129.
14. Layard, *Popular Account*, 171–203. Badger reported that Beirakdar had lent the Turkish government £150,000. *The Nestorians*, 1:75.
15. F.O. 195/175, Erzeroom February 10, 1842, Brant to Canning; F.O. 195/228, Mosul, August 13, 1843, Rassam to Canning; F.O. 195/204, Mosul, November 21, 1842, Rassam to Col. Taylor in Baghdad; Layard, *Popular Account*, 113. J. Fletcher, who was residing at Mosul on the death of Beirakdar, stated that the inhabitants celebrated the event. *Notes From Nineveh*, 1:339.
16. Ali Ridha, the Turkish pasha of Baghdad, gave him the title of pasha in 1831 as a reward for his participation along with the Arab Jarba tribe and the Turkish army in subjecting the Yazidis of Sinjar.
17. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 262; Grant, *The Nestorians*, 46.
18. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:372.
19. Qurani, *Min Amman*, 123.
20. F.O. 195/175, Erzeroom, June 14, 1840, James Brant to Viscount Ponsonby.
21. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 37.
22. Al Abbasi, *Emarat Bahdinan*, 16–17.

23. Ibid., 25–26, 45. Abbas al Azzawi stated that the dynasty that ruled this emirate had claimed descent from the Abbasids since 740 AH (AD 1339). Nonetheless, like other historians, he affirmed its obscure history and stated that it had only come into existence during the invasion of Timur Lang (1393–1401) under the leadership of Amir Saif ul Din. They offered valuable services to the Ottomans during the reign of Selim I (1512–1520), who awarded them emirate of Arbil. See *Al Iraq Ben Ihtilalen*, appendix to vol. 1, 2:64–65.
24. F.O. 78/2699 Tabreez, September 5, 1846, Abbott to Palmerston.
25. Anderson, 1:209–215.
26. The territories of the emirate of Bahdinan in the nineteenth century included the land of the ancient Assyrian principality of Adiabene. See Grant, *The Nestorians*, 126–127.
27. F.O. 195/228 Mosul July 16, 1843, Rassam to Canning; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:xi–xii, 184.
28. F.O. 195/204. Mosul November 21, 1842, précis of intelligence received from Mosul. No 1, Col. Taylor, 24 February 1843; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:182–183; al Saigh, *Tarikh al Mosul*, 1:32.
29. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:183–186; Nawwar, *Tarikh al Iraq*, 1:266.
30. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 46. Rich, the British resident at Baghdad, observed the power of the Assyrian tribes during his residence at Mosul. He wrote on the Kurdish attitude towards their power: 'The Pasha has a country-house [at Solav, 5 km southwest of Amadia]...a strong guard is obliged to be kept, for fear of incursion from the Tiyari, an independent Christian tribe of the Chaldean nation, who are dreaded by all the Mahometans'. *Narrative*, 1:154.
31. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 35; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 292; Fa'eq, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 14, 167–170.
32. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 35; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 292.
33. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:200.
34. Cooke, *Baghdad Madinat al Salam*, 1:246–247.
35. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:75.
36. F.O. 78/2698 Erzeroom, August 16, 1841, Rassam to Canning.
37. Layard, *Popular Account*, 120.
38. In his report on Dr. Grant's building, Abdul ul Smed stated that 'an Englishman' was erecting a building that was more like a *Qal'a* (قلعة) than a missionary building. It measured 300 × 300 feet and contained 250 rooms able to house 5,000 fighters. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:187.
39. Anderson, *History*, 1:207–208.
40. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 203, 255; American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 206.

41. Grant, *The Nestorians*, 228, 314.
42. F.O. 78/533 Samsoon, March 5, 1843, Stevens to Consul H. Suler; extract from a private letter received from Dr. Grant.
43. Anderson, *History*, 1:207–208.
44. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:xi–xii.
45. Ibid., 1:279.
46. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 298; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:199, 211.
47. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:265.
48. Ibid.
49. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 255.
50. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:265.
51. Ibid., 1:264; American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 206; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 263.
52. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 237.
53. Ibid., 277.
54. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, January 27, 1842, Southgate to Canning.
55. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:248, 264.
56. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 242.
57. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:xii.
58. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 146, 230–231.
59. Anderson, *History*, 1:206–209.
60. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 61–66.
61. F.O. 195/204, Mosul, May 12, 1843, Rassam to Taylor the Political Resident at Baghdad.
62. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 46.
63. Fa'eq, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 46–47; Qurani, *Min Amman*, 162–163.
64. Constance, *Baghdad in Bygone Days*, 226, and on the general unsecured conditions in the country, see 72, 137.

Chapter 10

The Subjection of the Assyrian Tribes in 1843

1. The Subjection of the Independent Tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari

In 1838 Beirakdar started moving steadily towards implementing the sultan's plan to subdue the remaining disaffected elements in the region. He showed his intentions when he successfully quelled the rebellion of Mardin in 1839, which the pasha of Diarbekir had failed to do. He then quashed another rebellion in *Si'arat* in 1841. But his greatest triumph was yet to come. In that year, the Sublime Porte officially annexed the whole of the emirate of Bahdinan to the pashalic of Mosul, whereas until then it had had nominally belonged to the pashalic of Baghdad. As has been mentioned, this change in the administrative map of the region brought Beirakdar's jurisdiction directly to the southern border of the independent tribe of Tiyari.

The next year, another *firman* from the Porte also assigned the territories of the emirate of Bohtan (in the district of Jazirah) to the pashalic of Mosul. Now Beirakdar's jurisdiction extended to the western as well as the southern frontier of Tiyari. The importance of this second annexation could be seen in the existing conditions of this emirate. It had been among the first territories that the Ottomans had sought to subdue, and they had scored some success during the campaigns of *al-Sadr-al Adham* Mohammed Rashid Pasha in the upper and northern regions of Mesopotamia in 1834–1838. Clearly the Porte's order meant that the vast majority of the Syriac-speaking people in the region, whether Syrian Orthodox, Catholics, or followers of the Church of the East, came directly under the rule of the pasha of Mosul. The only exception was the independent tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, whom the ambitious pasha accordingly chose as his next target.

The earliest sign of the Turkish-Kurdish offensive against the tribes appeared in the cooperation between Beirakdar and his *Mutasalim* of Berwar, Abdul Samad Beg. In a report regarding the district of Berwar, Brant, the British consul at Erzeroom, bore witness to the extent of the cruelty and oppression practised against the Assyrians of the district or those of Tiyari who were obliged to cross to other provinces. Among other things, he mentioned that

> [t]he governor appointed to Berwar is Kurdish and is depriving the Tiyari tribe from pasturing in that district. He executed 20 of them and demanded payments from the others. The Pasha of Mosul demanded their presence in his office and sent them to be detained in the Castle of Amadia until they paid for their liberation. This state of the affairs led the Tiyari tribes to take revenge on the Berwar Kurds.[1]

2. BEDR KHAN BEG BEGINS THE MASSACRE

In June 1843, Bedr Khan Beg began attacking Assyrian isolated villages located on the road that led to the crossing of the Zab River, taking away their flocks and their household possessions. He succeeded in these raids because of the poor relations existing between the Assyrian tribes at

this time, which was an early test for the quality of their internal front. Nevertheless they maintained their traditional pride and confidence in their ability to defend themselves and were quite sure of their ability to counter any real threat posed by Bedr Khan and his Kurdish alliance. This strong conviction was noted by westerners living in their midst. It rested on their past experiences, in which they had always inflicted crushing and humiliating defeats on their enemies, as they had done most recently to the invading forces of Mir Koor in the summer of 1834. The people were convinced that no enemy could penetrate their inaccessible mountains.

However, this inherited confidence and feeling of strength among the Assyrian tribes failed when it was put to test during Bedr Khan's campaign in 1843. The tribes failed to respond to the patriarch's call to resort to arms to defend their homeland; when the Kurds began their assault, they met with no effective resistance. Consequently, the Kurdish attack gathered momentum and gave the Assyrian tribes no time even to assess what was going on or to gauge the size of the threat and the danger they were about to face. This situation obliged the patriarch to flee his country. In explaining the reasons for their defeat, they stated that they had not been defeated by man's power but by the Divine Power, which had sought to punish them and made them unable to rally to the cause to defend their homeland during the enemy attacks.[2]

On 15 July 1843, Dr. Grant reached Mosul from the country of the Tiyari, the largest and strongest of the independent Assyrian tribes. He announced that the Kurdish federation under Bedr Khan had started its invasion and massacres against the Nestorian tribes and intended to devastate their homeland. The next day, Rassam hastily reported to Sir Stratford Canning, the British ambassador to the Porte, bypassing his immediate supervisor, the British resident at Baghdad, on the grounds of the importance and urgency of the subject. According to the vice-consul,

> Dr. Grant arrived here yesterday from Tiyari, bringing with him intelligence that the united forces of Bedr Khan Beg and the Emeer of Hakkari had plundered the Nestorian Christians in the province of Diz, killing a great number of individuals, including

> two (some say five) brothers of Mar Shimon the Patriarch and took captive one of his sisters.[3]

He added that the Tiyari were daily expecting an attack on their own province, which, unless prevented, must inevitably lead to their complete overthrow and subjection.

Rassam also mentioned the role of Beirakdar, stating that provisions were continually being sent from Mosul

> to the Pasha's soldiers in the Berwari...[and] messengers are continually going and coming between Bedr Khan Beg and the Kurdish Emeer of Salamast included within the Persian Frontier... I have received correct information to the effect that the soldiers have left Amadiah and are at present on the confines of the boundary between this Pashalic and the Tiyari occupying a position which commands the latter country.

The report stated that Mahmood Khan had visited Bedr Khan Beg to secure his assistance against the Ottoman authority of Van. At the same time, intelligence from Persian Azerbaijan confirmed the ongoing contact and correspondence between the emir of *Salamas* and Bedr Khan Beg.[4]

Moreover, Rassam also reported that Beirakdar was vigorously strengthening his army on the southern border of Tiyari. This act seemed to be intended to block the victims and prevent them from escaping from the Kurdish forces, which were attacking them from all directions. Mar Shimun, with a few followers, had succeeded in escaping from the scene of the massacres and reached Mosul, where he had taken refuge at the British vice-consulate.[5]

From the early reports, it seems that the first target for destruction was the tribes in the district of Diz, where the patriarch resided after Noor Allah Beg had burnt his house in Kochanis in 1841. The attacking forces had easily crushed the unorganised resistance of a small force of fighters, who could not withstand the thrust of the Kurdish army and their modern weapons. Every structure on the surface of the earth had been destroyed: churches, villages, farms, and irrigation channels. According to Rassam's intelligence, Bedr Khan Beg and his troops had

not distinguished between the victims; all males had been slaughtered, while the women and young girls had been taken as captives to be sold as slaves.[6]

In his second report on 20 July, Rassam stated that the news arriving from the mountains confirmed his earlier report and that Tiyari was expecting an attack similar to the one directed against Diz.[7]

On 3 August, Rassam reported to Col. Taylor, the British political resident at Baghdad, that the Kurdish forces had succeeded in subduing the tribes. They had taken control of all remaining villages of Tiyari and 'still the slaughter is not yet ended, and several who have attempted to flee have been murdered in the Barwari province within the jurisdiction of Mohamed Pasha of Mosul'.[8] After devastating the district of Diz, the invaders had turned against the district of Tiyari, where they had succeeded in occupying the villages and indulged in the cruellest acts against its people. Even those who had not opposed the Kurdish invasion had been treated in the same way as the fighters. It was reported, too, that four or five members of Mar Shimun's own family had been slain, among them two of his brothers and his sister. The fate of the patriarch's mother, aged eighty-seven, was a horrifying one: her attacker abused her, and her body was then chopped into four pieces, put on a raft, and floated down the Zab, where it was intercepted at the village of *Chamba*, the centre of the district of the Upper Tiyari, with a note reading, 'Your son will have the same fate'. Again many women and young children were taken captive to be sold as slaves in Jazirah and elsewhere, and Rassam also reported the destruction and looting of churches, monasteries, and ritual books.

Following the subjection of Tiyari and the enslaving of large numbers of women, young girls, and boys, Bedr Khan Beg demanded from the survivors the following:

1. Each house must pay ten golden liras of twenty-one or twenty-three carats.
2. Each male capable of carrying a rifle should submit one (the usual age for bearing arms was fifteen years).

3. Besides the captives sent to Jazirah, a demand was made for a further one hundred girls and one hundred boys.

When he had succeeded in subduing the Assyrian tribes, Bedr Khan left with the captives and the booty, leaving an occupation force at Asheetha under the command of his lieutenant, Zenal Beg,[9] along with four hundred fighters stationed at the controversial building that Dr. Grant had erected at Asheetha. Having crushed the society of the Assyrian tribes and inflicted untold slaughter, Bedr Khan departed from the scene.[10]

3. THE KURDS' RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MASSACRE

The hostile intention of the Kurds towards the Assyrians was well known to British officials. On 27 January 1842, Canning wrote to the foreign secretary, Lord Aberdeen, informing him that

> intelligence has been received from Mossoul that the independent Nestorians of Kurdistan have been subdued by a Kurdish Bey of the vicinity acting in concert with the Turkish Pasha of Van and doubtless with the approbation of the Turkish government.[11]

Shortly after his report, he informed the Turkish minister about the attacks on the Assyrian Christian tribes and the damage inflicted on them.[12]

As early as January 1841, Canning had informed Aberdeen that a Kurdish leader living in the vicinity of Mosul had subdued the Christian tribes. At that time, the report had turned out to be incorrect, but this time it was true. On 17 August 1843, Canning wrote to Aberdeen again, informing him that the Kurdish chief had massacred the Nestorian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari under orders from the Turkish authorities.[13] He wrote, 'Bedr Khan Bey had destroyed and plundered Diz, the Kurds are in complete possession of the Tiarii district...And every species of cruelty practised upon the unresisting inhabitants'. At the same time, Canning also reported that 'the Kurds are in complete possession of the Tiarii districts'.[14]

Meanwhile Rassam wrote to Col. Taylor, informing him on several issues, among which were the plundering, the enslavement of captives, and the attitude of the pasha of Mosul towards British efforts to liberate the captives. At Rassam's suggestion, Taylor had asked the pasha of Baghdad to write to Beirakdar, requesting him to interfere with Bedr Khan to free the Nestorian captives, including the immediate release of the patriarch's relatives. However, when the vice-consul had submitted the pasha's letter to him, Beirakdar had refused to act, claiming,

> The pasha of Baghdad has entire control over Bedr Khan Beg. He himself ought to have sent directly to that chief and moreover affirmed that *Nejib Pasha* was himself concerned in the attack upon the Nestorians, and was aware of the proceedings of the Bey of Jazirah.[15]

On 21 August 1843, Abbott, the British consul at Tabreez, reported on the role of the Persian Kurds in the ongoing massacres. Among other things, he stated that the Kurds around Urmia were heading to the front to attack the Nestorian tribes and that the frontier military mission had informed him that Dr. Grant had arrived at Mosul announcing that a huge army was assembling and preparing to attack the Nestorians. He also mentioned that several Nestorian bishops had arrived recently at the place and informed him that the prime agitator for the attack from the Persian frontier was the 'Shaik'" of the Kurds of *Bradost*, a province west of Urmia. The Kurdish tribes were marching in large numbers directly to the Assyrian provinces of *Kawar* and Julamerk.[16] Canning assured Aberdeen that the Turkish government had participated in the massacre.[17]

The cruelty that the Kurdish forces practised during their occupation against the Assyrian civilians and victims was the subject of a series of further reports from Mosul. Rassam reported to Canning that on 1 September, he had received information that a group of Assyrian refugees who were fleeing their homes had been intercepted while crossing the district of Berwar. All were caught, and on the orders of Abdul Samad Beg, they were slaughtered, and their possessions, chiefly their clothes, were confiscated.[18]

Although many concerned Ottoman officials in the region admitted Turkish complicity in the massacres of the Assyrians, many others were quick to deny any involvement, especially those in high positions at the capital. Canning was among many British diplomats in the Ottoman Empire to point to several pashas in Mosul, Erzeroom, and elsewhere whom he believed to have taken part in the slaughter, but the pashas hastened to deny any involvement.

The strained and deteriorated situation in the country of the Assyrian Christian tribes kept Rassam on constant watch informing his superiors about the situation. On 31 October, he reported that the latest news from the mountain region had been brought by a fleeing fugitive from Tiyari, who had announced that the slaughter against the Christian Assyrians was continuing vigorously. Reports stated that Bedr Khan intended to attack the province of Chal, on the ground that its Kurdish inhabitants had stirred up the Assyrians to revolt against Zenal Beg and his forces stationed in the castle built by Dr. Grant.[19]

In a later dispatch, Abbott, the consul at Tabreez, also referred to the tragic state of the Assyrian Christians and attached to his dispatch the report of two American missionaries whom Bedr Khan had invited to visit him at his stronghold at Dair Kulli. He mentioned that in 1843 this Kurdish leader had invaded the country of the Christian tribes, bent on destroying them through a campaign of terror, in which large numbers had been killed and others taken captive to be sold as slaves.[20]

The Anglican missionary J. Fletcher observed the conditions on the eve of the general massacre and later its progress from his post at Mosul. He was well informed about the political conditions of his time and had ready access to both the British consulate and the *sari* of the pasha of Mosul. They affirmed that Bedr Khan, with Noor Allah, the leader of the Hakkari Kurds, and both the Turkish pashas of Mosul and Erzeroom, after they had finalised the last details of their plan to attack the Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, had sought a pretext to begin their assault and had stirred up the fighting between the Assyrian and Kurdish villages as the required spark.[21]

Brant, the consul at Erzeroom, also made inquires about the massacres and reported,

> On making inquiries of the Pasha as to the attack on the Nestorians, he informed me that it was not authorized by him, and that he had reproved Bedr Khan Bey for his conduct in attacking a district belonging to his Pashalic without the Pasha's authority. The Bey in excuse said that he did so at the instigation of Noor Allah Bey who represented to him that the Nestorians had committed a great many depredations on his people; that they had desecrated several mosques, and were about converting one into a Christian Church, and begging him to lend his assistance to punish such bad people, adding that if he refused, he should not regard him as a true Mussulman...Relative to the people captured, Bedr Khan Bey said that about two hundred were made prisoners, but that the whole had been released except thirty, who were secreted; that afterward, fifteen of them were found and restored to liberty, but the remainder were undiscovered. The Pasha sent a positive order that these also should be found, and sent to their homes. I may remark that all this information is from the principal aggressor, Bedr Khan Bey, but the last order of the Pasha, he sent by a person of his own who was to see it executed.[22]

Official Turkish participation with the Kurds in the massacres of the Assyrian tribes was attested throughout the region and also in western circles. It was reported that Bedr Khan had not initiated his massacres until he had got the green light from the Turkish authorities. According to well-informed British sources in Mosul,

> Bedr Khan sent to Mohammed Pasha, the Turkish Governor of the Pashalic of Mosul, and asked permission to punish the Christians. This was at once granted, for their power and reputed wealth had long aroused the jealousy and the cupidity of the Turks.[23]

The pasha of Erzeroom stated that Bedr Khan put the number of the Assyrian captives at two hundred, all of whom had been released except for thirty who were missing, and claimed that the search for their whereabouts was underway. Afterwards fifteen of them were found, but the fate of the others remained unknown. The pasha had sent an order to the Kurdish chief, urging him to find the rest and to return them to their homes. Brant noted to Canning that Bedr Khan, the aggressor, had himself provided the information he relayed.[24] Canning was clear in directing his

accusations: in a report to Aberdeen, he stated that the pashas of Erzeroom and Mosul and the Porte were all implicated in the massacres.[25]

Brant was closely monitoring the developments and wrote to the foreign secretary, forwarding the intelligence that he received, stating that messengers were continually going and coming between Beirakdar and Bedr Khan. Indications pointed towards Beirakdar, who was trying to deny the accusation and putting the blame on his fellow pasha of Erzeroom. However, Brant believed that Bedr Khan could never have begun his invasion and massacres unless he had received the consent and approval of the sultan and his government. To support his opinion, he informed Aberdeen that the pasha's share of the loot had recently arrived at Mosul and included 2,750 sheep and 50 bulls. According to the list prepared by Stevens and Rassam, the total value of the Assyrian losses was estimated at more than eight million piastres.[26]

The immediate result of Bedr Khan's success in subjugating the Nestorians would be to strengthen his position and enlarge his influence and sway.[27] Brant noted to Canning that the information that the pasha had provided had come from Bedr Khan himself and was probably incorrect, and went on to acquaint Canning with the Beg's character. According to the pasha of Erzeroom, he was participating with other Kurdish leaders in a movement for independence, and when he had been under the rule of the pasha of Mosul, he had resisted him and challenged his authority. Brant concluded, based on the evidence of Kamali Pasha, that Bedr Khan Beg would not have ventured to attack the Nestorians without orders from higher authority. Still, Brant told Canning, 'I doubt that Bedr Khan Bey is declaring his submission to the Turks. He will execute no action which is not beneficial personally to him'. Brant believed that Bedr Khan could not be subjugated except by a fierce military operation against his headquarters to subdue him completely to the rule of the sultan. As for Noor Allah, Brant mentioned that he had visited Erzeroom by invitation from Mohammed Rashid Pasha, where he had declared his complete submission to the sultan and agreed to pay fixed annual taxes to the Porte. He had gone away loaded with gifts and courtesy but had not kept his promise.[28]

Mar Shimun and Beirakdar

When Mar Shimun reached Mosul on 27 July 1843 and sought British protection,[29] Rassam accompanied him to meet with the pasha. In the meeting, the patriarch was clear in his demands as well as his commitments. He appealed to Beirakdar to use his authority to gain the release of the captives, to restore his people to their homeland, and to provide protection for them. In return, the patriarch and his people would submit their allegiance and loyalty to the sultan and his government. Beirakdar, however, had his own agenda: he made it clear to the patriarch that if he wanted him to interfere on his people's behalf, he should put himself under Beirakdar's authority. This demand was very sensitive for the relations of the Assyrian tribes with the Turkish officials in the region, especially the pasha of Erzeroom, who had nominal jurisdiction over their country. Rassam correctly noted the serious consequences of agreeing to such a proposal, since the homeland of the Assyrian tribes was nominally in the pashalic of Erzeroom. And if Beirakdar was right in identifying the pasha of Erzeroom as the one who had ordered Bedr Khan to attack the Assyrian tribes, then under his rule, the situation of Mar Shimun and his people would have become even more difficult and complicated.

