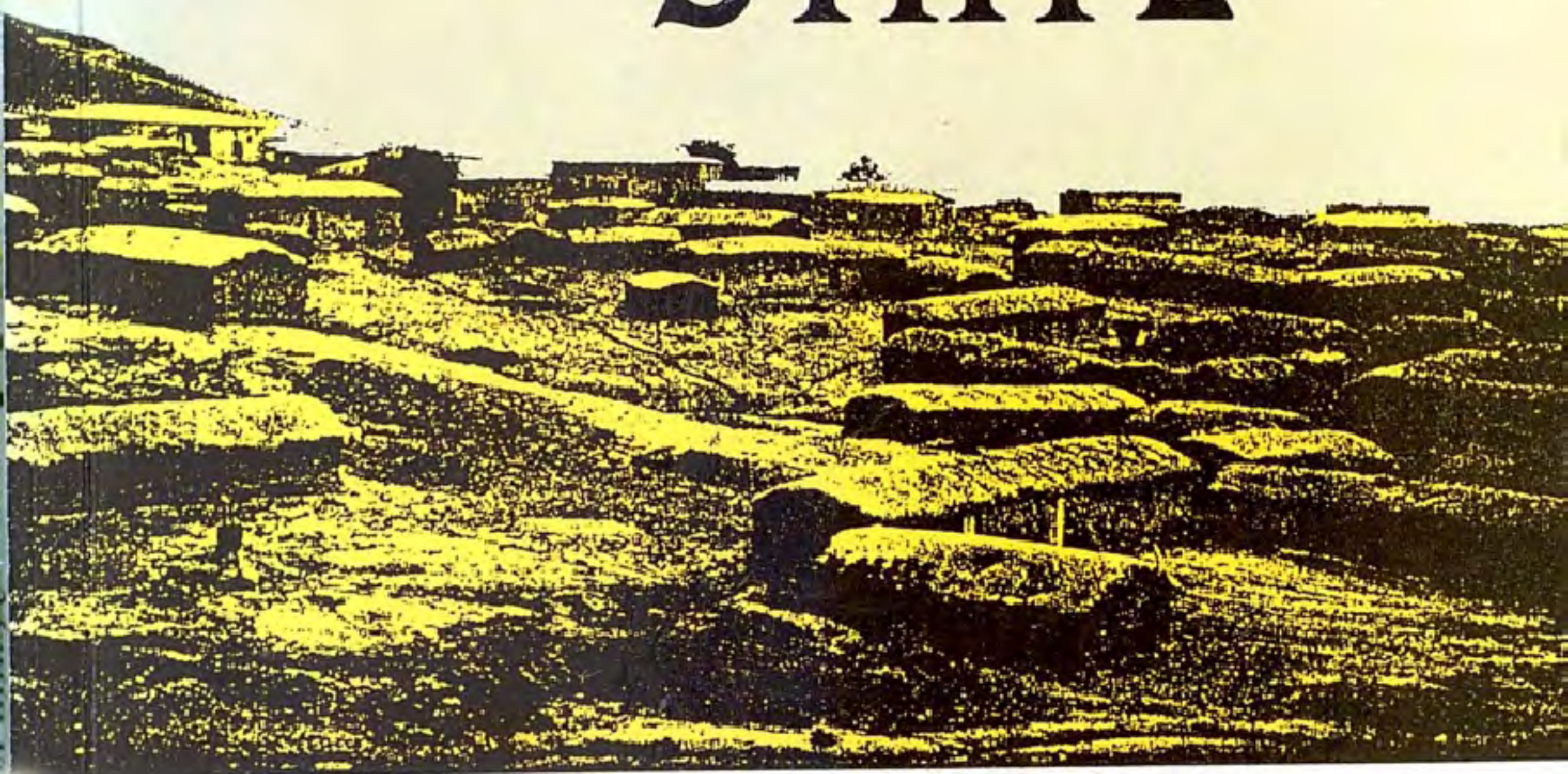


Martin van Bruinessen

AGHA, SHAIKH *and* STATE



— The —
Social and Political Structures
— of —
KURDISTAN

Agha, Shaikh and State

le 10 juillet

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a Schoonhoven

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Agha, Shaikh and State

The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan

Martin Van Bruinessen



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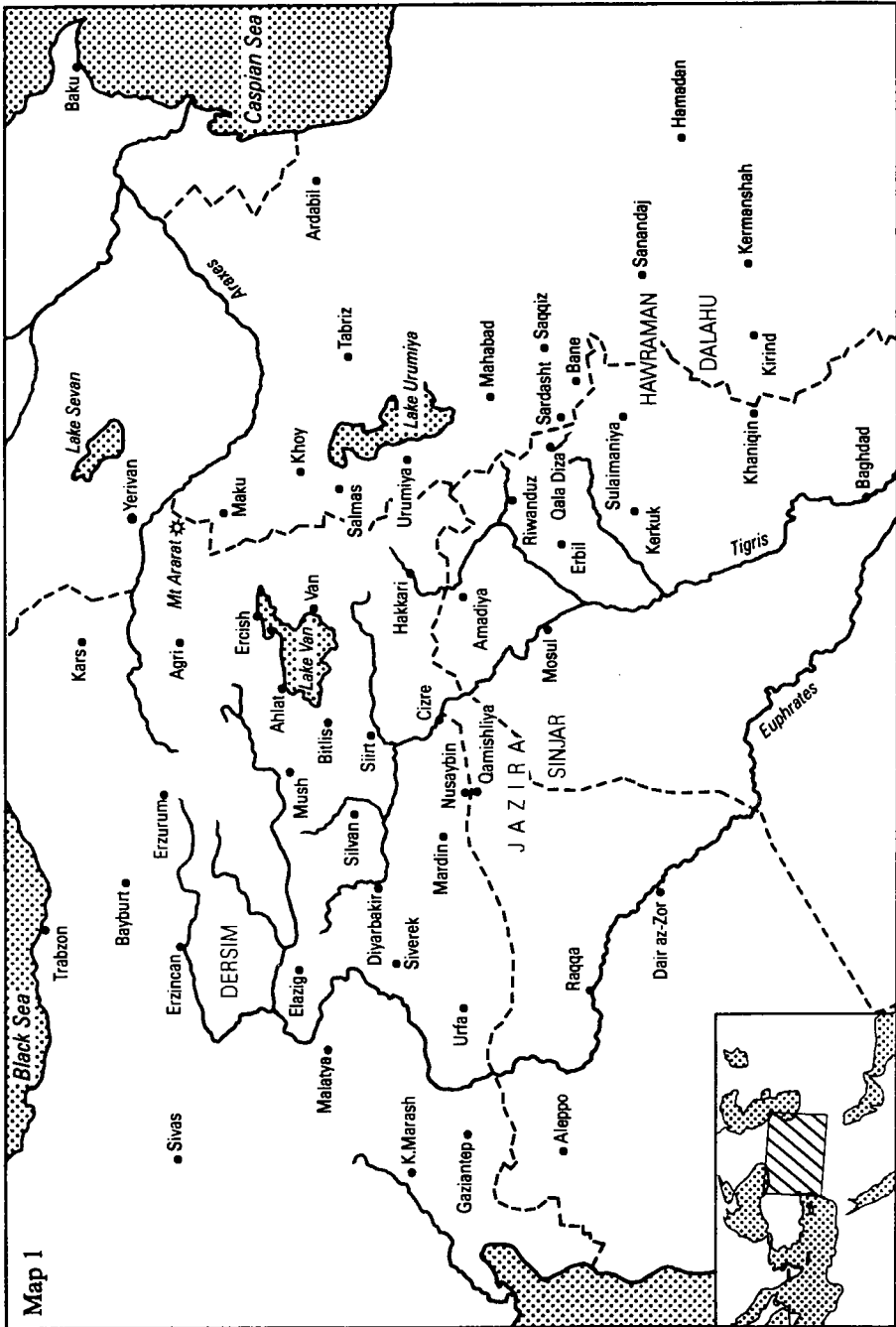
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Preface

This book is a revised edition of my doctoral dissertation which originally appeared in 1978. I have rewritten certain parts, left out some of the excessive detail, and added a few remarks on the developments since the book's first appearance, but have not made substantial changes to the major arguments. Since 1978 much literature has been published that is immediately relevant to the topics discussed here. Where appropriate I have made reference to these publications in the form of additional notes. There were one or two cases where later publications and my own subsequent findings forced me to revise my original views (notably on the *nurcu* movement, chapter 4); otherwise I have kept most of my interpretations and formulations as they were originally, even if now I might formulate them differently.

In gathering the information I owe great debts to many people and a few institutions. The Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research (ZWO) enabled me to spend almost two years in the Middle East with a generous research grant. The Public Record Office in London gave me access to its rich files and permission to quote from them. My