However, Beirakdar seemed to be aware of the issue of the massacres and the far-reaching consequences of the plan to crush the power of the Assyrian tribes. He told Rassam that the Nestorian issue was one that only the Sublime Porte could deal with and that he personally could not interfere.

4. The Role of the American Missionaries in the Massacres

The followers of the Church of the East had been among the first to experience the Roman Catholic missionary labours, and the Catholic missionaries had succeeded in establishing themselves among the people almost a century earlier than the next wave of western Protestant missionaries who rushed to labour among them after 1831. However,

as we have seen, after the arrival of the American missionaries in the region in 1834, a dramatic change occurred in the relations of the tribes with their Kurdish neighbours. Until then, the relations between the two peoples had rested on mutual understanding of each party's rights, and a line of demarcation had been practically set, which neither side attempted to cross. The Kurds coexisted with the Christians who shared with them similar warlike habits; that was why the tribes had been able to enjoy their freedom and their independence for so long. The mountain Assyrians were considered by western observers and diplomats as a solid body that derived its strength from the internal unity between all the tribes and their unconditional loyalty to the patriarch, whom they recognised as civil and religious head of both church and state, over and above their local *maliks* and *rais*.

These conditions were put to the test shortly after the arrival of the western missionaries, in particular the Americans. According to Beirakdar, Dr. Grant, ever since his first visit to the country in the fall of 1839, had stirred up and created much hostility between the different tribes, on the one hand, and between the *maliks* and the patriarch, on the other. That the Americans went well beyond the bounds of their Christian mission was clear from the political activities that they were involved in before the massacre. Dr. Grant, during his stay in the region 1835–1844, made contacts with the Assyrian and Kurdish leaders, as well as the Afshars and other ethnic and religious elements in the region, and his political views regarding the state of independence that the Christian tribes enjoyed were well known to the concerned Kurdish leaders. These activities had nothing to do with the religious message by which the Americans justified their presence and activities in the region.

Brant reported to Canning on Grant's political activities on 13 November 1843, stating that Rev. C. Jackson had informed him of the contents of a message that he had received from Grant, who was then residing at Mosul, acquainting him with the patriarch's position on the following issues:

1. His willingness to declare his submission to the Sultan
2. They are willing to pay taxes

3. To allow them to return to their homeland
4. The Patriarch is asking the Pasha of Erzeroom to appoint a deputy to rule their country instead of the Kurdish invaders.

The consul presented the message to the Pasha, who told him that:

1. It would be in the best interest of the Nestorians to declare their submission to the Sultan.
2. The inaccessibility nature of their country, which was far away from Erzeroom, as well as lack of information, prevented him from appointing a deputy to govern them; taking into account that such measure would displease the Kurds, who would disapprove of it.
3. Nevertheless, the Pasha expressed his willingness to meet with the Patriarch to obtain from him precise and detailed information about his country and the necessary steps to be taken. Before doing that, he could not give any definite answer.[30]

Brant added that he had informed Jackson of the situation, who in turn had written to Dr. Grant. Furthermore, his own opinion was that if the patriarch went to Erzeroom, it would be advisable for Dr. Grant to go with him, because assurances given in the presence of a 'European' would be more reliable than any that the patriarch could get alone. Brant added that he suspected the pasha was not authorised to meet the patriarch's demands without referring them to the Porte. Therefore it might be better for the patriarch to travel to meet the sultan in person, and he hoped that Canning would provide him with a letter of recommendation.[31]

5. The Massacres Continue

Killing and destruction continued apace. Corpses lay everywhere. The surviving men and women were forced to carry unbearable loads of booty for very long distances, while being lashed all along the way until they fell from torture and exhaustion. Ross wrote, '[T]hey were tortured

in an awful manner to force them to expose what they call hidden treasures, while others were killing them just for entertainment and as sport and games'.[32]

The tribes were all but encircled and left with no safe route to escape the slaughter, yet people did attempt to flee. The most promising route lay towards the Chaldean villages in the plain of Nineveh, but it passed through the hostile Kurds of Berwar under their leader Abdul al Samad. Under his iron fist, one group after another was caught on the border of Tiyari or while trying to escape under cover of darkness. Rassam reported that those who tried to flee that way were caught and slaughtered. He further noted that this district was officially under Beirakdar's jurisdiction.[33]

6. ARMED REVOLT AT ASHEETHA, NOVEMBER 1843

Zenal Beg with his Kurdish force turned the country of Tiyari and Asheetha, its capital, into a laboratory for torture and persecution. These methods were first employed in the territory under his authority. The reaction of the people of Tiyari to his tyranny was inevitable after he and his troops had made the survivors' lives a living hell. The people found no escape except by inviting the invading force to kill them all. Secretly, however, they devised a plan to fight back and then staged a revolt. People from surrounding villages managed to penetrate Asheetha, where the Kurdish force under Zenal Beg had made its headquarters in the building put up by Dr. Grant, without being noticed. Meanwhile, as Zenal Beg was lying in the shade of a tree in front of the building, a thirteen-year-old Assyrian boy approached and shot him, giving him a minor wound. Zenal Beg, however, was able to stab the youth in his heart and hurried to the castle, while other Assyrians shot at him in vain. He found refuge among his four-hundred-strong force, to which the desperate revolting Assyrians then laid siege.

Despite their weakness from the first slaughter, the Assyrians managed to keep the Kurdish force under close siege in Dr. Grant's castle for nine days, depriving it of any supplies such as water and food. This

obliged Zenal Beg to bargain with them, offering to place himself in their hands as their guarantor in return for the badly needed supplies. The trick worked, for the inexperienced head of the revolt saw no reason why they should not let the Kurds get their needed water. In return, Zenal asked to have Deacon Mando put in his men's custody as a counter hostage. As soon as he arrived at the castle, the deacon was seized and put in chains and then killed once the Kurds and their leader had secured their needed water, which they brought from the fountain outside the castle. Meanwhile Zenal Beg managed to smuggle one of his men out at night to carry word to Bedr Khan Beg of what was taking place and to ask him to hasten to their aid.

When the Kurdish forces arrived at Asheetha, they initiated a mass indiscriminate slaughter of the inhabitants, males and females, old and young alike. We can begin to estimate the total number of victims once we appreciate that twenty-six thousand fighters with such orders carried out their mission—so how many must have perished? Layard, who visited the scene in 1846, gave a detailed and horrible account of what had occurred:

> It was near Lezan that occurred one of the most terrible incidents of the massacre;...we found ourselves at the foot of an almost perpendicular detritus of loose stones, terminated, about one thousand feet above us, by a wall of lofty rocks. Up this ascent we toiled for above an hour, sometimes clinging to small shrubs whose roots scarcely reached the scanty soil below; at others crawling on our hands and knees; crossing the gullies to secure a footing, or carried down by the stones which we put in motion as we advanced. We soon saw evidences of the slaughter. At first a solitary skull rolling down with the rubbish; then heaps of blanched bones; further up fragments of rotten garments. As we advanced, these remains became more frequent—skeletons, almost entire, still hung to the dwarf shrubs. I was soon compelled to renounce any attempt to count them. As we approached the wall of rock, the declivity became covered with bones, mingled with the long platted tresses of the women, shreds of discoloured linen, and well-worn shoes. There were skulls of all ages, from the child unborn to the toothless old man. We could not avoid treading on

> the bones as we advanced, and rolling them with the loose stones into the valley below. 'This is nothing,' exclaimed my guide, who observed me gazing with wonder on these miserable heaps; 'they are but the remains of those who were thrown from above, or sought to escape the sword by jumping from the rock. Follow me!' He sprang upon a ledge running along the precipice that rose before us, and clambered along the face of the mountain overhanging the Zab, now scarcely visible at our feet.[34]

Ismael Pasha and Abdul Samad of Berwar committed similar acts throughout Berwar. Those who escaped the sword and managed to flee the scene were obliged to cross the district of Berwar and fell easy victims to Abdul Samad.

What had been reported through diplomatic channels sheds little light on the scale of the cruelty and terror that had been practised against the inhabitants of Tiyari. Rassam was observing events from his near-by location and keeping daily records. The detailed reports of other diplomats and missionaries in the region also attest to acts of terror and sadism. In a report to Canning, Rassam mentioned the following:

1. Five children were thrown into the air to fall over the bayonet of a rifle.
2. Throwing people into the fire while they were alive.
3. Seven women threw themselves into a river while crossing the bridge with their young children tied to their backs to avoid the humiliation of slavery.
4. Breaking the captives' bones.

A missionary at Mosul declared that Timur Lang had not practised as much cruelty as Bedr Khan Beg and his followers.[35]

7. THE EFFECTS OF THE MASSACRES

For almost four years after the Kurdish invasion, none of the westerners in the region tried to visit the ravaged country of the Assyrian tribes.

No one was able to examine the scene of the massacres and the scale of the destruction inflicted on the people and their country. The only exception was the visit of Thomas Laurie, an American missionary and close friend of Dr. Grant, who, during his limited visit in 1844, enjoyed the protection of their friend, the Kurdish leader of Hakkari, Noor Allah Beg.

In 1846 and 1847, two British subjects with extensive experience and knowledge of the people and the region visited the scenes of the massacres and reported on the subject as eyewitnesses. Sir Henry Layard and the former vice-consul Henry Ross had both lived in Mosul for many years. Layard visited intensively the scenes of the massacres throughout the eastern provinces, while Ross visited the rest, mainly the Upper and Lower Tiyari. We have, therefore, eyewitness accounts of the devastation that the Assyrian tribes experienced, and they were still under the iron fist of the Kurdish occupation force during Layard's visit.

> It may be remembered that Bedr Khan Bey, in 1843, invaded the Tiyari districts, massacred in cold blood nearly 10,000 of their inhabitants, and carried away as slaves a large number of women and children. But it is, perhaps, not generally known, that the release of the greater part of the captives was obtained through the humane interference and generosity of Sir Stratford Canning, who prevailed upon the Porte to send a commissioner into Kurdistan for the purpose of inducing Bedr Khan Bey and other Kurdish chiefs to give up the slaves they had taken, and who advanced, himself, a considerable sum toward their liberation. Mar Rassam also obtained the release of many slaves, and maintained and clothed, at his own expense and for many months, not only the Nestorian Patriarch, who had taken refuge in Mosul, but many hundred Chaldeans who had escaped from the mountains.[36]

This was the scene of one of the many massacres committed upon the members of the Assyrian tribes. Layard's account could be used to estimate the number of the victims. As he reported in the passage quoted earlier, the site of the Lizan massacre was directly above the Zab River, and this explains how he could see the remains of the victims still rolling down to fall on the riverbank at the time of his visit in 1846.

Things had been in this state ever since July 1843, and the number of Assyrian fugitives killed could be reasonably assessed as a large one. Layard himself could catch only a glimpse of the Great Zab from the top of the overlooking mountain, but he could still see the heap of bones and remnants of the victims spread along the shore of the river.

The victims, as we are told by contemporary western eyewitnesses, were the inhabitants of Lizan and the surrounding villages, who had fled to this inaccessible mountain, taking refuge on the platform and on the rock above. They had thus hoped to escape the notice of the Kurds, or to be able to defend, against any numbers, a place almost inaccessible.

> Women and young children as well as men concealed themselves in a cliff which mountain goats could scarcely reach. Bedr Khan Beg had not taken long to discover their retreat; but being unable to force it, he had surrounded the place with his men and waited until they should be compelled to yield for shortage of water and food. The weather was hot and sultry. The fugitives had brought but small supplies of water and provisions; after three days their thirst began to fell on them and they offered to capitulate. The terms proposed by Bedr Khan Beg, and ratified by an oath on the Koran, were their lives on the surrender of their arms and property. The Kurds were then admitted to the platform. After they had disarmed their prisoners, they commenced an indiscriminate slaughter; when the became weary of using their weapons, they hurled the few survivors from the rocks into the Zab below... only one escaped.[37]

According to contemporary sources, the victims of the assault of 1843 numbered ten thousand. That figure, however, cannot represent the total victims of the attack, based on the details provided by eyewitnesses and those who carried statistics before and after the massacres.[38]

Endnotes

1. F.O. 78/2698 Erzeroom, August 16, 1841, Brant to Palmerston.
2. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 64–68.
3. F.O. 195/204 Mosul July 20, 1843, Rassam to Taylor; F.O. 195/228 Mosul July 29, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
4. F.O. 195/228 Mosul, July 16, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
5. Ibid.
6. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, July 29, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
7. F.O. 195/204, Mosul, July 20, 1843, Rassam to Taylor.
8. F.O. 195/204, Mosul, August 3, 1843, Rassam to Taylor.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. F.O. 78/2698 Constantinople, January 27, 1842, Canning to Aberdeen.
12. F.O. 78/2698 Constantinople, August 1, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
13. F.O. 78/2698 Constantinople, August 17, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
14. Ibid.
15. F.O. 194/204, Mosul, August 17, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
16. F.O. 78/2698, Tabreez, August 21, 1843, Abbott to Lt. Col. Williams.
17. F.O. 78/1698, Constantinople, September 5, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
18. F.O. 78/2698, Mosul, September 10, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
19. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, October 31, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
20. F.O. 78/2699, Tabreez, September 5, 1846, Abbott to Palmerston.
21. Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 2:322–324, 328.
22. F.O. 78/2698, Erzeroom, October 31, 1843, Brant to Canning.
23. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 33.
24. F.O. 195/227, Erzeroom, October 21, 1843, Brant to Canning.
25. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, September 5, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
26. F.O. 195/204, Mosul, August 17, 1843, Rassam to Taylor.
27. F.O. 195/227, Erzeroom, October 21, 1843, Brant to Aberdeen; Grant, *The Nestorians*, 358; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:276–277.
28. F.O. 195/227, Erzeroom, December 1, 1843, Brant to Canning.
29. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, July 29, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
30. F.O.195/227, Erzeroom, November 13, 1843, Brant to Canning.
31. Ibid.
32. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 64–68.
33. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, November 5, 1843, Rassam to Canning.

34. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 1:188–9.
35. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, October 31, 1843, Rassam to Canning; Fletcher, *Notes From Nineveh*, 1:325–326; American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 102–104; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 360–363; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:366–367.
36. Layard, *Popular Account*, 122, n. *; see also 134–135.
37. Ibid., 135.
38. Arafa, *The Kurds*, 23.

Chapter 11

Great Britain, the Ottomans, and the Assyrian Tragedy

1. The Kurdish Invasion and the Attitude of Great Britain

Great Britain was alarmed by Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798, which brought Mesopotamia under its direct concern and led it to act to secure its interests there. Accordingly Baghdad was chosen in 1802 as a centre for British diplomats in what was then known as Turkish Arabia. From then on, a series of capable representatives served to promote British influence throughout the region.[1] However, until the collapse of the Mamluk dynasty in 1831, Great Britain's role and influence in the three Iraqi vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra was very limited. It was only after the Turks established their rule in Baghdad in 1831 that Great Britain began to play an active role in the affairs of Mesopotamia, which lasted until 1876.

As was explained earlier, in 1835 the Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari became known to the outside world after the publication of Captain Geseney's comprehensive survey of the Euphrates.[2] Thereafter Great Britain, moved by its own interest, on the one hand, and the wish to compete with France, on the other, desired to secure its interests in Mesopotamia and the route of navigation to India. Establishing solid relations with the tribes was seen as the key to British influence in the whole region, since they served as a bridgehead into the Mesopotamian world. To that end, the Foreign Office dispatched Ainsworth and Rassam to establish contacts and relations with the Church of the East and Mar Shimun the patriarch in the summer of 1840.[3] This mission was followed in 1842 by that of George Badger and J. Fletcher.[4]

The earliest British report on the affairs of the tribes was sent to the Foreign Office by Sir Stratford Canning, the ambassador in Constantinople, immediately after Ainsworth's visit. There he informed his government of the recent subjection of the Assyrian independent tribes by a Kurdish leader in the vicinity of Mosul:

> Intelligences have been received from Mossoul that the Independent Nestorians of Kurdistan have been subdued by a Kurdish Beg of the vicinity, acting in concert with the Turkish Pasha of Van and doubtless with the approbation of the orders of the government.[5]

However, as we have seen, this news proved to be premature.

Great Britain's special interest in the independent Assyrian tribes was shown by the appointment of Rassam, the brother-in-law of George Badger, as vice-consul in Mosul. This appointment was designed to fit the new British approach to the region, since Rassam was highly qualified and was a native of the city who came from a prominent family. From then on, the Assyrian tribes could no longer maintain their old isolation. Europeans began to penetrate their homeland, particularly American and British missionaries. Thus in 1842, immediately after Ainsworth's return, Badger was dispatched with his companion Fletcher as envoys of the archbishop of Canterbury to the Assyrian

tribes. Badger was a particularly suitable choice, since he was Rassam's brother-in-law.

Badger's assignment was carefully supervised and directed by the Foreign Office. Instructions were sent to Canning to assist Badger in his mission to Assyrians, with a memorandum of instruction to Badger on his departure to Kurdistan mentioning:

> It appears from a communication which has just been made to me by the Archbishop of Canterbury that Reverend George Percy Badger has been selected by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for the proposed mission to the Nestorian Christian Church... Caution him as to his proceeding; and to warn Mr. Rassam not to mix himself in proselytism.[6]

2. Great Britain Expresses Its Concern on the Assyrian Question

While Badger was at Mosul, the Assyrian tribes that he had come to help and to establish firm relations with were subject to the Kurdish invasion and massacre. Thus the newly established relations were overshadowed by the tragedy, which, however, gave Great Britain a further opportunity to establish its presence and influence among the tribes, which resulted in rooting that influence. In doing so, Great Britain was assisted by its advanced position at the Porte and its influence over the sultan and his government as protector of the ailing empire. The Turkish government took advantage of Great Britain's support, while at the same time, it tried to justify Bedr Khan Beg's action against the Assyrian tribes.

3. British Efforts to Free the Captives

The new British-Assyrian friendship was put to the test for the first time during and after the massacres. The records of the events from the summer of 1843 to 1847 are full of British involvement in the affairs of the victims. Although there were other outstanding issues related to the

Assyrian crisis, the issues of the captives and liberating their homeland were to remain pressing ones occupying much British diplomatic activity. Thus the events after July 1843 produced many issues, which badly required British assistance and support. Among the most pressing were the evacuation of the invading forces from Tiyari and Hakkari; the release of the captives, who were considered as slaves and were sold in large numbers throughout the Middle East; and, last but not least, the return of the loot, which represented all the people's possessions.

Rassam was the first to initiate the process of demanding the release of the captives. He informed Canning that Bedr Khan and his supporters were still holding many of the victims. The British resident at Baghdad was also acquainted with the subject and had asked him to use his good offices with Najib Pasha of Baghdad to secure freedom for the largest group of the captives, which included the immediate relatives of the patriarch. In his request, Rassam hoped that Najib Pasha would ask Beirakdar to send an envoy to Bedr Khan Beg asking him to release the captives immediately and send them to Mosul.[7]

Najib Pasha responded positively to the request, and Colonel Taylor then wrote to Beirakdar, asking him to intervene. Beirakdar's reply was astonishing: on the one hand, he politely informed Rassam that Najib Pasha ought to ask Bedr Khan Beg himself to release the captives, because he had a great influence on him; on the other, he declared that Najib Pasha had been deeply involved in the massacre of the tribes and that he himself could not act unless he was authorised by Najib. Nevertheless Beirakdar made it clear that if any one wanted to facilitate this matter, then the pashas of Baghdad and Erzeroom were the Turkish officials most directly concerned.

Canning wrote to Rassam, expressing to him the opinion of Her Majesty's Government regarding the whole issue of the Assyrian tribes. He also acquainted him with the contacts that he had made with the Turkish foreign minister to relieve the victims, stating that

> His Excellency the minister for foreign affairs has listened with interest to my suggestions respecting the precarious state of the

> Nestorians...the Porte has promised to write in a suitable sense to the Pasha of Mosul. This promise I believe His Excellency has already executed and though his intended instructions should not arrive at time to prevent the attack, it is to be hoped that they will have the effect of giving a proper direction henceforward to the Pasha.

However, the pasha of Mosul had categorically stated 'that he had received no order whatsoever from his government' regarding the liberation of the captives.[8]

The Assyrian issue had become bound up with the Turkish attitude towards Bedr Khan Beg. Canning observed that his power must be eliminated and that to secure peace and tranquillity for the Christians required an action against him that could reduce him to obedience to the Porte.

One of the channels through Rassam who sought help to free the Assyrian captives was Ismael Pasha, the former chief of Amadia, who had himself vigorously participated in the massacres. Ismael Pasha was in debt to the British consul, who had offered protection and refuge to his family during his years of conflict with Beirakdar over the emirate of Amadia, and his amply rewarded efforts resulted in freeing some of the captives, including the patriarch's sister. Meanwhile Rassam's envoy to Jazirah reported to him that 125 captives had reached that town just before his departure, comprising women and children who were about to be sold as slaves or given as presents to mullahs, Turkish officials, and the close friends and allies of Bedr Khan Beg. The source further stated that among those who were already distributed was 1 child to the emir of Sherwan, 4 others to Zandi Oghlu, and 8 ladies destined for the mullahs, the followers of Bedr Khan.[9] On his way to Mosul, the French consul also saw the miserable state of these Christian captives. Meanwhile Bedr Khan Beg left the scene of the massacres and reached Jazirah with a large number of the captives. Rassam reported that Bedr Khan had ordered the survivors to give up to him 100 young men and as many young women, 'for what purpose does not appear', and had also demanded ten *ghazis* (gold liras) of twenty-one or twenty-three carats from every household as

a general fine upon the Christians, and a musket from every man capable of bearing arms.[10]

4. MAR SHIMUN AS A REFUGEE AT MOSUL

At this early stage, Canning sympathised with Mar Shimun's desire to return to his homeland enjoying limited privileges under Turkish sovereignty.[11] When Bedr Khan Beg had attacked the district of Diz, Mar Shimun, with a few of his followers, had succeeded in fleeing the scene of the massacre and headed to Mosul. On arriving on 29 July, he had taken refuge at the British vice-consulate.[12] After his arrival, he appealed to Canning at Constantinople, placing himself and his nation under the protection of Her Majesty's Government. In his appeal, he stressed the need for assistance for him and his people to return to their homeland and the removal of the occupying Kurdish forces. He also asked Canning to use his good offices to free the large number of captives and to get back the loot that Bedr Khan had carried away, which represented all the tribes' possessions.

Rassam repeatedly reminded Canning that Mar Shimun had thrown himself and his nation on the protection of Her Majesty's Government. He begged Canning to provide him with instructions on how to secure their right to return to their homeland. He further asserted that Mar Shimun was willing to make his submission to the sultan and had shown himself willing to go to Constantinople if the ambassador guaranteed his safety. The patriarch was also begging him to advocate their case with the Porte and urging him to interfere to free the captives and have them returned to their homes.[13]

The British ambassador was the Assyrian tribes' only advocate in their tragedy. He intervened on several levels, which eventually made Great Britain a major party in the whole issue. Among other matters, Canning was also pressing the sultan's government to take measures to resolve the issue within the general framework of the Turkish policy of centralisation. Thus it was the ambassador's involvement that succeeded in getting the Porte to dispatch a delegation to Mosul to inquire into the

issue of the tribes and the emerging power of Bedr Khan Beg. Canning considered the affair an appropriate opportunity for Great Britain to get an effective role in the region, while also using it to put pressure on the sultan's government that would serve the interest of his own homeland.

Naturally, Canning's conduct was a reflection of the official policy of his government, and accordingly his actions were always approved by the Foreign Office:

> HMG, share in the regret expressed by your Excellency in your dispatch 69 of 1st August...As to the attack on the Nestorian Christians near Mosul by some Kurdish tribes; and in which I convey to your Excellency the approval of your having called the attention of the Porte to the dangers by which the Christians were menaced. I have to instruct your Excellency to state to the Turkish ministers:
>
> H.M.G. expect that the Porte will issue preceptory orders to the Pasha of Mosul to use the most energetic measures for the preservation of the Christians within his district from a repetition of like outrages, which you will point out to the Porte cannot fail to produce a most painful and unfavourable impression on all Christian Nations.[14]

Cunning's efforts convinced the Porte to send a delegation of inquiry to Mosul headed by Kemal Effendi. This move coincided with the appointment of a new pasha for Mosul to succeed the deceased Mohammed Ince Beirakdar. Canning reported to Lord Aberdeen, stating,

> I have availed myself of the departure of the newly appointed Pasha for Moussoul to promote the interest of the Nestorian tribes by recommending their affairs to his special attention, and engaging Rifaat Pasha to furnish him with instruction of a corresponding tenor. I have particularly urged him to exert his authority for the more complete execution of the *Firmans* already sent down for the recovery of the Slaves and if possible of the property destroyed or plundered in the late incursion. I have further solicited his good offices to deter Bedr Khan Bey from the design imputed to him of attacking the district inhabited by the Jacobites...in the spring.[15]

The efforts and intervention of the British ambassador appear to have produced results. In a dispatch to the Foreign Office, he announced that the Turkish Chamber of Ministers had decided to respond to his appeal and send a delegation to Mosul headed by Kemal Effendi to investigate the Nestorian issue and to contact both Mar Shimun and Bedr Khan Beg. He expressed his wishes to meet the sultan's envoy, and

> [i]nsisting upon the restitution of the Nestorian prisoners, and laying the foundation of friendly understanding with that chief and the eventual withdrawal of his forces from the Nestorian country...to affect the liberation of the Nestorians and the settlement of their relations with the Porte.

The ambassador, however, reflected the policy of his government towards the whole issue of the Assyrian tribes, which in part was to support the Turkish government and to assist in establishing centralisation and the firm rule of the sultan, and also noted the limit of his influence with the Ottoman government:

> I do not despair of being able into the end to effect an arrangement between the Porte and the Patriarch, sufficient to establish the Sultan's authority and to secure an independent land administration for the Turkish Nestorians under the civil as well as spiritual guidance of Mar Shimon.[16]

The direct intervention of Canning in the Assyrian issue secured the participation of Stevens, the vice-consul at Samsoon, in any discussion or meeting with the sultan's envoy to inquire into the affair of the Assyrian tribes, which gave Stevens effective access to Bedr Khan Beg and Mar Shimun alike. In this way, Britain became a prime player in all the affairs of the region. This state of affairs continued until the final disaffected centre of the emirate of Bohtan under Bedr Khan Beg was subdued in July 1847. Throughout the whole operation and development, both the Assyrians and the Kurds were convinced that Great Britain was the only great power able to influence the outcome of the issue. This conviction rested on experience of the British role in the affair of Mohammed

Ali Pasha of Egypt, which had revealed the extent of the protection that Britain could offer the Ottoman Empire to avert its final collapse.

Canning's Instructions to Stevens on His Mission to Mosul

On 21 December 1843, the first British action in the affair of the Assyrian tribes was taken when Canning issued his instructions to Stevens to leave his post at Samsoon and go to Mosul. There he was to join Kemal Effendi, the sultan's envoy, and try to open a line of communications with Bedr Khan Beg. The ambassador defined Stevens' new mission by informing him that

> Kemal Effendi embarks tomorrow for Mossoul with the intention to going on to Diarbekir, and after staying there some weeks, to Mossoul. I have appraised him of your going to Moossul and of the interest which you would be directed to take in the objects, as far as they are known to me, of his mission. The person whom I sent to him assures me that he expressed his satisfaction at the prospect of advantage to be derived from your society and assistance and proposed of his own accord that you should travel with him to Diarbekir, and he is under an impression that you have other motives for motives for your journey than what relate to him.

Canning was keen to have his vice-consul gain the confidence of the sultan's envoy without drawing his attention. He acquainted him with Porte's instructions. The prime purpose of Kemal Effendi's mission was

> to obtain from Bedr Khan Beg, and perhaps from the chief of Hakkari Kurds, the restitution of all persons taken as slaves and of all property plundered from the Nestorian Christians in the late incursion on their country; to stop the effusion of blood; and to feel the way toward effecting some permanent arrangement as well with the chiefs as with the Nestorian Patriarch, Mar Shimun, who on fleeing from his country sought refuge with Mr. Rassam at Mosul. However, Her Majesty's government desire in particular that nothing should be omitted to give the earliest and fullest

> effect possible to the Porte's Instructions for accomplishing the more immediate objects of the Sultan's envoy.

Thus Canning hoped that by joining Stevens' efforts with those of Kemal Effendi, and by employing his advice and good offices to keep him steady to that purpose, 'you may hasten the period of relief and effect the termination of sufferings which have already lasted too long'.[17]

Once Stevens was assigned to deal with the Assyrian issue, the role of vice-consul Rassam was limited if not eliminated. The ambassador's orders were as follows:

> By communicating with Mr. Rassam and possibly by taking part in the communications with Bedr Khan Bey you may find the means of advocating this benevolent work, through I must leave the latter suggestions to your own judgment and the information to be acquired on the spot.

As for Bedr Khan Beg, Canning was keen to establish contacts with him, even though, in his view, the British diplomats could not to

> any degree answer for the disposition of Bedr Khan Bey either towards the Porte or towards Great Britain. The main object of the Porte must naturally be to establish her own authority and we cannot reckon on her being too scrupulous in the means employed for that purpose.

As for 'Mar Shimun and the Nestorians who look up to him as the spiritual and I believe, their civil chief, the Porte advances a claim to their allegiance and consequently to the payment of tribute from them'.

As Canning stated, Great Britain's attitude was that it would be agreeable to:

> Her Majesty's government to see tranquillity established among the Koordish Tribes by the intervention of a regular authority... Nor can I doubt that the Nestorians would greatly improve their position by obtaining Turkish protection and the benefits of an acknowledged separate administration by the payment of a fixed and moderate tribute.

On the tragedy of the Assyrian tribes and their patriarch, the ambassador stated,

> I have reason to believe and I may so state it to you confidentially that Mar Shimon is disposed to consent, and I would willingly afford him every assistance of a confidential character to obtain an arrangement on these terms. But as the Porte has not yet evinced more than a general indication to consider him with favour, and evidently seeks to treat with him directly.

Although, after his arrival at Mosul, the patriarch had declared that he was putting himself and his people under the protection of Great Britain and hoped that that would release them from their tragedy, the ambassador cautioned,

> I have thought it best to abstain from making any special offer on the part of the Patriarch, and to leave him master of his own terms and conduct, should Kemal Effendi be authorized, as I am assured he is, to communicate with him on his arrival at Mossoul.[18]

His opinion was based on the situation that was rapidly developing in the country of the Assyrian tribes and in other hot spots in the Ottoman Asiatic territories. He laid out the line of conduct that his envoy should follow towards the concerned parties in the whole matter of Assyrian-Kurdish relations by saying,

> Considerations of personal safety arising out of the state of the country, or Bedr Khan's actual disposition, must be left to your own discretion. Admitted to the person of that chief, you will be careful not to encourage him in cherishing any pretensions inconsistent with his duty to the Sultan, or in forming any expectations which might terminate in disappointment to him, or in embarrassment to us. I wish him to be convinced of our friendly disposition toward him. He may find in that conviction a motive for treating his Christian neighbours with humanity, and good will. If you can prevail upon him, to give up the small remnant of the slaves retained in his possession, you will complete the work of Christian benevolence, which you have already prosecuted with so much credit and success.[19]

Thus Stevens headed to Mosul, joining Kamali Effendi en route, and together they opened a new chapter in the affairs of the Assyrian tribes. Britain expressed to the Turkish government its concern about the well being of its Assyrian fellow Christians, denounced their persecution, and demanded their protection. The Porte's attention was called to Britain's humane treatment of the Muslims under her direct rule in India, which the Turks were urged to follow. The Foreign Office asked the ambassador to exert pressure on the sultan's government and to make it clear that the continuance of British support to the Turks depended on their good treatment of their Christian subjects.[20]

The Mission of Kemal Effendi and Stevens

Stevens began his mission in Mosul by establishing early contacts with the patriarch Mar Shimun as well as with Bedr Khan Beg and other concerned parties. From his new location, he began to carry out his new duty of dealing with the Assyrian crisis and enabling Great Britain to play a major role in the general affairs of the region. Accordingly he wrote to Canning informing him of his efforts to liberate the captives as being the most pressing issue.

In his first report, Stevens wrote that Rassam had succeeded in liberating sixty of the captives and that there were some five hundred more in al Jazirah where Bedr Khan Beg lived. Those were over and above the ones sold as slaves in distant places such as Baghdad, Diarbekir, and Aleppo. Kemal Effendi's efforts had helped to free some of the captives held in Bedr Khan's headquarters and surrounding locations, and he hoped that Kemal Effendi would manage to free some more who were held in regions under Bedr Khan's control.[21] He further acquainted Canning with his activities, stating,

> I had received no answer from Diarbekir to an application I addressed him regarding the Nestorian slaves in that town... now...that he has recently sent thirty, fifteen women and children, which he had got restored by persons who had purchased them from agents of Bedr Khan Bey, among them a 7 year old child who forgot his Syriac mother tongue and declared himself as Muslim. He did so also in the presence of Kemal Effendi, Mar Shimun

> [and others]...Kemal Effendi had kept the child with him until further instruction reaches him from Constantinople.[22]

The ambassador continued his efforts with the Turkish government, urging Rifaat Pasha to intervene to get the captives released as soon as possible and to remove the threat hanging over them. Once again, he informed the Foreign Office that there were reasons to believe that the pashas of Erzeroom and Mosul had secretly encouraged Bedr Khan Beg to attack the tribes. He reaffirmed that his interventions were secret and that Mar Shimun had authorised his proposal to Rifaat Pasha, which the missionary Badger had communicated to him.[23]

Turkish officials in the region were keen to deny any involvement in the invasion and claimed that the Porte had not authorised it. Kemal Pasha of Erzeroom was under suspicion of complicity, but he told Brant, the British consul in that city, that he denounced Bedr Khan's action in the region, which was officially under his jurisdiction, denied any involvement, and asserted that Bedr Khan had acted without his approval. He added that Noor Allah Beg was the prime agitator and had told him that the Nestorians had committed many aggressions against his people. Thus he admitted that the Hakkari Kurdish leader had asked for his help and support to deal with the Assyrian tribes. Noor Allah had been so insistent that he had warned Bedr Khan that 'if he does not respond, he would no longer consider him a pious Muslim'. Meanwhile the Turkish foreign minister referred to the report that Beirakdar and Abdul Samid of Berwar had procured on the subject of Dr. Grant's 'castle', which was aimed at misleading the Porte by asserting that the 'castle' had been built for well-calculated military purposes.[24] On the issue of the captives, Brant reported the pasha as telling him that Bedr Khan Beg had said that they numbered two hundred, but that all had been sent back to their homes.[25]

The Turkish involvement in imposing centralisation was evidenced throughout the region. Canning informed the Turkish foreign minister that Beirakdar Pasha of Mosul declined to implement his orders. He once again called for the liberation of the captives, evacuation of their homeland by the Kurdish occupation forces, and holding the participants with Bedr Khan Beg responsible for their actions. The request also contained

an appeal to assist the people in rebuilding their destroyed homes. To implement his proposals, the ambassador recommended stationing a Turkish force in the tribes' country. At the same time, he wrote, a good understanding must be established with Bedr Khan Beg.[26]

Meanwhile Canning wrote to the Foreign Office, conveying his dissatisfaction with Beirakdar's conduct. He affirmed that he 'had complained to Rifaat Pasha of this provocation and delay requesting that fresh and more stringent instructions might be sent down forthwith to the Pasha of Mosul'. He mentioned that the Turkish minister had asked him to provide the terms, which he wanted him to convey to the pasha of Mosul, and went on to say that '[i]n making every practicable exertion for the relief of the persecuted Nestorians I feel convinced that I shall only fulfill the intentions of Her Majesty's government'.[27]

Thus the British diplomats became the advocates of the Assyrian cause with the sultan's government. Canning's early intervention reveals the flexible response of the Turkish officials, who seem to have had the good sense to realise their weakness. They were badly in need of time to deal with the pressing issues of various centres and were in fact unable to offset their weakness. Canning wrote to the Foreign Office, stating that

> [b]y means of a private and confidential communication to Rifaat Pasha I have...to obtain the Porte's assistance in favour of the unfortunate Nestorians and their Patriarch, Mar Shimon. The object of my application on their behalf was two fold: First: to obtain the release of the Captives, the recovery of the plundered property, and the evacuation of the invaded district; Secondly: to effect an arrangement between Mar Shimon and the Porte, forwarded on the principle of his administrative independence under Turkish protection on payment of an annual tribute, occasionally rendering military service to the Sultan.
>
> These proposals I was authorized by letters from Moossul to bring forward on behalf of the Patriarch. They have been laid before the Council by Rifaat Pasha, and His Excellency has sent me word that the Porte is disposed to treat with Mar Shimun, that letters

> will be written to Mossul for further information, and that the Porte is not strong enough in that site to enter into a contest with the powerful Kurdish chief, whose army has now so cruelly ravaged the Nestorian territory.

He further explained the nature of his interference on behalf of the Assyrians, stressing, however, that his efforts were

> not a very promising commencement and yet I knew that no more was to be expected in the first instance. By direct of perseverance I hope to be more successful at a later period; and I trust that while my interference is so conducted as neither to displease the Porte nor to commit Her Majesty's government, your Lordship will not disapprove of my endeavours to meet...of the Nestorian Patriarch to save him from the intrigues of the French and their Roman Catholic Coadjutors and to obtain some degree of relief for his suffering people.[28]

The Foreign Office confirmed Canning's conduct, and Aberdeen wrote acknowledging and approving the course that he had taken in dealing with the crisis:

> Your Excellency will avail yourself of every suitable opportunity to impress upon the Porte that Her Majesty's government feel a strong interest in the well-being of the Christian subjects of the Sultan, and would see with deepest concern not only the positive oppression of the Porte but even the indifference of the Turkish government to their being oppressed by any subordinate authority...Nothing indeed could be more calculated to indisposes the feeling of European nations towards the Porte.[29]

While praising the attitude of Foreign Office towards the Christian tribes, who had undergone such cruel persecution, Canning warned that they had

> reasons to fear the intention of the Turkish government to establish the Porte's authority, which in fact was the main objective, of the Porte authority, was likely to prove the main point of Kemal

> Effendi's instruction and the restitution of the slaves and the caption of bloodshed and in equitable arrangement with Mar Shimon only its secondary objects.[30]

In a letter addressed to the sultan, Mar Shimun showed that he was anxious to express his submission and recognition of the sultan's authority over his country and people. Canning, however, withheld this letter and declined to submit it to the sultan, wishing to obtain more information about the intentions of the Porte towards the Assyrian tribes.[31]

Alison had written to Canning, informing him that Rifaat Pasha, the minister of foreign affairs, had read to him extracts from a letter by the grand vizier, stating that a horde of Nestorians had attacked a Turkish village, killed and wounded above forty of the inhabitants, and carried off a good deal of plunder. Bedr Khan Beg had assembled his men to avenge the injury, entered the Nestorian territory, ravaged three villages, and destroyed a missionary station that the Nestorians had erected under the superintendence of a missionary called Grant for the ostensible purpose of a college for the propagation of Protestantism. The pasha of Mosul had sent to inspect this building and reported his opinion that it was well calculated for a military station and capable of containing two *Allays* divisions, or five thousand men. Alison went on to say that Grant had created a great deal of trouble among the Nestorians by making proselytes.

Rafaat Pasha did not explain how the Assyrians could have managed to attack a Turkish village when the nearest one to their county was hundreds of miles away (one can only assume that he might meant a Kurdish village). Canning was well aware of Dr. Grant's activities in the country of Tiyari and that his presence there was approved by a *firman* from the sultan and protected by all the local officials. Besides, he was under British protection and was in constant contact with British officials throughout the region.[32]

Mar Shimun's Appeal to Great Britain and the Ambassador's Response

Mar Shimun had a direct line of communication with Canning at Constantinople. Among other things, he made it clear that he intended to

make his submission to the sultan and to assure him that he and his people were faithful subjects. However, as civil and religious head of his people, who were enjoying complete independence, he was keen to preserve their longstanding historic privileges despite the rapid changes in the political map of the region. Thus he harboured the hope that, given the enhanced role of Great Britain and its great influence over the sultan and his government, he might succeed. Accordingly he appealed to British diplomats in the region, including Canning, for a proper redress for the destruction and damages that Bedr Khan Beg had inflicted on his people and country. On this subject, the ambassador wrote to Foreign Office that

> [proposals] have been laid before Council by Rifaat Pasha, and His Excellency sent me word that the Porte is disposed to treat with Mar Shimun, that a letter will be written to Mosul for further information, and that Porte is not strong enough on that side to enter into a contest with the powerful Kurdish chief, whose army has now so cruelly ravaged the Nestorian territory.[33]

Despite this, the Ottomans were determined to restore their authority over all provinces and districts inhabited by various ethnic and religious groups. This task was progressing: after the Assyrian independent tribes were subdued in 1843, the one remaining powerful centre was that of Bedr Khan Beg, which the Turks could not rush immediately to eliminate due to their general weakness, as has been mentioned. Accordingly Canning informed the Foreign Office that the Porte was endeavouring to form a front against the Kurdish chief. That aim, however, the Turks could not achieve until 1847.[34]

The Tragedy of the Captives and the Attitude of the Turkish Government

Rassam reported that Beirakdar refused to implement the Porte's orders to help free the captives and even denied receiving any such order. He did, however, admit to receiving orders to 'treat Bedr Khan Beg favourably and with leniency'.[35]

Nevertheless the heart of the problem remained unsolved, and the Assyrians continued to trust the Porte and Great Britain to solve their problems, whether they were returning the refugees to the homeland or freeing the captives. Thus Kemali Effendi, during his mission, had managed to address part of the problem, but not its core. He had demanded from Bedr Khan Beg the release of all Assyrian captives,[36] but Stevens had to report that the Assyrian question remained unresolved, because the Beg's power lay beyond the limit of Ottoman reach. He questioned the seriousness of the sultan's envoy in his mission, declaring that he had neither the power nor the authority to solve the problem. In contrast, Britain had taken a clear stand in calling for a Turkish military force to occupy Tiyari:

> I cannot state positively that what proceeds will be the course which Kemal Effendy may recommend his government to pursue regarding the Nestorians, but I shall be able to give your Excellency more certain information when the commission prepares his report, which I hope he will do, by the next post. He has not been able to devote so much of his attention to these matters, as they require. He has been obliged to listen to hundreds of complaints against the extortions of the late Pasha.

Stevens further reported on the issue of the Assyrian tribes:

> Bedr Khan Bey sent the following message to Mar Shimon a few days since he warned the Patriarch against listening to proposals made by 'Osmanlees' who he said were notorious for lying, that if Mar Shimon would put himself in Bedr Khan Bey's hands, he should be reinstalled in the mountains, and all his affairs settled to his satisfaction. Mar Shimon replied that having thrown himself on the protection of the Sultan he would abide by whatever decision His Highness' government should come to regarding him.[37]

On his part, Rassam once again urged Beirakdar to interfere and to send an envoy to Bedr Khan to release the captives. The envoy, however, reported that the response of the Kurdish chief was that 'the captives became private property by purchase'.[38]

The Assyrian question was still in flux and occupying the attention of many concerned parties. The Turkish government was keen to show its concern for the interventions of Great Britain. Nevertheless the ill intention of the Turkish officials further complicated the situation and the issue of the captives. Taylor, the British resident at Baghdad, summarised the whole issue as follows:

> I had uniformly experienced at his hands the utmost readiness to promote inquiry regarding these unfortunate captives, and to assist in their identification and delivery. I had thus been permitted to examine a great number of slaves brought from Mosul and Jazerah, and suspected of being Nestorians, and I had been able to assure myself that they were exclusively Yazidis.

Meanwhile the real captives were kept in well-known places, which constantly were referred to by the British representatives in the region.[39]

Stevens, however, reported that he had asked Kemal Effendi to send an urgent message to Bedr Khan Beg informing him that the Sublime Porte had sent another order demanding the release of all Christian captives who were still in captivity.[40] He once again confirmed his intelligence that some captives were still in the territories under Bedr Khan's direct control and insisted that they must be collected and sent to Mosul. On the other hand, he mentioned his personal efforts with the pasha of Diarbekir, explaining that the pasha had not yet responded to his appeal to collect the Assyrian captives in that city and send them to Mosul, except for fifteen women and young children. Those captives Stevens had been able to redeem from a dealer who had bought them from an agent of Bedr Khan Beg.[41]

Britain's Direct Involvement in the Crisis of the Assyrian Tribes

Canning's instructions to Stevens reveal the official policy of Great Britain on the Assyrian issue. As for the return of the patriarch Mar Shimun to his people after he took refuge in Mosul, it was clear that he would not be allowed to do so. On the subject of the Assyrian tribes, Canning

informed Rassam that he had not received any new information, even regarding the Turkish attitude towards the Nestorians. He told the consul that Zenal Beg would be removed from Asheetha and that the Nestorians would be allowed to return to their homeland, except the patriarch Mar Shimun and his immediate assistants. This, however, would be done only after a Turkish military force had occupied Asheetha to protect them.

Canning further mentioned that the Porte viewed Bedr Khan as a powerful leader whom it could not subdue, due to its military and economic weakness. It was simply not in the power of the Porte to punish him and to subdue him to the authority of sultan. Thus the Porte was clearly advancing cautiously in restoring its authority. The massacre of the Nestorians had sprung from the hatred existing between the various peoples, but the sudden appearance of the missionaries and the acute competition among them had been a contributing factor.[42]

Another example of the strong British presence and influence on the Ottoman sultans could be found in the appointment of Rashid Pasha as minister for foreign affairs with the assistance of the British ambassador at Constantinople, Canning.[43]

Bedr Khan's Beg's Account of the Massacre and Slaves

Stevens' mission reached its peak when he successfully established contacts and relations with Bedr Khan Beg, whom he interviewed intensively from 29 June to 1 July 1844. Bedr Khan did his best to defend himself and to justify his inroad on the Assyrian tribes. He was keen to acquaint Stevens with his side of the story, representing the tribes as the aggressors and affirming that, as a Turkish official with a duty to subdue those who resisted the sultan's rule, he had been obliged to punish them. However, he minimised the number of the victims and the amount of the loot and remained defiant on the subject of the captives, insisting that some had been freed, others had become private property by purchase, many had converted to Islam, and neither of the latter two groups would be restored. He maintained that there had been no plunder except some sheep that his fighters had killed and eaten, and a small sum of money

that he had distributed among them. He had also sent one thousand guns and a number of mules to Kemal Pasha of Erzeroom. Despite all his denials, he admitted that even before his invasion, the Assyrian Christian tribes had been left destitute by the campaign of Mohammed Rashid Pasha. He expressed his gratitude to Almighty God for bestowing on him His kindness once again.[44]

ENDNOTES

1. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, 176–177; J. T. Parfit, *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917), 31. G. E. Hubbard, *From the Gulf to Arrarat: An Expedition Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan* (London: W. Blackwood, 1916), 145–146, stated that after 1802 British interests were consolidated and the post of Political Resident in Turkish Arabia was created; H. M. Stationery Office, *Geographical Handbook*, 1:294. Col. Taylor reported that Ali Ridha Pasha was very pleased with the improved relations with Great Britain and recommended to the Porte giving concessions for navigation in Tigris and Euphrates. F.O. 195/113, Baghdad, February 15, 1833, Taylor to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bombay. See also Longrigg, *Four Centuries*, 275–27; Graves, *Britain and Turkey*, 11; Cooke, *Baghdad Madinat al Salam*, 2:120–122.
2. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:xi–xii; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 127.
3. Ainsworth, *Travels*, 2:220–221, 245–253; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:ix.
4. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:xiv. American Sunday-School Union, *The Nestorians*, 8–9.
5. F.O. 78/2698: Constantinople, January 27, 1842, Canning to Aberdeen; also Tabreez, August 21, 1843, Abbott to Colonel Williams.
6. F.O. 78/2698, London, March 24, 1842, memorandum of instruction to Rev. G. P. Badger on his departure to Kurdistan (included in Canning no 34; includes February 1844).
7. F.O. 195/228, Mosul August 17, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
8. F.O. 19/204, Mosul August 17, 1843, Rassam to Taylor.
9. F.O. 19/204, Mosul August 3, 1843, Rassam to Colonel Taylor.
10. Ross reported that the age for bearing arms in Tiyari was fifteen and sometimes lower. *Letters From the East*, 61.
11. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, June 17, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
12. Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 356–357.
13. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, August 13, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
14. F.O. 78/2698, London, August 26, 1843, Aberdeen to Canning.
15. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, March 23, 1844, Canning to Aberdeen.
16. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, December 1, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
17. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, December 21, 1843, Canning to Stevens.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

20. F.O. 195/228, Foreign Office, January 16, 1844, Aberdeen to Canning.
21. F.O. 195/228 Mosul April 12, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
22. F.O. 78/2698, Mosul, May 18, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
23. F.O. 195/228, Constantinople, September 17, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
24. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, September 8, 1843, Alison to Canning.
25. F.O. 195/227, Erzeroom, Oct. 21, 1843, Brant to Canning.
26. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, November 6, 1843, Confidential Memorandum sent to Rifaat Pasha through Mr. Pisari.
27. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, November 20, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
28. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, December 1, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
29. F.O. 195/228, London, December 16, 1844, Aberdeen to Canning.
30. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, December 31, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
31. Ibid.
32. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, September 8, 1843, Alison to Canning.
33. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, September 1, 1843, Canning to Aberdeen.
34. F.O. 195/228, Constantinople, March 23, 1844, Canning to Aberdeen.
35. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, February 12, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
36. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, March 8, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
37. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, March 23, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
38. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, February 11, 1844, Rassam to Canning.
39. F.O. 195/227, Baghdad, April 3, 1844, Colonel Taylor to Canning.
40. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, March 23, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
41. F.O. 78/2698, Mosul, May 18, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
42. F.O. 78/2698, Constantinople, June 20, 1844, Canning to Rassam.
43. Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reforms*, 26.
44. F.O. 78/2698, Mosul July 10, 1844, Stevens to Canning, Report on a visit to Bedr Khan Beg.

Chapter 12

Tekhoma: The Last Assyrian Independent Province

1. On the Eve of the Massacres

Tekhoma, the second largest district of the Assyrian tribes, was not seriously affected by the massacre of 1843. However, the conditions were changed during the autumn of 1846, both internally and regionally. Bedr Khan's invasion of the other Assyrian provinces in 1843 had ended the independence of their tribes. After the subjection of Tiyari, the Turks had nothing to worry about in the region except the two remaining independent centres of the Bohtan Kurds under the leadership of Bedr Khan Beg and the Assyrian tribes of Tekhoma. The Turks were now poised to achieve their goal, since Bedr Khan Beg was at their disposal to finish the job for them.

Until the fall of 1846, the inhabitants of Tekhoma were keen to maintain good relations with both Bedr Khan and Noor Allah Beg. Nevertheless a western visitor in 1846 reported on the conditions of the inhabitants and their readiness to defend their province. To create an excuse for his

attack, Bedr Khan required them to meet certain requests that they were in no position to fulfill, chiefly the payment of a large sum of money, and backed his demand up with a threat to invade and destroy their country if they failed to comply. To make his threat sound serious, he ordered the inhabitants of Tiyari to collect and prepare provisions and other necessary supplies for the projected campaign.

The date for starting the invasion was announced as immediately after the end of the Muslim month of *Ramazan*. This gave Layard, who had been planning to visit this district, time to do so just a few days before the invasion began. On his way, he observed a Kurdish group headed by the Mutasalim of *Julamerk*, who, as he noted, was notorious for his enmity to the Assyrians. The Mutasalim summoned Layard's companion Rais Yacob and, after threatening him, sent a similar message to Layard. Meanwhile a messenger was sent to Noor Allah Beg, informing him of the presence of a 'Frank' in the mountains. The next day, a messenger arrived and informed Layard that this time 'Bedr Khan Beg intends to finish with the Christians, and will not make slaves for consuls and Turks to liberate'.[1]

The threat of upcoming massacre hung over the daily lives of the inhabitants. Even the women, along with the men, were participating in discussing this nightmare and expressing their opinions on how to defend themselves and their country.

2. APPEAL TO THE PASHA OF MOSUL

Even while they were preparing for the attacks, the people were exercising every means to secure peace for themselves, including an appeal to the government to provide them with protection. They understood that their own power was no longer enough to withstand a powerful attack by the Kurds. The imbalance between their limited resources and those of the Kurds in both Persia and Turkey, who were well armed and determined, left them no hope except the interference of the pasha of Mosul. Accordingly a meeting at the village of Birjani resolved to send a delegation to the pasha made up of leading men and including the learned

Kasha (Priest) Bdakha. The delegation's mission was to meet the pasha and to promise the submission of Tekhoma to the sultan and to him. They were also to declare that they were willing to acknowledge their loyalty to the sultan and his government, that they were his sincere subjects who had committed no crime whatsoever, and that they were willing to pay taxes and do whatever else the government deemed necessary. However, the delegation never reached Mosul, and its members were feared to have been killed while crossing the district of Berwar.[2]

Meanwhile Rassam submitted a report to Ambassador Wellesley, informing him about developments regarding Tekhoma, including Bedr Khan Beg's intention to attack it. In his report, he expressed his sorrow that the actions of the pasha of Mosul indicated that Bedr Khan either had already entered Tekhoma or was about to do so. If the pasha intervened, he would do so not to secure the safety of the tribe but to ensure that Bedr Khan acted in accordance with Ottoman Turkish plans and interests. The pasha had dispatched a Turkish officer to Bedr Khan, supposedly to persuade him not to attack Tekhoma, but in Rassam's view, the Porte really intended to put an end to the independent status of these centres. However, he declared with frustration that, as usual, the Kurdish leader had not obeyed the pasha's orders or even listened to them. Bedr Khan's reply to the pasha's appeal had been that 'he will not allow any interference in the affairs of the mountain region'.[3] This, along with the escape of the patriarch Mar Shimun from the British vice-consulate at Mosul, further compounded and complicated the situation and made conditions more even difficult.[4]

On the other hand, the cooperation between the Kurdish leaders was unusually strong. Once again, the close and strong relations between those leaders coincided with their intention of attacking the last independent Christian tribe and carrying out the massacre that Bedr Khan had threatened to commit. Thus their attitude towards the inhabitants of the district of Tekhoma reflected their real objective.

The black clouds that were gathering in the sky over Tekhoma in October 1846 were made even darker by Layard's remarks about the prosperity and the military power of the district. During his tour throughout the

country of the tribes, including the district of Tekhoma, just a few days before Bedr Khan began the slaughter, he found the district still prosperous compared with others;[5] however, when he reached the villages of Birigai and Ghissa, he noticed that their inhabitants were anxious to hear the latest news about the anticipated invasion and Bedr Khan's Beg threat to massacre them.[6]

Once again, just as during the massacre of Tiyari and Diz in 1843, the Ottoman authorities gave Bedr Khan a free hand to crush the power of the Assyrian tribes. In the autumn of 1846, the tribes were still suffering from the after effects of Bedr's first onslaught; their country was almost in ruin, and the people had not recovered from the general destruction. Now Tekhoma's turn came to face a similar fate.

3. THE TURKS AND THE CONTINUED MASSACRES OF ASSYRIAN CHRISTIANS

Bedr Khan's preparations for the attack on Tekhoma were well observed and closely followed by the Ottoman Turks in Mosul. The inhabitants of the district, feeling their own weakness and inability to stand the thrust of the upcoming Kurdish invasion, applied on many occasions to the pasha of Mosul, begging him for protection, but he seems to have put them off with evasive answers. The pasha's Turkish envoy to Bedr Khan was well publicised and allegedly ordered to convey a message that if the beg caused any harm to the Christians of Tekhoma, he would pay with his own head. But Bedr Khan's reply to the pasha to mind his own business, and that he would allow no interference in the affairs of the mountains, shows that he quite correctly took the envoy's threat for empty words. The different attitudes of the Turks and the Kurds were made to represent a disagreement between them over Tekhoma, when in fact both had a common interest in subduing its inhabitants.[7]

Before the attack, the authorities tried to lull the victims into a false sense of security and so lower their state of readiness. In the midst of all these rapid developments, Noor Allah Beg of Hakkari sent a message summoning all the *maliks* and *ra'eses* of the Assyrian tribes. Surprisingly,

it was the envoy himself who warned them not to respond because of his leader's ill intentions towards them, and that if they obeyed, they would all be put to death.

4. The Scene of the Tekhoma Massacre and the Fate of the Captives

In November 1846, while all the heads of the tribes were assembled at a meeting with their followers, the news came that the Kurds were invading the district. Shortly after, a messenger from Bedr Khan arrived and submitted his demands, with which the inhabitants would have to comply if they wished to avoid the massacre: every person from the district—male and female, adult and children—must pay twenty-five piastres; all the inhabitants must surrender their weapons; and they must hand over all their possessions and wealth.

The people's past experience had taught them to not trust Bedr Khan's word—and anyhow, they could not afford these demands. Meanwhile the Kurdish agha of Chal sent a messenger to Tekhoma offering to protect the women and children, but he betrayed the Assyrians: he sent word to Bedr Khan informing him of the route that the refugees would follow to get from Tekhoma to Chal. Bedr Khan's commander-in-chief, the notorious Zenal Beg, cut the refugees off and surrounded them; when they arrived at the spot where the Kurdish fighters were waiting, a wholesale slaughter ensued. All the women and children were slain except two young girls who pretended to be dead and managed to escape at night to tell the tale.[8]

5. Tekhoma: The Last Assyrian Independent Province

Bedr Khan Beg now issued orders not to spare any survivor or take any captives, whether men, women, children, or elderly. He had learned from his previous experience; this time, he decided not to take slaves whom foreign consuls would then require the government to liberate.

Accordingly, he treated every Christian in the province as a target to be eliminated; the buildings were to be levelled to the ground, and the inhabitants slaughtered.[9]

The British ambassador sent a dispatch to the foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, warning him of the projected massacre, based on the intelligence that he had received. Meanwhile the British high commissioner to Persia also received a report from Abbott, the consul at Tabreez, informing him that Bedr Khan Beg had once again invaded the country of the Assyrians. This time, the thrust of the invasion was directed against the district of Tekhoma, which was the most populous one left after the destruction of Tiyari. According to the early reports, after a fierce operation lasting four hours, the Kurdish forces had managed to disarm the people and seize their arms and had driven away all their flocks. Once again, it was reported that the Hakkari leader Noor Allah Beg had cooperated in the attack; however, Abbott stated that he did not know 'the cause of renewed hostilities against the unfortunate mountaineers, whose cruel fate seems to recruit the interference of civilized governments in their behalf'.[10]

6. THE FATE OF THE CAPTIVES

After massacring the hundreds of women and children who were on their way to the province of Chal, relying on the offer of its Kurdish agha, Zenal Beg then directed his attack against the district of Tekhoma, which is centred on one main valley containing all the villages of the district. Being outnumbered by the Kurds, who were well armed, the few fighters of Tekhoma could neither withstand the assault nor counter it; so after few hours, they were all rounded up. The Kurdish fighters then began a general slaughter, following their new instructions not to take any captives. All able-bodied fighters were killed except for a few who managed to escape to neighbouring Persia. The people's possessions were thoroughly plundered, and then all houses were burnt, fields were destroyed, trees were chopped to small pieces, and the irrigation system was completely destroyed.[11]

The tragedy of Tekhoma resembled what had befallen Tiyari, and the attackers practised extreme cruelty. Here Zenal Beg and other Kurdish leaders committed the most atrocities. Then as Zenal and Tahir Agha Mutasalim al Jazirah were sitting in front of the ruins of the church after destroying the village of *Kordiktha*, a group of captives was brought to them comprising twenty males, thirty-five women, twenty-six young girls, and twelve children under seven years of age. As soon as they were assembled on the village common, Tahir Agha cried, 'We don't want slaves to be liberated by the consuls. Kill them all'. Immediately a general slaughter began, and all the captives were killed except three young girls, who were spared for their beauty.[12]

After the massacre, Bedr Khan Beg and his forces returned from the scene, and in due course, some of those who had escaped to Persia returned to their ruined villages and homes. Noor Allah Beg promptly attacked them, enslaved most of them, and tortured some to make them reveal the location of their supposed buried treasure. The few who manage to escape once again crossed the border to Persia, leaving the whole district almost without inhabitants. This massacre was the subject of a detailed report in a private letter from Urmia, which stated that two hundred women had been slain besides the six hundred killed on their way to Chal, and another three hundred had been killed trying to escape to Persia. Even that figure overlooks those who were killed in the district of Berwar on their way to Mosul.[13]

The severity of the massacre and the fanaticism of the Kurdish leaders were ascribed, among other factors, to the agitating role of their religious leaders, who had called for *jihad* against the Christians. Rassam reported that every species of cruelty had been practised in the district of Tekhoma. Furthermore, the survivors were subjected to oppression and exploitation, and taxes were being collected from them three times a year—once for Noor Allah Beg and twice for Bedr Khan Beg.

The British consul at Baghdad expressed his firm opinion on the attitude of the Turkish officials to this tragic occurrence. The pasha of Erzeroom could have offered protection to the Christian tribes if he had wished to do so; the Turkish government had taken the same stance. For some time,

Rassam kept arguing that the Kurdish leader's power was exaggerated if not illusory and that he had many enemies who were willing to fight him.[14]

Wellesley informed Palmerston about the massacre, which he described as even more horrible than the one the Nestorians had suffered three years before. He also noted that he had brought it to the attention of Aali Pasha, the Turkish foreign minister. Aali Pasha had assured him that he had sent instructions to the pasha of Mosul to protect the Nestorians and that a new plan had been drawn up to crush Bedr Khan Beg, taking into consideration all related issues.[15] These, however, were merely phrases that the Turkish official used to evade his government's responsibility to protect its citizens.

The number of the victims could not be accurately estimated, especially since, when the people came under attack, they fell victim to the hysteria of the fanatics and were slaughtered in all directions. People were caught on the fighting grounds, in their villages, along the escape routes to Chal, and in other places. However, it is safe to say that huge numbers were killed as a direct result of the orders that the fighters received before beginning their attacks, and consequently the figures that were provided for some locations must be considered a moderate estimate:

Location	Victims	Remarks
Kizza	99	killed in the battle
Birjani	20	" "
Tekhoma Kawaya	260	" "
Kurdiktha	88	killed outside the battle
Mizry	Unknown	among the victims, 3 priests
In the Battle	200	
Chal	600	
Total	**1057**	

Conduct towards the Assyrian tribes stemmed from their desire to occupy their land and to consolidate their own presence in the regions surrounding the homeland of the tribes. As Edward Robinson remarked, the Nestorians lived in the midst of the Kurds 'in their festinated mountains';

thus their homeland represented the heart of Kurdistan.[16] To achieve this goal, certain Kurdish tribes who were under the influence of mullas and their aghas and chieftains were psychologically prepared for the campaign on religious grounds. In both massacres of 1843 and 1846, fanatics played a key role in agitating the invaders, and they continued to agitate the masses against the Assyrians as being infidels living among the believers. Added to this was the thirst for loot and for women slaves. When the various Kurdish groups from Turkey and Persia headed to the attack against the tribes, they had in mind these three inducements: fighting the infidel, plundering loot, and enslaving the women. As the historian Ibn Khaldun remarked, these are common motives among invading nomads.[17]

7. Great Britain's Reaction to the Tekhoma Massacre

The Nature of the British Intervention

The British government's reaction to the massacre was explained in the memorandum that Layard submitted to the ambassador, where he outlined his own views on the best method for ruling the region after Bedr Khan was removed. He held that there had been no justification for the massacres of 1843, which had led to the recent one in Tekhoma; he believed that the religious fanatics and the furious ambition of Bedr Khan lay behind this carnage.[18]

The response of the Foreign Office to the tragedy of Tekhoma was firmly expressed by Palmerston in his instructions to Wellesley. Referring to the dispatch that he had received from the consul at Tabreez, he expressed his concern about the fate of the Nestorians. They were oppressed and persecuted throughout the region. The plight of those who were under the rule of the government of Urmia was considerably aggravated by the continued detention of their patriarch, who was considered a prisoner at Mosul. Consequently the Foreign Office instructed Wellesley to intercede with the Porte in favour of the patriarch and to express the pleasure that the British government would feel if he were set free from his detention.[19]

These instructions reflected the bitterness that the Assyrian followers of Mar Shimun were feeling. Besides having been killed in large numbers and having seen their country destroyed, they were suffering further from being deprived of their spiritual and civil leader, who remained captive in Mosul. Palmerston's instructions marked a turning point in the policy of Great Britain towards the Assyrian crisis. The decision was motivated, however, by many factors, among which was the active labour of the Catholic missionaries among the Nestorians. There was concern lest the French would take advantage of the plight of the patriarch to convert his followers, who now had no one to guide them, to Catholicism, which would represent a victory for French influence at the expense of the British.[20]

The official attitude was conveyed to the sultan's government, which assured the ambassador that it intended to eliminate Bedr Khan and had drawn up a comprehensive plan for doing so, which it would carry out as soon as the winter was over.[21] However, the foreign secretary responded in strong terms, instructing the ambassador to impress upon the Turkish officials the dangerous effects that a policy of persecuting the sultan's Christian subjects for their religious beliefs would have on public opinion all over Europe. The British minister warned the Turks that if they were not moved by their own interest, they should be moved by humane principles and ought to take proper measures to prevent such barbarous crimes in the future. He told them that it was the duty of any civilised government to punish the criminals and to secure protection for the Nestorians, and that the Ottomans would be held responsible for any mistreatment of the Christians. The Turkish officials, however, seem to have correctly assessed the threat and known quite well that neither Britain nor any other western European nation was willing or indeed able to send an army into the country of the tribes for the sake of saving them, while they would all unite to prevent Russia from doing so, from fear that, once its forces had occupied that territory, they would proceed to conquer all Mesopotamia and probably all Persia as well.[22]

After the Massacre of Tekhoma

Rassam informed Wellesley that if the Porte wished to take any step against the Kurdish leader, then the Jacobites of Tur Abdin, who occupied a district stretching between Mardin and al Jazirah, would be useful, as they had been for the campaign of the former al Sadir al A'dham Mohammed Rashid Pasha in 1834–1838 during the last Kurdish war. They were able to muster a large number of fighters, and fifteen thousand of them would join in the final campaign against Bedr Khan.

Rassam also mentioned that those who had just arrived from Tiyari and Tekhoma had informed him that the massacre of the women and children had been disgusting. In one of the villages, the scene in the river was unspeakable: the bodies of the victims had been thrown into the water, which consequently was no longer fit for use. In the same dispatch, he put the human loss at four thousand persons killed. Zenal Beg had stripped the people of Tiyari of all their possessions, including their stocks of food, and threatened them, saying he would 'starve them to death'. He had also issued orders to prevent them from going to Mosul and threatened any who defied them with execution.[23]

8. The Sufferings of Mar Shimun

As has been mentioned, Mar Shimun had fled from his homeland and taken refuge in the British consulate at Mosul. His correspondence with the British authorities in Mosul and Constantinople shows him constantly begging them to interfere on behalf of his people and to help them to return to their homeland after their eviction by the invading Kurdish troops. But the long years that he spent in Mosul appealing and begging produced no positive result. At first the patriarch seems to have been convinced that Great Britain would help his people to return to their homes and that he would then be able to resume his civil and religious authority. But political and military conditions in the region were moving steadily towards eliminating the leaders of the independent centres, and the patriarch's turn was approaching.

Nevertheless the British officials kept feeding the patriarch with hopes of returning to his homeland. Stevens reported to Canning that he had met with the patriarch and expressed to him the government's wishes to see him and his people return to their country under the rule of the sultan. Once again, Stevens said he had done his best to impress upon the patriarch the benefits that he and his people would reap from his contacts with Kemali Effendi. The patriarch, however, had had nothing to say except to thank him and to assure him that he put his fate and his nation's in the hands of the British government.[24]

On his part, the patriarch submitted many appeals and messages to the British ambassador, all of which expressed his wish to put himself and his people under the protection of Great Britain, and stated that he was authorised to act on their behalf.[25] He said he was willing to submit to the sultan's authority under the terms of any settlement that the ambassador deemed likely to resolve their crisis.[26]

While the Assyrian patriarch put all his hope in the assistance of Great Britain, it seems that he could not comprehend that Britain had a different agenda from the one he was hoping to achieve. In a report to Canning, Lt. Col. Farrant stated that the patriarch must remain in Mosul for an unspecified period and that his stay would continue until his fate was decided.[27]

When he first took refuge at the British vice-consulate, just a short time after Rassam and Ainsworth had visited him in Tiyari in June 1840, Mar Shimun had been well aware that he and his nation had no one else to depend upon for support. The massacre had left him alone, and he was anxiously looking for a power that would provide them protection without imposing its religious doctrine[28]—that was why he had approached the British. However, during the frustrating years at Mosul, the patriarch was living in constant anguish and constantly giving voice to his complaints: '[M]y country and my people are gone! Nothing remains to me but God'.[29] He seems not to have appreciated that the issue of the Assyrian tribes represented a conflict of interest for Great Britain, since it was seeking to establish its influence over the Asiatic Ottoman Empire and among various ethnic and religious groups living there, and the Assyrians

were only one element. Thus the Assyrian tragedy fell in the middle of a critical situation, which was marked by sharp changes in the political and ethnic map. This explains the ineffective mission of Kemali Effendi, the sultan's envoy, due to the two-pronged approach to the issue by which the sultan's government sought to undermine Bedr Khan Beg but was equally anxious to deprive the Assyrian tribes of their independence.

Mar Shimun pinned too many hopes on British intervention, and they gradually faded as no improvement came, but, on the contrary, the conditions of his nation only grew worse. He vented his frustration in a message to the ambassador dated 17 March 1845, when he bitterly complained about the fruitless efforts of Kemali and Stevens, which had been supposed to save his people from the crisis. He extended his frustration to the second tier of the Assyrian leadership: many *maliks* and bishops had applied for passports to emigrate to Georgia, to escape the persecution that they were living under.[30]

9. Mar Shimun's First Attempt to Escape From Mosul

The patriarch was frustrated by the fruitless intervention of Great Britain in the affairs of his nation and gradually became convinced that he himself was also a target for elimination like other ethnic leaders. But his determination to rejoin his people and hold them together was an inspiration to them, and his plight was the subject of intensive correspondence by British diplomats. Consequently he laid plans to escape from his detention and seek freedom wherever he could. He first applied to the pasha of Mosul to let him go to the district of Berwar for a change of scene and to recuperate; the pasha first approved his request but later refused to let him leave.[31] Then he tried to go to Tekhoma, but the presence of Bedr Khan's forces there prevented him from doing so, and he was obliged to head for Amadia instead. However, his first attempt to escape from his detention led the pasha of Mosul to order his mutasalim to capture him and sent him back to Mosul; as Rassam reported, Mar Shimun was captured near Amadia and brought back to Mosul under

heavy military escort. The pasha received and treated him civilly, but only to comply with the wishes of the British ambassador, which he had conveyed to Aali Pasha, the Turkish minister of foreign affairs. Thus the patriarch's attempt to regain his freedom was foiled, and he was back to square one.[32]

The patriarch's attempted escape alarmed all British diplomats and Turkish officials in the region, especially in Mosul. The pasha was informed immediately and so had ample time to send his orders to the officials in distant districts to chase the fugitive patriarch and capture him.[33] The escape was the subject of a report by the ambassador to the Foreign Office, where he stated that Mar Shimun's attempt had been frustrating for the Turks, but the ambassador did not mention whether the patriarch had any serious differences with the sultan and his government. Badger justified the patriarch's attempt to escape from Mosul to any place that could offer him an opportunity to serve his people.[34] Many other British diplomats shared the patriarch's belief that Great Britain could solve the crisis if it really wished to do so. Palmerston drew the ambassador's attention to the reports of the consul at Tabreez, who expressed his opinion that the unfortunate Nestorians were frustrated, angry, and outraged at the continuing detention that the patriarch was suffering as a prisoner in Mosul.[35]

Ambassador Wellesley wrote to Palmerston, informing him that the expedition against Bedr Khan Beg has been postponed because the Porte had too few troops at its disposal to insure the success of the campaign, while the rebel chieftain was said to have sixty thousand men ready for action. Wellesley drew attention to Bedr Khan's hostile intentions against the Assyrians and noted again that Mar Shimun's escape had caused much embarrassment and frustration to the Ottoman government. This was why he had asked Aali Pasha to treat him kindly if he was captured.[36]

10. The British Intervention to Restore the Patriarch

Mar Shimun was convinced of the mounting threat to his life as long as he remained in Mosul, and his failed attempt to escape in October 1846

only made him more determined to seize any opportune moment. During his forced exile of nearly four years, he had become well informed about the role and attitude of all concerned parties towards the tragedy of his nation. News of his second escape came from Tabreez when Stevens reported to Palmerston that Mar Shimun had arrived in Urmia, justifying his action by saying that he feared for his life after he had received notice from Ambassador Cowley requiring him to visit the capital in order to receive a *firman* from the sultan recognizing his authority. Stevens, who had considerable experience on the subject, reported that Mar Shimun had expressed himself willing to take his advice, which, however, he could not give without official instructions from his government. He also warned that the Porte might take umbrage at the escape, since the patriarch had fled from the sultan's dominions to Persia, and advised the Foreign Office to seek assurance from the Turkish government that the patriarch would be received in a satisfactory manner if he returned.[37]

The success of Mar Shimun's second escape created a renewed flurry in diplomatic circles, because it displayed the futility of British policy on the Assyrian crisis. On 3 August 1847, Ambassador Cowley wrote to the Foreign Office, noting the serious consequences of the patriarch's prolonged absence from his people; among other considerations, it would encourage the French to approach his followers, and they would then be able to convert them to their own doctrine, which would strengthen their political influence, especially when they were offering the people their protection if they joined their Catholic Church. To this end, the ambassador mentioned that he was contacting Aali Effendi on the subject and moving with great caution.[38]

Mar Shimun's escape from Mosul to Urmia clearly provoked an angry reaction among British circles in the city. Ross, the former diplomat, reported on the event to Layard, stating,

> [T]hat old fool, Mar Shimon, is positively off to escape going to Constantinople and being made an *Ingleez* [Englishman] of... I asked *Habbuba* [his housekeeper] if she knew why Mar Shimon

> had run away; she said: because the *Balioz* [the British consul] wanted to send him to Constantinople and that both he and all Nestorians were afraid if he went there he would never return.[39]

Mar Shimun's trip to the capital was an urgent aim of the Turks. Aali Effendi had prevailed upon Cowley to convince the patriarch to undertake the mission using various pretexts, such as to obtain information regarding Bedr Khan Beg and to explore the best ways to offer services to his people, while Cowley had written to Rassam stating that the aim of summoning the patriarch to Constantinople was to decorate him with the *Nishan* medal and to provide him with a *firman* confirming his right to occupy his office.[40]

Rassam wrote back to Ambassador Cowley on the subject of Mar Shimun's escape and the reasons behind it. He affirmed that 'Mar Shimun thought it had been cruel to keep him in Mosul so long and that he had spent too many years in exile there, unable to improve his conditions or look after the needs of his people'. The vice-consul acknowledged that he was not encouraged to support the return of the patriarch to his homeland as long as Bedr Khan Beg posed a threat to his safety; however, once Bedr Khan Beg was eliminated, sending the patriarch home would not pose any danger or threat that he would resume his independence and refuse his submission to the sultan. However, at present, the conditions were not ripe.[41]

Endnotes

1. Layard, *Popular Account*, 153.
2. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 9, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. On the subject of the massacre, Mar Shimun told Badger in 1850 that the people of Tekhoma had applied to the pasha of Mosul for protection, but the pasha's action had been limited to sending a message to Bedr Khan Beg criticizing his action. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:270, 276.
5. Layard, *Popular Account*, 145.
6. Ibid., 123–124, 140–141.
7. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, September 19, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
8. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 17, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:371.
9. Ross, Mosul, November 19, 1847, Ross to Mary, 64–68.
10. F.O. 78/2699, Oala Koozeh, November 2, 1846, Abbott to Col. Sheil; F.O. 78/2699, Constantinople, October 17, 1846, Canning to Palmerston.
11. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 9, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
12. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:370–371.
13. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, Rassam to Wellesley; Statement made by a party of Nestorians from Tekhoma regarding the late massacres; F.O. 78/2699, Oroomiah, November 4, 1846, Extract from a private letter from Oroomiah.
14. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, September 19, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
15. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 17, 1846, Canning to Palmerston.
16. Edward Robinson, 'The Nestorians of Persia', *American Biblical Repository* 6 (1841): 465.
17. 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dar al Awda, n.d.), 95, 109–111.
18. F.O. 78/2699, Constantinople, October 17, 1847, Layard's Memorandum on Kurdistan.
19. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 9, 1846, from Rassam to Wellesley.
20. F.O. 78/2699, London, October 24, 1846, Palmerston to Wellesley.
21. F.O. 78/2699, Constantinople, November 17, 1846, Wellesley to Palmerston.
22. F.O. 78/2699, London, November 17, 1846, Palmerston to Wellesley.
23. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, December 12, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
24. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, February 12, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
25. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:291, 376–378.

26. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, February 12, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
27. F.O. 78/2699, Erzeroom, May 28, 1844, Lt. Col. Farrant to Canning.
28. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, February 12, 1844, Stevens to Canning.
29. Anderson, *History*, 1:222.
30. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, March 17, 1845, Mar Shimun to Canning.
31. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 3, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
32. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 19, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
33. Ibid.
34. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:369–370.
35. F.O. 78/2699, London, October 24, 1846, Palmerston to Wellesley.
36. F.O. 78/2699, Constantinople, October 19, 1846, Wellesley to Viscount Palmerston.
37. F.O. 78/2699, Tabreez, July 2, 1847, Stevens to Palmerston.
38. F.O. 78/2699, Constantinople, August 3, 1847, Cowley to Palmerston.
39. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 52.
40. F.O. 78/2699, Constantinople, February 17, 1847, Wellesley to Palmerston; F.O. 78/2699, Tabreez, July 2, 1837, Stevens to Palmerston.
41. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, November 26, 1847, Rassam to Cowley.

Chapter 13

The End of the Kurdish Wars

1. The Rise and Fall of Bedr Khan Beg

After his attack on the Assyrian tribes and occupation of their country, Bedr Khan Beg emerged as the only Kurdish leader affecting the lives and fortunes of the non-Turkish people under his control. Being devoted to the fanatical teachings of the extremist Muslim Darwish order, he treated the non-Muslim inhabitants of al Jazirah with severe cruelty in a vigorous attempt to convert them to Islam. In January 1844, Rassam reported a new general campaign against the Yazidi settlements throughout the region. In it, Bedr Khan used every means to further his desire to convert all the inhabitants of al Jazirah to Islam, in which he finally succeeded.[1] The Christians were treated in the same way, and this policy was so violently practised that one of its victims was a bishop of the Jacobite Church in Tur Abdin. Kemal Effendi, the sultan's envoy, was convinced that Bedr Khan had committed this atrocity. The governor of Diarbekir, who had under his authority *Midyat*, one of the largest Syrian Orthodox

towns in the region, summoned the head of the clergy there to obtain from him the necessary evidence to prove Bedr Khan's complicity.[2]

Bedr Khan's attack on Tekhoma in the autumn of 1846 marked the end of all the remaining disloyal centres that the Ottomans had sought to subdue except for his own emirate of Bohtan, where he had emerged as the most powerful leader of the Kurds. After Tekhoma, the Turks were very close to concluding the last chapter in the saga of subduing these centres. Meanwhile it seems that the circumstances that had prompted the Kurds to form a unified front against the independent Assyrian tribes during 1843–1846 no longer applied, because they no longer viewed the Christians as a serious threat. Thus the equilibrium of political and racial relations was changed late in 1846, and that change in turn affected the Kurds' relations with the sultan and his government. They no longer felt bound in a common national cause but reverted to their entrenched tribal loyalties, functioning as competing centres with the stronger always seeking domination over the weaker. The power of various other Kurdish leaders had been strengthened after the massacre. Having managed to entrench their position through their loyalty to Bedr Khan, leaders such as Noor Allah Beg, Ardasheer Beg, the elder son of the spiritual leader of the Bohtan Kurds, Bedr Khan's nephew, and others were now to be involved in his downfall.[3] So just when he had reached the peak of his power and domination, Bedr Khan Beg found himself a leader with a cause but without supporters.[4]

2. THE FOREIGN POWERS' REACTION TO BEDR KHAN'S ATROCITY

The reaction of the foreign powers, especially Great Britain, after the massacre of Tekhoma and the successful escape of Mar Shimun from his detention in Mosul put strong pressure on the sultan and his government to make an end of such attacks on his Assyrian Christian subjects. The powers took the events at Tekhoma as an occasion to demand in strong terms that the massacres should cease. The pressure that these great powers exerted upon the Ottoman government led it to speed up its action against the Kurdish leader, which was at last officially undertaken

in the summer of 1847. As early as December 1843, Brant, the British consul at Erzeroom, reporting to Canning on the subject of the attacks on the Assyrian tribes, had urgently requested an immediate campaign to subdue this rebellious leader: '[T]here is no alternative to the military campaign to subdue the Kurdish leaders who live in the neighbourhood of the Nestorians to the Sultan's authority'.[5]

Bedr Khan's policy towards both the Christians and the Yazidis in Tur Abdin also drew much attention and observation from British diplomats. Rassam reported that the region was chiefly inhabited by Yazidis, Kurds, and Christian Jacobites, who had lived in virtual independence until the campaign of the former al Sadr al Ahdam Mohammed Rashid Pasha, who had subdued them. But after he came to dominate the region in 1840, Bedr Khan had pursued his policy of imposing Islam on all the non-Muslim inhabitants. Accordingly Tur Abdin underwent demographic changes, as Bedr Khan encouraged the oppressed Kurds living under the rule of Beirakdar and other Turkish rulers to abandon their villages and to settle there, where the living conditions were much better than under direct Turkish rule. The newcomers, however, settled in depopulated villages that the Kurdish leader Mir Koor of Rawanduz had devastated earlier. The improved conditions did not apply to the Christians or Yazidis of Tur Abdin but were limited to Muslims only. Badger, who had passed through Tur Abdin and al Jazirah late in 1842, saw the tragic life of the Christians, who were then so demoralised that they were hardly able to open their mouths and could only whisper when they wished to talk.[6] The policy of compulsory conversion was attested throughout 360 Christian villages in Tur Abdin, which had belonged entirely to the Syrian Orthodox Church, as Rassam reported in 1844.

Rassam also reported that a Syrian Orthodox bishop from Mosul was on a pastoral visit to the region of Tur Abdin, where the people begged him to refer their suffering to the pasha of Mosul and appeal for his intervention.[7] Their condition was also the subject of complaint by two Kurdish leaders who arrived at Mosul and submitted a letter to Kemal Effendi (the sultan's envoy) describing the atrocities that Bedr Khan Beg and Noor Allah Beg were committing against the Christians.[8]

On the recommendation of Noor Allah Beg, two American missionaries visited Bedr Khan in May of 1847. They were obliged to take a long route to reach al Jazirah rather than the short route across the country of the Assyrian tribes. Having been treated courteously during the month of their visit, they reported the bright side of the Kurdish leader and highly praised the prosperity, peace, and tranquillity prevailing in the territories under his rule. At the same time, however, they also mentioned his continued cruelty and oppression against the Christians of Tiyari and Hakkari, who had been the victims of his during 1843–1846.[9]

3. THE COUNTDOWN TO BEDR KHAN BEG'S DOWNFALL

February 1847

The first sign of the Ottoman government's resolve to eliminate Bedr Khan appeared with the appointment of Asaad Pasha (أسعد باشا) as new pasha for the pashalic of Mosul. According to established practice, the newly appointed pasha took the desert route to reach Mosul. This route lay to the southwest of the Jazirah Ibn Omar, where Bedr Khan was expected to greet the new pasha at the head of a large military force. While Asaad Pasha was still in Mardin, Bedr Khan Beg asked him to change the traditional desert route and instead pass through the town of Jazirah, where he could pay his respects without bringing along a large military force. The pasha replied firmly that he did not intend to change the traditional route to meet the wishes of one of his underlings. If the beg were eager to meet him in the desert, he could do so with a retinue of his servants and staff. But if he did not trust himself in his pasha's hand except in the presence of a large military force, then it would be better for him to stay where he was.[10] This attitude marked the reversal of the good relations that had existed between the Turks and Bedr Khan Beg during the attacks on the Assyrians in 1843–1846. The new Ottoman attitude towards the Kurdish leader signalled the opening of a new chapter in which his end was approaching.[11]

These developments led Rassam to report again on the cruelty that Bedr Khan Beg was still practising against the indigenous Christian

and Yazidi populations of the provinces under his rule. Those who lived within his emirate of Bohtan were ruled with an iron fist. The religious leaders, especially the *mufti* (المفتي) of al Jazirah, Abdul *Qaddus* (عبد القدوس), were constantly claiming that the Muslims were free to kill the Christians and that a Christian's blood was worth only 30 piastres, which was equal to 2.25 dinars.[12]

29 May 1847

Both Mulla Abdul Qaddus and Shaikh Abdul Izrael (والشيخ عبد العزرائيل ملا عبد القدوس) encouraged Bedr Khan to adopt the fanatical tenets of the Darwishes (درويش) and to undertake mass slaughters of the Christians of Tiyari and Hakkari, as well as the Yazidis and Syrian Orthodox of Tur Abdin. These extremist Muslim fanatics surrounding the Bohtan leader declared that 'the time of the Christians on earth is over and killing them is *thawab* (ثواب) a pious act'. Thus the Christians were forced to convert to Islam or flee to other districts. *Shammas* (Deacon) Anton Ghanemah أنطون غنيمة (شماس), whom Bedr Khan employed as an accountant, mentioned that he knew many terrible stories but was afraid to come forward and tell them until his master was eliminated.[13]

Rassam further reported that Bedr Khan had committed a new attack against the Christians under his rule. His envoys sent to inquire on the subject reported that *Matran* (Bishop) George, the Syrian Orthodox Bishop of Tur Abdin, a ninety-three-year-old man, with twelve other leading Syrians there, had vanished after visiting Bedr Khan. They had gone to his headquarters to beg him for mercy and to ease the oppression of the Christians under his rule. Bedr Khan had replied to the appeal of the aged bishop, 'You are *Kafir* [كافر—infidels], how dare you complain against Muslim believers?' and had had the bishop and his companions abused without mercy, and all were thrown in prison. After two days, *Matran* George's body was thrown to the Christians, while the consul reported that there was so far no information about the others. The envoy, however, had reported the painful treatment of the Christians, who were practically slaves to the Kurdish aghas in al Jazirah and all surrounding

regions, living in constant terror of becoming the next victims. The people were even afraid to leave their villages.

As for the conditions of the remaining Assyrian inhabitants of Asheetha, the vice-consul was informed that Bedr Khan had left them destitute. However, the Turkish government was party to the oppression and had no intention of relieving the sufferers. Furthermore, the Turkish envoys sent to inquire into Bedr Khan's conduct had been bribed: 'Nizam Effendi' had received fifty thousand piastres. The contemporary westerners in the region reported that persecution of the Christians was daily practice.[14]

What complicated the situation and compounded the miseries of the people was Bedr Khan's growing fanaticism. Rassam reported that under mounting influence from the extreme fanatical religious leaders around him, he had adopted the tenets of the order of Darwishes and had started practising its rituals. This turn had affected all the non-Muslim indigenous inhabitants of the land, especially the Christians and the Yazidis, whom he was forcing to choose between Islam and the sword. Among other abuses, Rassam reported in January that the Christians of Tur Abdin were being forced to carry heavy stones up to the top of the mountain where the Kurdish leader was building a castle.[15]

4. OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BEDR KHAN AND NOOR ALLAH BEG OF HAKKARI

Noor Allah Beg of Hakkari, Bedr Khan's brother-in-law, was presented as a prime agitator encouraging him to attack the Christian Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, but he was secretly among the earliest Kurdish leaders to betray him. These early signs of differences, which later turned to enmity, reflected deep-seated rivalries between the two leaders. One was their competition for the Kurdish leadership; another was the control of the lands that had come under direct Kurdish rule, which included the homeland of the newly subdued Assyrian Christians. Their country nominally lay within the authority of Noor Allah Beg but was in fact occupied by Bedr Khan's forces.

As early as the Asheetha revolt of October 1843, Rassam had reported on the relations between the two leaders. He stated that the Asheetha affair and the successful siege of the Kurdish forces in Dr. Grant's castle for nine days had been carried out after agitation by Noor Allah Beg and some aghas of the region of the Zab River. In encouraging the Assyrians to fight his supposedly staunch ally, Noor Allah was moved by his desire to minimise Bedr Khan's influence, on the one hand, and to annex the country of the Assyrian tribes to his own dominions, on the other. Thus Noor Allah had used the Assyrian victims for his own advantage and designs, and by doing so, Rassam pointed out, he had brought further suffering on them.[16]

5. The Ottomans' Determination to End Bedr Khan Beg

22 March 1847

A few weeks after the appointment of Asaad Pasha (أسعد باشا), Bedr Khan finally grasped the real intentions of the Ottoman government towards him. He realised both their determination to bring his role and rule to an end and the crucial part that Great Britain could play in deciding his fate. Accordingly he got in touch with Rassam, who on 22 March informed the ambassador of the sudden arrival of Shaikh Yousif, whom Bedr Khan had authorised to lay before the ambassador his suggestions for settling his affairs with the Porte.

Bedr Khan was ready to respond to the Turkish demands. The message that his secretary Osman Beg and Shaikh Yousif carried to the pasha of Mosul and the British vice-consul there amounted to abject surrender. His envoys declared that he was willing to go to Constantinople to settle his differences with the Porte if Rassam guaranteed his safety. He would spare all parties further bloodshed, no longer interfere in the affairs of Hakkari and Bahdinan, and relinquish the administration of Tiyari and Tekhoma. He would restore all his Nestorian captives and recognise Mar Shimun as the Nestorian patriarch. He would use the name of the sultan in the Friday prayers instead of his own name, abandon the title of *immam* (إمام), hand over Zenal Beg to Mosul, pay the Porte the determined

indemnity, and meet the pasha of Mosul without the escort of a large force. He would in the future rule with justice without discrimination between Muslims and Christians, abolish capital punishment, and hand over to Mosul for punishment all those who were requested. In short, he was ready to do whatever the sultan wanted him to do.

Bedr Khan's proposal represented a complete surrender to the Ottoman authority and an abandonment of his iron hold over Tur Abdin and the upper regions of Mesopotamia. His concessions would have reduced him to an ordinary official of the sultan. But when Shaikh Yousif finished the long list of Bedr Khan's undertakings, Rassam informed him that he could not give him any firm promise.[17]

The succeeding days showed the real intention of the Ottomans, which fell in line with the policy they had pursued since 1831. After two weeks, Rassam reported to Wellesley, informing him that military preparations in Mosul were going vigorously forward and seemed to be related to the rumours of a campaign against Bedr Khan Beg. Despite the financial crisis that Mosul was going through, provisions were being collected for a large military force, and all indications pointed towards Zakho, located a short distance from al Jazirah, Bedr Khan's headquarters, as its destination.

Ross, the British former diplomat who still resided at Mosul, wrote to Layard about the pressing issue of Bedr Khan, stating that

> Mosul is likely soon to be the focus of great activity, and will acquire considerable political interest in consequence of the now seemingly serious intentions of the Porte against Bedr Khan Bey, who I think has sealed his fate by the last slaughter of the Tekhoma Nestorians.

Ross believed that a force of forty thousand regular troops would be able to subdue him.[18]

The Cracks in the Kurdish Front

Bedr Khan had succeeded in forming an unprecedented alliance among the Kurdish tribes of Diarbekir, *Sevaik*, *Viranshahr*, *Sulaimaniyah*, and

Suj Bolaq (Mahabad) in July of 1843. But when the Turks decided to eliminate him, all those Kurds who had staunchly rallied around him in his inroads against the Assyrians during 1843–1846 deserted him. Their motive then had been to fight the 'infidel' Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, who, as has been shown, occupied a strategic location in the midst of their settlements. In 1847 the situation was reversed, and accordingly each Kurdish leader reverted to pursuing his personal interest. Thus the Ottomans' resolve to eliminate Bedr Khan arose from Kurdish internal politics. Many chiefs who had hesitated to announce their disagreement with Bedr Khan during his might openly sided with the Turks against their fellow Kurd, who presumably was leading a national movement, at the first sign of Turkish determination to deal with him. Their desertion arose from the historic friction and even enmity between the various tribes and from their jealousy of Bedr Khan's position. The Kurds had shown the same tendencies many times before when they had helped the Turks to eliminate any emerging Kurdish centre, such as Baban, Bahdinan, or Soran.

5 April 1847

News was circulating about the advance of Omar Pasha (عمر باشا) from Aleppo at the head of two corps to join the advancing force of the *Sar Askar* (commander-in-chief). The immediate effects of these preparations were to fall upon the Christian population of the region. Rassam observed that these unfortunate people would bear the burden of supplying provisions, among which was a large store of grain collected from Mosul and the villages throughout its plains. This was done despite the impoverished state of the people, who were already oppressed by the rulers and Muslim majority and exploited to the limit. Thus this policy only worsened conditions for the Christian population in all provinces where the projected contest was to take place.

Bedr Khan's messages to Rassam revealed his awareness of both his own weakness and the determination of the Ottoman government to end his role. This state of affairs must have convinced the Porte that its previous estimate of the power of this Kurdish leader had been highly

exaggerated. Rumours were also circulating that he was selling his grain stores, intending to escape to Persia.[19]

12 April 1847

As the affair of Bedr Khan Beg came to dominate the region, the British became actively involved. Great Britain's policy reflected a desire to give the Ottomans all needed support to impose their central authority, on the one hand, while maintaining friendly relations with the Kurds, on the other. However, as has been mentioned, while Great Britain was eager to fulfil its own desires, the Ottomans were pursuing their own scheme to achieve their goal on their own terms by using force, not negotiation.

In the midst of all this, the British efforts to solve the crisis continued. Khawaja Anton (خواجة أنطون), the brother of the British consulate's dragoman, was Bedr Khan's accountant, which made him a suitable intermediary between the British consulate at Mosul and the Kurdish leader at *Dair Quli*. To encourage Bedr Khan to surrender peacefully, Rassam warned him that the Ottomans were determined to destroy his power and eliminate his independence. On these lines, he wrote informing him that 'the commander-in-chief of the Imperial camp, with numerous *Nizam* [regular] troops, had entered Diarbekir'. He also warned him that if he lost the present opportunity, he could not get the same favourable conditions later.[20]

On 27 April, Bedr Khan wrote back to Rassam, asking him to look after his affairs with the pasha of Mosul and to send his secretary Osman Beg for that purpose. The vice-consul answered on 1 May 1847, urging him to go to Constantinople as the Porte required and telling him that he had no alternative.[21] However, the following exchange of messages shows Bedr Khan's tenacity and the British attitude towards both the Turks and the Kurds:

> To our beloved friend the Consul Bey...we commence by inquiring after your health and well being, and then inform you that we received your kind letter by the *Tatar*, and have read it attentively and understood its contents, with which were much pleased. We

> are well aware that you take great interest in our welfare, and do all in your power to arrange matters with the Porte, and that you have represented our case at Constantinople, by which you have infinitely obliged us. But we beg you to adjust our affairs and excuse our coming; for fear has penetrated our heart, and you are aware that the dread of death surpasses all other fear. Thus we entreat you, if it is in your power, to arrange matters without our coming until this fear quits our heart...we have entrusted all our affairs into your hands, and you are our agent, with the exception of life, which is not to be placed in comparison with anything else.
>
> (Signed) Bedr Khan Beg.[22]

The vice-consul replied by stating,

> The cause of our writing to you is that we received your letter in a fortunate time, and have read it with great attention. It seems that you excuse yourself from coming on account of the fear from your mind, and to calm your apprehension, if you will listen to the advice of His Excellency the Ambassador, which we communicated to you, no evil will befall you, for we all desire earnestly to save both yourself from death, and your country from the ruin of war. You must be well aware that the forces of the Sublime Porte are so great that you cannot stand before them, and hostilities once commenced, you will not be able to save your life by flying to other places...and to take courage and go immediately to His Excellency Osman Pasha the *Mushir*, whom I have addressed on the subject, and His Excellency will show you all due attention and respect. The reason that I have sent *Hojja Antoon* (أنطون الخواجة) to you is that his brother *Hojja Toma* (الخواجة توما) is too unwell to travel. I hope that you will not listen to the advice of others, but trust in God and start immediately for Diarbekir, where you will be convinced that our counsel was for your good. May God preserve you.
>
> (Signed) C. A. Rassam.[23]

3 May 1847

Rassam's envoy to Bedr Khan returned to Mosul and reported, among other things, that the Kurdish leader Sa'adun Agha Khalgholi (آغا غلغولي سعدون)

and other leading supporters had been convinced by the ambassador's message to their chief and now believed that it was useless to resist the sultan and that there were two alternatives: peace or war. The majority of the Kurdish leaders had urged Bedr Khan Beg to listen to their opinion that there was no use in resisting the mighty army of the sultan. Saadun Khalgholi had gone further, declaring that 'Bedr Khan Beg can always depend on his support in fighting with the tribes, but he can't do so with the Sultan and his government'. Furthermore, Bedr Khan had ordered the inhabitants of the villages in the plains to leave for the *Dair Quli* in the mountains with all their possessions, because he intended to desert al Jazirah. Meanwhile news had arrived in Mosul of fighting between Ottoman forces and those of Khan Mahmud of Van, but the vice-consul said he could not verify it. At this stage, it seems the Ottomans were taking precautionary measures in the regions, notably by sending a military force to Amadia to prevent any foreseeable Kurdish disturbances.[24] The same day, Wellesley wrote to Rassam that the Porte intended to end the issue by force. Therefore he asked him to exert his utmost effort to induce Bedr Khan to surrender with all his immediate supporters.[25]

16 May 1847

Bedr Khan's letters to Rassam were translated and submitted to the ambassador at Constantinople. From them, it appears that he had received assurance for his life and property if he headed to Constantinople, as the Porte demanded. However, Rassam told Canning that Bedr Khan hesitated to go to Constantinople and that Asaad Pasha of Mosul believed it was better to wait and give him an opportunity to make his next move.[26]

Rumours had begun to circulate a few days before that the Kurdish leader had burnt the town of al Jazirah and the surrounding villages. At the same time, Zenal Beg, from his side, was threatening to attack the Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari once again, as well as Mosul. Rassam secretly dispatched Khawaja Anton to urge Bedr Khan not to lose time but to go to Diarbekir and surrender himself to the Ottoman *Sar Askar*. He gave his envoy verbal instructions beyond his written

message to use all means of persuasion on Bedr Khan to make him agree to go to *Sar Askar* Osman Pasha in Diarbekir, but without giving any commitment. This action was also kept secret from the pasha of Mosul, who was convinced that the issue must be settled by force.[27]

Bedr Khan's reply to the letter and request, in which he asked for *Rai ve Aman* (pardon and security of life), was prompted by his own fear. He was aware of all the dangers that he would face as a rebel and that he was considered disloyal to the sultan despite his contrary protestations.

After arriving in Zakho, Rassam's envoy sent a message to Bedr Khan to tell him that he was carrying a message to him and would like his permission to proceed, and when the request reached him, Bedr Khan immediately sent his secretary to escort the vice-consul's envoy to his headquarters.

Next day, Rassam reported the desertion of Ardasheer Beg, the elder son of Saif ul Din (سيف الدين) and his arrival at Mosul. Saif ul Din was the famous leader of Bohtan in whose name Bedr Khan Beg had carried out all his actions until only a few years before. He occupied a prominent place among all the Kurds, who looked on him as a holy man. The desertion of the twenty-year-old Ardasheer Beg, along with his younger brother, to the Ottoman camp created a sharp division among the Kurds and shifted the balance of power towards the Ottomans. This was a serious blow to Bedr Khan Beg and a great boost to the Ottomans, which strengthened their resolve to destroy their foe.

Ardasheer, for his part, announced that he believed Noor Allah Beg was leaning towards the Turks and against Bedr Khan. Consequently the pasha sent him an envoy with a private message. Both Ardasheer's desertion and Noor Allah Beg's approach to the Ottomans weakened Bedr Khan and forced him later to surrender himself to *Sar Askar* Osman Pasha. According to Ardasheer Beg, all these developments were a direct result of the message that the British ambassador had sent to Bedr Khan urging him to surrender peacefully to the Ottoman authority. Thus the message had influenced his decision to join the Turks with his two brothers, as had those of others.[28]

Meanwhile Bedr Khan dispatched his secretary Osman Pasha and Shaikh Yousif to Mosul to offer the pasha conditions for solving the crisis that practically amounted to surrender. The envoys were also anxious to know the real intentions of the Porte towards their master. Rassam communicated to Asaad Pasha and both Kurdish envoys the ambassador's wish to settle the issue peacefully, which required Bedr Khan to surrender himself to the Turkish army with guarantees to save his life and property. Rassam, however, believed that neither side would meet the ambassador's request. The two Kurdish envoys were unwilling to convey the message to their master, and after discharging them, the pasha informed Rassam that he had no instructions from the Porte on the subject; all that he had received were orders to prepare a certain number of men and provisions to be ready at short notice.

Consequently Rassam wrote to Bedr Khan, informing him that the Porte intended to subdue him by force if he did not surrender. He urged him to listen carefully to the ambassador's advice and not refuse the Porte's offer of clemency. Furthermore, he advised him that he had no hope of any resistance and would not be able to counter the huge army that would shortly advance against him. In conclusion, he warned him once again that if he lost this opportunity, he would not get the same favourable conditions later.[29]

19 May 1847

Rassam's envoy reported from al Jazirah that Bedr Khan was anxious to know the intentions of the Turkish government. If he went to Constantinople, he feared the British ambassador, who might raise the issue of the Nestorians with the sultan's government. Another deterrent was the continual arrival of messages from his supporters in Mosul and Diarbekir advising him not to listen to the British ambassador or his consul at Mosul. He thought that if he surrendered himself, he would meet his end, and if he were captured in the fight, he would have the same fate.

While the envoy was in Bedr Khan's quarters, information arrived that the Turkish commander-in-chief with several of his military commanders had arrived in Diarbekir. The place was filled with Kurdish leaders,

which forced Rassam's envoy to lodge with thirty of them, who treated him rudely, cursing him and accusing him of having brought about their leader's downfall. He was even more alarmed for his safety when he discovered that the wooden bridge across the Tigris had been destroyed, which obliged him to seek leave to visit a nearby village, from which he made his escape southward to Zakho. He was instructed, however, to write to Bedr Khan Beg informing him that if he wished to go with Yousif Effendi and was anxious to have his companionship, he must set out from *Feash Kahabour* (فيشخابور), a village west of Zakho. Bedr Khan replied that he would not surrender unless the sultan issued a *firman* freeing him from any blame for the affairs of the Nestorians and the Yazidis and offering him pardon.

Rassam's moves and contacts with Bedr Khan Beg annoyed the Pasha of Mosul, who viewed them as contradicting the policy of the sultan's government. Meanwhile Rassam's envoy Khawaja Anton reported that Ardasheer's supporters represented a formidable power and that his younger brother had barricaded himself in a castle which could be considered a key to the district of Bohtan.[30]

6. The Last Kurdish Battle and Its Aftermath

14 June 1847

Rassam reported that after all attempts to convince Bedr Khan Beg to surrender had failed, a fight broke out between the Turkish army and his force. According to the details that his informant reported, the *Sar Askar* was assembling his forces in large numbers for the upcoming contest. Bedr Khan Beg was occupying the other bank of the Tigris River, where clashes between the two sides had broken out and two Turkish soldiers had been killed. The Kurds' losses were unknown, despite the assistance sent by Khan Mahmud.

As for the Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, Rassam informed Wellesley that the news from their country indicated that Noor Allah Beg had released the detained Assyrian leaders. The country was now cautiously watching developments, and the people were keen not to disturb

their neighbours. The Kurds were involved in watching the Turks, and they were also keen for the moment not to disturb their neighbours.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of the Muslim population considered Bedr Khan as their protector and as a symbol of Islam against the infidels, and expressed their support for him. Those supporters were spreading rumours that the troops coming against him had been sent by the Europeans, not the sultan.

By the end of June 1847, Bedr Khan's affairs had reached a crisis under mounting British pressure to surrender and the Ottoman preparations to crush his power. His only way out was to take refuge in Persia. While in Dair Quli, Khawaja Anton learned that Bedr Khan had sent a messenger to the Persian shah asking for asylum.

However, Bedr Khan was defeated even before the Ottomans initiated their campaign. He had miscalculated his alliance and misjudged his supporters, including Noor Allah, who conspired against him with the Ottomans. His attempt to counter the Turkish threat by forming a united Kurdish front revealed that only Khan Mohammed had been honest with him and loyal to the common Kurdish cause to end the Turkish occupation. Faced with the bitter reality of the desertion of most of his former Kurdish allies, Bedr Khan remembered his Assyrian victims of Tiyari and Hakkari, hoping to gain their support and assistance in his upcoming conflict. Rassam learnt that he had asked Noor Allah Beg to arm the Assyrians and promised to send him the required arms if they lacked any. Bedr Khan does not seem to have realised that, just as in the days of their weakness, the Turks would impose their authority using the old weapon of enmity both between the various ethnic and religious groups and even within a single race, as they did with the Kurds. Thus the proposal to form an alliance came to nothing when all the leaders of the tribes refused Noor Allah's request.[31]

7. THE SURRENDER OF BEDR KHAN BEG

12 July 1847

As the Turks' campaign to eliminate Bedr Khan reached its final stage and their forces surrounded him from all sides to begin the final assault,

he learned that Ressoul Pasha (رسول باشا) had gone with Stevens' man to Baghdad, after he had lost any hope of Persian assistance. The Turkish forces were superior to his own, which left him unable to defend either himself or his territory. When the Turkish army attacked his camp on the mountain of *Arak Kaleh*, he could not withstand the pressure for more than a few days, especially after almost all the Kurds deserted him, reducing his force to some three hundred fighters. His project for fleeing the country and taking asylum in Persia had also aborted, so he found no way to escape the circle tightening around him except through surrender. That was what he did when he went for *Rai ve Aman* (الرأي والأمان).[32]

On 12 July 1847, Rassam reported to Ambassador Wellesley the long-awaited news of the end of the siege of Bedr Khan:

> The defection of Noor Allah Bey of Hakkary, who after tendering his submission had exerted himself to cut off a retreat to Persia, and the impossibility of any longer maintaining his position, decided the Mir to sue for Ray ve Aman, and on receiving it he rode into camp with five or six attendants.[33]

The fall of Bedr Khan Beg marked the end of the series of many Kurdish leaders: Khan Mahmud of Van was so discouraged by the outcome of the battle of the Sa'arat River that in despair he gave himself up to the Erzeroom division, while Rassam reported that Zenal Beg had either been captured by the Tiyari or else was lying badly wounded in the castle of Berwar. Omar Pasha, with his division, was marching to Mosul. This explains the message that Ross sent to Layard, in which he stated, 'Thus we may say that the Koordish war has terminated'.[34]

After the elimination of Bedr Khan Beg, it was considered that the region would be more under the authority of the sultan if all hereditary rulers were eliminated, among whom were Zenal Beg, who had participated in the last slaughter of the Tekhoma and had persistently mistreated the Christians in his district.

26 July 1847

Rassam communicated the result of the contest to subdue Bedr Khan to Cowley as he had received it from his informant in Bedr Khan's

headquarters at al Jazirah, Shammas Anton, the treasurer. The battle had not lasted more than two days. Bedr Khan himself had been sent to Diarbekir under strong guard. Several of his immediate followers who had taken part in the massacres against the Nestorians had been detained, but many others were still free, among them, Zenal Beg. Mulla Abdul Qaddus was considered the prime agitator who had preached constantly for eliminating the Assyrian males and enslaving the females, and his preaching had helped to support the Kurdish leader. Rassam urged that such individuals must not escape the punishment of the law. Now that the region had entered a new chapter, it was for the Ottoman government, if it had the will and determination, to impose law and order and to keep peace and tranquillity there. Moreover, if it wished to protect the Christians, all those who had mistreated the non-Kurdish inhabitants must be made to account for their actions and removed from the administration. This would also help the Ottomans to establish their authority firmly.[35]

The vice-consul attached with his dispatch the report of Shammas Anton, who described with many details the capture of Bedr Khan Beg and his imprisonment. He mentioned that four days after his departure from al Jazirah, he had reached the imperial camp at *Avrak Kaleh* (أفراك قلة), which belonged to Bedr Khan Beg. On Wednesday, the Ottoman army had assaulted Bedr Khan's entrenchment. Omar Pasha had ordered the beginning of the attack. The battle had lasted until the next day, and when it had been decided to ambush the place, the fighting had become so intense that Mustafa Pasha was killed. At 10 a.m. on Sunday, it was decided to start the final assault. Bedr Khan had then decided to surrender with his three hundred fighters, along with two cannon, asking for 'clemency', and then the Turkish commander had arrested the Kurdish leader himself.[36]

8. BEDR KHAN BEG IN CHAINS: 23 AUGUST 1847

Finally the mighty Kurdish leader had fallen from his glory, and a British informant at the scene of the operation reported that Bedr Khan Beg, along with his supporters, had been led through the bazaar of al

Jazirah on 23 August. Khan Mahmud of Van and Mofti Mulla Abdu Qaddus (ملا عبد القدوس) were among the large number of prisoners, who also included other begs, aghas, mullas, and shaikhs who had been Bedr Khan's senior supporters; they had been mounted and their legs chained to their horses. As for Noor Allah Beg, the news was that he had been sent to Hakkari escorted by a Turkish military force that would encamp there. Some other Kurdish leaders were still at large, such as Zenal Beg; Rassam advised Wellesley of his hiding place in the village of *Hallamoon* in Lower Tiyari. He also reported on the campaign of the *Sar Askar* in the region of Siarat (سعرت) against some local Kurdish leaders.

According to the reports, the conditions of the Christians improved immediately after Bedr Khan's defeat, because his fate convinced the other Kurdish leaders that they could no longer go on persecuting and exploiting them. The capture of their persecutor gave the oppressed Christians a chance to show their feelings, but they did not enjoy their release from oppression for long. The ninety-five-year-old bishop of Berwar, pressed by the persecution against his followers, was obliged to head to Mosul to present their sufferings to the pasha, while Abdul Samad was continuing his oppression and confiscating their possessions. Rassam introduced the bishop to the pasha. Despite Abdul Samad Beg's persecution of his followers, he begged the pasha to keep the Kurdish leader in his post and not replace him, because at least he did not rob the Christians to the limit and the appointment of a new governor would cause much of suffering, since the new governor would exceed even Abdul Samad in fleecing the poor Christians. However, Rassam noted that Beirakdar himself had ordered the Kurdish leader to treat the Christians harshly. Therefore the pasha preferred to keep him in his post as mutasalim of Berwar, especially after he confessed that in his conduct he was carrying out the orders of the former pasha of Mosul.[37]

Kurdish Desertion

The final determination of the sultan's government to eliminate Bedr Khan was ascribed to the pressure exerted by the British ambassador along with other representatives of the great powers in Constantinople.

When the Kurdish leader failed to meet the sultan's demand to surrender his independence, the Turkish army forced him to do so. The majority of the Kurdish leaders deserted him, including Noor Allah Beg, who had been the prime mover of the Assyrian massacre; he had even conspired against Bedr Khan before the Turks determined to attack him. He then joined the Turks in their campaign to destroy Bedr Khan and employed all his power to prevent him from escaping to Persia. Further blows were the desertion of his nephew and the refusal of Persia to offer him asylum.[38] Ross wrote to Layard, 'Thus we may say that the Koordish war has terminated'.[39]

Endnotes

1. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, January 13, 1844, Rassam to Canning.
2. F.O. 78/2698, Erzeroom, May 28, 1844, Lt. Col. Farrant to Canning.
3. Wilson, *Handbook*, 232.
4. F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 19, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
5. F.O. 195/227, Erzeroom, December 1, 1843, Brant to Canning.
6. Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:69.
7. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, January 13, 1844, Rassam to Canning.
8. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, April 6, 1844, Rassam to Canning.
9. Anderson, *History*, 1:334–342.
10. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, March 6, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
11. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, March 8, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
12. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, March 6, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
13. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 29, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
14. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, March 6, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley; Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 246; Badger, *The Nestorians*, 1:57.
15. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, January 13, 1844, Rassam to Canning; Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 329.
16. F.O. 195/228, Mosul, October 3, 1843, Rassam to Canning.
17. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, March 27, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
18. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 45.
19. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, April 5, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley; F.O. 78/2699, Mosul, October 19, 1846, Rassam to Wellesley.
20. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 3, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
21. F.O. 195/301, Mosul-Dair Quli, April 27, 1847, Bedr Khan Beg to Rassam, and F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 1, 1847, Rassam to Bedr Khan Beg.
22. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 1, 1847, Rassam to Bedr Khan Beg.
23. Ibid.
24. Rassam stated that 'Khan Mahmoud of Van also was so disheartened by the result of the battle of the Sert River, that in despair he gave himself up to the Erzeroom division'. See F.O. 195/301, Mosul, July 12, 1847, Rassam to Cowley.
25. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 3, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
26. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 16, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.

29. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, July 3, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
30. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 29, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
31. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, May 29, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
32. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 49.
33. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, July 12, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
34. Ibid.
35. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, July 26, 1847, Rassam to Cowley.
36. Ibid.
37. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, August 23, 1847, Rassam to Wellesley.
38. F.O. 195/301, Mosul, October 31, 1847, Rassam to Canning; Nawwar, *Tarikh al Iraq*, 1:312.
39. Ross, *Letters From the East*, 49.

Chapter 14

Conclusion

As their name implies, the Assyrians were the aboriginal inhabitants of northern Mesopotamia, where they survived for over two millennia after the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC, despite continual waves of foreign pillage and conquest. Even after these misfortunes drastically reduced the Assyrian population in the plains and the adjacent hill country, the independent Christian Assyrian tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari, who were faithful followers of the Church of the East, continued to live isolated in their ancestral homeland in the rugged mountains of ancient Assyria, serving as a unified ethnic and religious group who were able to maintain their Christian faith and independent presence amid the various surrounding Muslim groups.

One factor that may have contributed to the ultimate downfall of the tribes and their church was the labours of the Roman Catholic missionaries, who pursued their hostility to the doctrine of the Church of the East because they considered it a 'Nestorian heresy'. As has been shown, the isolation between the two churches was not the product of any truly serious doctrinal dispute, for contrary to what many writers have asserted,

the Church of the East accepted the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon regarding the nature and person of Christ—as, it appears, did Nestorius himself. The real cause of the schism between the Catholic Church and the Church of the East was the relatively minor issue (as appears later in the declaration of the pope and the patriarch of the Church of the East in their joint Christological declaration of 11 November 1994) of the Three Chapters passed by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. This difference could probably have been resolved far sooner if both churches had only managed to maintain the good and close relations with the Orthodox Church of the Byzantine Empire that they had enjoyed in the earlier decades of the sixth century. And so it seems fair to say that the real cause of the permanent schism was the political hostility between the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanids, on the one side, and the estrangement between the Orthodox Church and the papacy, on the other, rather than any really serious theological differences. As it was, however, the bad effects of this three-way cleavage appeared in the age of the Crusades and later; for it is at least arguable that, if the papacy had understood how close the doctrine of the Church of the East really was to its own, the crusaders would have treated the Assyrian Christians at least as well as they did the Armenians in the lands they conquered—and better than they did the Jacobites—and might conceivably also have done more to defend them against the inroads of the invaders from the east, mainly the Turks and later the Kurds.

However, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, several new factors were introduced into the arena, both regional and external, which seriously affected the existence of the tribes. The regional rivalry between the Ottoman and Persian empires became a decisive factor in shaping the course of events. This became obvious with the emergence of the two powerful dynasties of the Sunni Ottomans and the Shi'a Persian Safavids. Those two dynasties and their successors have ever since written the history of the whole region. The drive for domination by each of these emerging powers led eventually to the Battle of Chaldiran, where religious and doctrinal factors influenced the outcome of the hostilities. The homeland of the Assyrians was also to be affected by this development; it lay right

between the two rivals, while the surrounding regions, in particular to the south, continued to serve as a battleground between them.

Historically, the Battle of Chaldiran led to profound military, political, and ethnic changes. The Ottomans owed their victory to their alliance with their co-religionists the Sunni Kurds, mainly those of Azerbaijan, who had been harshly persecuted by the Shi'a Safavids. The Kurds, for their part, found a safe and prosperous shelter from persecution after Chaldiran. According to the agreement between the Ottoman sultan Selim I and the Kurdish leader Idris al Bidlisi, they were to be settled along the newly gained Ottoman eastern borders, which geographically matched the northeastern frontier of the modern state of Iraq. For their part, the Ottomans also had an interest in the arrangement, since it secured their eastern frontier, on the one hand, and so freed them to pursue their design and desire for expansion in Europe, on the other. Thus the settlement of the Persian Kurds along the eastern border was the first powerful action in changing the demographics of the Assyrian homeland.

The Assyrians as Element of Balance Between Ethnic Groups

Although the Kurdish settlement in Assyria after 1514 affected the Assyrians in the extreme eastern parts of their homeland, it did not seriously affect the independent tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari for several reasons, most notably the martial culture of the tribes and the inaccessibility of their country. While the new Kurdish settlements went some way to strengthen the circle around the tribes, they continued to maintain their independence and give significant support to those semi-independent Assyrians who had to make some degree of forced submission to the Kurdish aghas. At the same time, however, the tribes maintained good relations with their Kurdish partners in the emirate of Hakkari, who had settled in its eastern parts before the emergence of the Safavid state.

On other fronts, the Assyrians were to face the impact of the contemporary international development by which France introduced itself

as an ally to the Ottomans. This brought the Catholic missionaries to the region after Sultan Selim's award of concessions to France in 1535, determined to resume the efforts to bring the Christians of the Near and Middle East into communion with Rome, which had begun during the era of the Crusades. The missionaries entered the Ottoman Asiatic dominions as early as 1536 and soon after were able to penetrate among the followers of the original patriarchal line of Rabban Hormuzd. The continual labours of the Catholics involved many attempts to sow division among the Nestorian followers of the Church of the East, who were viewed by Rome as heretics. The first recorded attempt to 'reconcile' the Church of the East in 1551–1553 failed with the termination of the first Catholic patriarchal line in 1575; however, a fresh opportunity presented itself to Rome when a division in the patriarchal family led the bishop of Salamas, Jelu, and Si'arat to defect from his church and join the Catholics, who encourage him by appointing him as patriarch in 1580, thus creating a second rival line to the mother church, which has ever since been known as the line of Mar Shimun. This line drew its strength and support from the independent Assyrian tribes but did not maintain its allegiance to Rome for long, owing to opposition among both the clergy and the laity. By the middle of the seventeenth century, it had severed all its relations with Rome, and its followers had returned to the doctrine of the Church of the East. Among the Assyrian *Ra'aya* of both the Ottoman dominions and Persian Azerbaijan, however, the Roman Catholic missionaries eventually enjoyed greater success, and the resulting religious divisions contributed to a political disunity among the Assyrians of which the Ottomans were to take full advantage in the era of centralisation.

THE TRIBES AND THE KURDS

The Kurds remained loyal to the accord of 1514 as long as the Ottomans were enjoying power and greatness. But once the Ottomans' weakness was exposed in Europe, the Persians seized the opportunity to resume the expansionist policy of Ismael Shah. This time, Persia emerged under

Nadir Shah, who invaded the territory of ancient Assyria in 1743 with the full backing and support of the Kurds, whom he organised as a political entity forming what become known as the emirates. This was a further step to strengthening both the older Kurdish settlements, including those made after Chaldiran, and the newer ones that followed Nadir Shah's invasion. Hence the Assyrians living around the country of the independent tribes lost both land and numbers due to a continual series of invasions, wars, and deportations that were inflicted upon them during those turbulent times. After Nadir Shah's invasion, the independent tribes also faced further tightening of the Kurdish circle around their country, which cut them off from other Assyrian settlements in the region to the north and northwest of Nineveh, as well as those *Ra'aya* living in Persian Azerbaijan.

Once the weakness of the Ottoman authority was widely exposed again after Nadir Shah's invasion, a certain indifference to Ottoman rule took root throughout Mesopotamia and Assyria, particularly among the non-Turkish population. Consequently various ethnic and religious centres emerged and acquired varying degrees of internal self-government. These centres had no significant relations with the Ottoman central authority.

Hence from 1747 until 1831, many ethnic and religious centres joined the independent Assyrian tribes in acquiring a status of autonomy. Meanwhile the Ottomans, shaken by their defeats in Europe, took no military or even financial interest in their Asiatic 'backyard'. This state of affairs, however, lasted only until reign of the reformer, Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839), which witnessed the loss of much of the Ottomans' remaining possessions in Europe and Africa. Thereafter the sultan seems to have thought he had no alternative but to reconquer the Asiatic territories that his ancestors had annexed to their empire in the sixteenth century. In 1826 he began to implement reforms aimed at securing his grip on power and improving the effectiveness of his armed forces, and then in 1831 he was able to embark on his policy of centralisation. The Tanzimat reforms promulgated by Mahmud II and his successor Abdulmecid had little or no direct impact on the peoples of northern Mesopotamia as

long as they maintained their autonomy; however, by strengthening both the Ottoman administration and the army, they enabled the sultans at last to impose their effective authority on that part of their empire. This effort lasted until 1847 and turned the whole region into a battleground. For this, all the inhabitants of the non-Turkish autonomous regions paid the price, including both the Kurdish emirates and the Christians living around the country of the independent tribes; at last, in 1847 Ottoman rule was permanently established over the tribes themselves after Bedr Khan Beg's occupation of their country, which lasted from 1843 to 1847. The Assyrians, who had maintained their independence for ages in Tiyari and Hakkari, were then subjected to a systematic campaign of genocide and repression.

THE ASSYRIAN MASSACRE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In the end, the independence of the Assyrian tribes was destroyed not directly by the Turks but by their Kurdish neighbours under Turkish auspices. This took place following the Ottoman success in undermining the autonomy of the various Kurdish emirates, Yezidi centres, and Arab dynasties by a policy of divide and rule. The Ottomans reaped the fruit of the Kurds' internal dissensions and the actions of the Kurdish leader Bedr Khan Beg against the independent Assyrian tribes, whom he first fatally weakened and finally subdued during his invasions of 1843–1846. The tribes were forced by power of arms to join other Assyrian communities in the plains of Nineveh and Azerbaijan that had been turned into *Ra'aya* during the preceding centuries. Thus the massacres of 1843–1846 ended the long-lasting existence of the Assyrian people as an independent body, as attested by thousands of monuments, churches, towns, and villages that had existed in their homeland from time immemorial.

Thus the preceding chapters recount a distressing narrative that reveals how enmity between two different ethnic and religious peoples replaced a willingness to live side by side in coexistence and to maintain a positive relationship that could serve the best interests of both groups. Inevitably this led in the end to the removal of the weaker group from the

scene. Today the vast majority of the remnant of the Assyrian tribes and their brethren who once lived throughout the adjoining regions are scattered in diaspora communities throughout forty-two countries, among different cultures.

The ethnic and religious balance that could have contributed to the well being of all the inhabitants of northern Mesopotamia was terminated because their Islamic neighbours lost the will to coexist with the Christian Assyrians. This development claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent people and ultimately contributed to driving the remaining Assyrians from the land of their ancestors. Its after effects can still be seen in the ethnic tensions disturbing modern states of Turkey and Iraq.

APPENDIX A: THE LINE OF MAR SHIMUN

THE LINE OF MAR SHIMUN

During the period under study, the patriarchate of Mar Shimun contained the following structure:

1. Mar Shimun, the patriarch.
2. Mar Khnanishu, the metropolitan who consecrated the patriarch.
3. The bishopric of Mar Yonan in the district of Urmia, Persian Azerbaijan.
4. The bishopric of Mar Kebriel, Urmia.
5. The bishopric of Mar Yousif, Urmia.
6. The bishopric of Mar Elia, Urmia.
7. Metropolitan Mar Eshu.
8. The bishopric of Mar Dinkha.
9. Mar Youhanan, bishop of the district of D'rostaka.
10. Mar Silaiwa, bishop of the district of Gawir.
11. Mar Sarkees, bishop of the district of Jelu.
12. Mar Eshuyab, bishop of Berwar.

THE EXTENT OF THE FOLLOWERS OF THE MAR SHIMUN LINE

The geographical extent of the followers of Mar Shimun could be assessed from the following document, which illustrated the expansion of the church in the Ottoman Empire and Persia:[1]

Urmia: twenty-five thousand families in the city and villages throughout a district eighty miles along the western shore of Lake Urmia. In Urmia, there were sixteen hundred houses. They had five bishops.

1. Bishopric of Mar Gibrael Ardishi, a senior bishop
2. " " " Isha'a - Nazlo

3.	"	"	"	Elia - Gog Tapa
4.	"	"	"	Yonan - Kwelan
5.	"	"	"	Elia - Armodagh
6.	"	"	"	Solduz
7.	"	"	"	Merga Wa'ir
8.	"	"	"	Shamzdin—The seat of the metropolitan who officially consecrated the patriarch
9.	Bishopric of Mar Bishu.			An ancient bishopric with monuments dating back to the early centuries of the Christian era.
10.		"		of Gawir: Seat of two bishops.
11.		"		of upper Dasan (The district of the independent tribe of Jello)

Endnote

1. *Taqwem Qadim Lil Kanisa al Kildaniya*, published by Putrus Aziz (Beirut: Al Mashriq, 1909).

Appendix B: Assyrian Dioceses by Area/Region

Diocese of Mar Auraham of Gonduk (أبرشية مار أوراهم - كوندك).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Shermen	1	2	30	Near Akra in the Zebar region
Shosh	0	0	3	"
Goonduk	1	1	12	"
Artun	1	1	15	"
Ba-Mishmish	1	0	15	"
Erdel	1	1	14	In the Murzuiyeh region
Bekole	1	0	20	"
Another Village	1	1	16	Name unknown
Esyen	1	1	40	In the mountain district south of Jabel Gara (جبل كارا)
Ergen	1	0	10	"
Talneetha	1	1	6	"
Mezi	1	1	30	"
Barmeen	0	0	8	"
Adekh	1	0	15	"
Armashe	1	0	15	"
Total	**13**	**9**	**249**	

Diocese of Mar Yeshua-Yau of Berwari (أبرشية مار يشوعياب - برور).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Amadia	0	1	25	In the plain of Sapna
Deiri	1	0	12	"
Comane	1	0	13	"
Dirgni	1	2	40	"
Bilejan	0	0	8	"
Bibedi	1	1	20	"
Hamziyya	1	0	6	"
Dehe	1	0	20	"
Karoo	1	1	10	In the district of Naerwa
Alih	1	0	2	"
Bash	1	1	12	"
Welah	1	1	10	"
Tashish	1	1	20	Berwar
Jdeede	0	0	5	"

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Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Bekolke	0	0	5	Berwar
Tootha Shamaya	0	0	10	"
Maya	0	0	15	"
Deriske	0	0	15	"
Aina d'Nooni	1	1	20	"
Iyyet	1	1	5	"
Bishmiyaye	1	1	6	"
Doori	2	4	20	"
Helwa	1	1	7	"
Malkhtha	0	0	5	"
Akri	1	1	20	"
Bebaluk	1	1	10	"
Hayyis	1	0	15	"
Total	**20**	**18**	**348**	

Diocese of Bohtan[1] (أبرشية بوهتان).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
District of Bohtan	23	16	220	District of Bedr Khan Beg

[1]Mar Yousif, the metropolitan of Bohtan, died in 1846, and no successor has been appointed by the Mar Shimun, who has never visited this province. There are still two bishops here, Mar Shimun, who resides in the Atel district, and exercises Episcopal jurisdiction over twenty Nestorian villages in the mountains, and two or three in the valley of the Khabour between Zakho and Jezerah, and to contain in all (see "Diocese of Bohtan").

Diocese of Mar Shimun the Patriarch (أبرشيات تابعة للبطريرك مار شمعون).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Garamoon	1	2	80	In the district of Asheetha
Halamoon	1	2	50	Lower Tiyari
Tcalluk	1	1	40	"
Arosh	0	0	17	"
Hor	0	0	15	"
Teire Rezen	0	0	14	"
Asheetha	1	4	400[2]	"
Zaweetha	1	1	90	"
Minyanish	4	2	60	"
Merghe	0	1	80	"

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Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Kurkhe	0	0	35	"
Leezan	1	2	80	"
Oomra Tahtiya	1	0	00	n/a
Zerni	1	1	16	Lower Tiyari
Karukhta	0	0	6	"
Chamba d'Beth Soseena	1	1	25	"
Matha d' Kasra	2	2	40	"
Be-Zeezo	0	0	6	"
Lagippa	1	1	20	"
Be-Alatha	1	3	40	"
Be-Rawole	1	2	30	"
Shoord	0	0	12	"
Rawola d'Salabeken	1	5	120	"
Serspeedho	2	2	80	Upper Tiyari (تياري العليا)
Siyadhor	1	1	20	"
Chamba d' Be Ellia	0	1	6	"
Chamba d'Nene	0	0	7	"
Chamba d' Coordhaye	0	0	5	"
Mezzraa	0	0	4	Sub-District of the Church of Mar Sawa
Mrateetha	0	1	6	"
Be-Nahra	0	0	10	"
Be-Zrako	0	0	10	"
Roomta	0	1	20	"
Jeiatha	0	0	10	"
Reshe d' Nahra	0	0	20	"
Aina d'Aleete	0	0	3	"
Doora Allaya	0	0	6	"
Total	**22**	**36**	**1,463**	"
Kalaytha	1	1	40	"
Mezraa d' Kalayatha	0	0	3	"
Chamba d' Melek	1	0	60	"
Be-Dalyatha	0	0	12	"
Dadosh	1	0	35	"
Mabbuaa	1	1	20	"
Ko	1	1	30	"
Chamba d' Koodkhe	0	1	10	"
Be-Meriggo	1	1	20	"
Roma Smoka	0	0	5	"
Chamba d'Hasso	0	0	5	"
Darawa	1	1	30	"

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Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Malota	0	0	20	"
Chamba Hadtha	0	0	20	District of Waltoo
Zorawa	1	1	6	"
Seerta	1	1	66	"
Shwawootha	0	1	14	"
Matha d'Mart Miriam	1	1	100	"
Khadiana	1	1	90	"
Reshe d' Nahra	1	1	45	"
Total	**12**	**12**	**631**	"
Golozor	1	1	25	Province of Diz (إقليم دز)
Soowwa	1	0	6	"
Koorsen	1	0	20	"
Chiri Chare	1	1	40	"
Mades	1	1	18	"
Mar Kuriakos	1	1	5	"
Akose	1	1	25	"
Choolchan	1	0	6	"
Be-Shammasha	1	0	32	"
Saramos	1	0	18	"
Rabban dad'Yeshua	1	0	4	"
Makeeta	1	0	6	"
Alogippa	1	0	4	"

[2]This number does not match that given by other missionaries who resided among the people for long time, in addition to the statement of diplomats and others.

District O Berwar d'Kochanis (برور د قوجانس).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Kochanes	2	3	35	Province of Diz (إقليم دز)
Be-Nano	1	0	6	"
Nerwa	1	0	10	"
Kerkones	4	0	20	"
Keeger	1	0	12	"
Soreenes	1	0	10	"
Tamel	1	0	16	"
Be-Khajiji	1	0	6	"
Baros	1	0	12	"
Total	**59**	**56**	**2,496**	"

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District of Berwer Siweene (إقليم برور سويني).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Khardalanes	1	0	14	Province of Diz (إقليم دز)
Kotranes	1	0	25	"
Akhwanes	1	0	20	"
Shmooneenes	1	0	20	"
Siweene	1	0	30	"
Espin	1	0	20	"
Sallen	1	0	6	"
Goranes	1	0	20	"
Kerme	1	0	20	"
Oret	1	0	6	"

District of Berwer d'Shwawootha (إقليم برور شواووثا).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Shwawootha	1	1	20	Province of Diz (إقليم دز)
Sakerran	1	1	18	"
Derikki	1	0	6	"

District of Billijnaye (إقليم بليجناي).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Derres	1	0	15	Province of Diz (إقليم دز)
Awert	1	0	16	"
Daden	1	0	16	"
Be-Respi-1	0	0	14	"
Alas	1	0	20	"
Nauberi	0	0	6	"
Be-Respi-2	0	1	9	"

Diocese of Mar Seghees of Jelu—أبرشية مار سرجيس - جيلو.

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Gissa	1	1	50	The District of Jelu
Be-Arijai	1	1	100	"
Tkhoma Gawaya	1	1	120	"

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Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Merzaa	1	1	130	The District of Jelu
Goondooktha	1	1	110	"
Alsan	1	1	90	"
Medhi	0	0	5	"
Nahra	1	1	30	"
Zereni	1	1	110	"
Matha D'Mar Zeyya	1	1	50	"
Ummod	0	0	25	"
Talana	1	0	55	"
Be-Bokra	0	0	20	"
Nerik	0	0	28	"
Ori	0	0	5	"
Zer	1	1	100	"
Serpel	1	0	105	"
Boo Bawa	1	0	35	"
Samsikki	1	0	40	"
Matha d'Oriyaye	1	0	28	"
Musperan	1	0	22	"
Argeb	1	0	99	"

Province of Baz—إقليم باز.

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Kojeeja	1	0	20	The District of Jelu
Matha Tahteitha	1	1	100	"
Shwawootha	1	1	110	"
Orwantooz	1	1	80	The District of Baz
Heesh	0	1	10	"
Merkanish	0	0	8	"
Gebba	0	0	6	"
Erbeesh	4	1	20	"
Ba-Dare	1	1	35	"
Ba-Ikta	1	0	15	"
Be-Kooraye	1	1	52	"
Be-Azeza	1	1	40	The District of Tchal (إقليم جال)
Rabbat	1	1	70	"
Talana	1	0	22	"
Arewun	0	0	33	"
Ko	1	1	21	"
Irk	1	1	28	"
Be-Shooka	1	1	15	"

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Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Shawreza	0	0	6	The District of Tchal (اقليم جال)
Biyya	1	1	12	"
Be-Letha	1	1	28	"
Total				

(Diocese of Mar Sleewa of Gawar—أبرشية مار صليو).

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Be-Rberri	0	0	20	Province of Gawar
Zirkanes	1	0	16	"
Ooreesha	1	1	20	"
Darawe	1	1	20	"
Kiyyet	1	1	24	"
Manoonann	0	0	6	"
Kadeeyyan	0	1	30	"
Memekhan	1	1	13	"
Seen Awa	1	0	16	"
Khulkhus	1	0	16	"
Gebrel	1	1	20	"
Gagoran	1	0	15	"
Ba-Jirga	1	0	22	"
Wezeer Awa	1	0	19	"
Maken d'Awa	1	0	20	"
Pir Zalan	1	1	28	"
Cher Diwer	1	1	30	"
Zeezan	1	1	21	"
Pa Elan	1	1	20	"
Dara	1	0	13	"
Paghi	1	0	15	"
Serdesht	1	0	19	"
Dizza	1	0	60	"
Mar Be-Yeshu	1	1	100	"
Iyyel	1	1	28	"
Be-Zekte	1	1	125	"
Basan	1	1	20	The District of Derranye
Khananes Alleita	1	1	20	"
Khananes Tehteitha	1	1	25	"
Khananes Teheitha	1	1	38	"
Silmooan	1	0	12	"

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Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Khaleela	1	1	22	The District of Khananes
Hoze	0	0	25	"
Erji	0	0	20	"
Ates	0	0	30	"
Menjil Awa	0	0	12	The District of Albak
Khralun	0	0	10	"
Shareenes	0	0	7	"
Ozan	0	0	12	"
Poosan	1	0	14	"
Boorduk	1	0	18	"
Alamiyyan	1	0	20	"
Kalanes	1	1	24	"
Gezna	1	0	90	"
Parrashin	1	1	20	"
Kharaban	0	0	18	"

Additional District Dioceses Belonging to the Patriarch See.

Location	Churches	Priests	Families	Remarks
Erki	1	1	23	The District of Albak
Khergel	1	1	20	"
Matha d'Oomra	1	1	6	"
Nevgweezan	1	1	24	"
Zaranes	0	0	10	"
Kanoonta	0	0	8	"
Bellekken	0	0	8	"
Khandekki	1	1	20	"
Billi	0	1	15	"
Deira Zengel	1	0	10	"
Gohikki	0	0	6	"
Mar Yawnan	1	1	24	"
Oolama	1	0	20	"
Tcil Geri Tarkhilan	1	0	16	"

Diocese of Mar Hnan-Yeshua.

No specific details were provided, however, Badger stated that the number of the Assyrians in this large district: "There is another large district in central Koordistan, inhabited by Nestorians, called Be-Shems ood-Deen, under the Episcopal jurisdiction of Mar Hnan-Yesua, who resided at Rustaka. The Metropolitan of this province for the time being consecrates the Patriarch. He has three suffragans, whose dioceses include the districts of Ter, Gawar, Mar Gawar, Somava, Bradostnai, and Mohmedayeh. In Oroomiah there are four Bishops

and many neighbouring Nestorian villages. Mar Shimoon estimates the population of these dioceses at 4500 families." Badger, I. 399.

Badger summarised the total number of the bishops, priests, churches, and families as follows:

Dioceses	Metropolitans	Bishops	Priests	Churches	Families
Mar Auraham	1	0	9	13	249
Mar Yesua-Yau	1	0	18	20	348
Buhtan	0	2	16	23	220
Mar Shimoon	0	0	62	75	2778
Mar Serghees	1	0	24	37	1979
Mar Sleewa	1	0	18	34	1082
Mar Hnan-Yeshua	3	5	34	38	45000
Districts of Lewun and	0	0	7	9	222
Total	7	7	188	249	11378

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