supervisors at the University of Utrecht, Professor Thoden van Velzen and especially Professor van Baal, gave me support and stimulation and had the wisdom to allow me all the freedom I wanted. The major debt, however, I owe to all the Kurdish friends who helped me in the various stages of my research. Many of them may prefer not to be mentioned by name; I thank all of them and dedicate this book to them.



Introduction

How this book came to be written

This book bears the marks of the conditions under which it was researched. Several of the basic ideas occurred to me only in the course of my fieldwork, and I would probably not have conceived of them had the circumstances of the fieldwork been different. My interest in the Kurds was first aroused during a trip to the Middle East in 1967, when I was still a student of physics. Like so many visitors before me, I was awed by the landscapes of Kurdistan, pleasantly surprised by the hospitality of its inhabitants, impressed by their tales of national oppression and resistance. It was the beginning of a completely romantic fascination, which only gradually, in the course of subsequent visits, gave way to a more realistic appreciation. The fascination, however, remained, not least because of the difficult political situation of the Kurds in all those countries among which Kurdistan is divided, and the fact that they were permanently at odds with their governments.

Another result of my travels was that my intellectual interests shifted from the physical to the social sciences. I took courses in anthropology and sociology, and under the influence of the political and intellectual climate of the late 1960s became strongly interested in the theories concerning the related issues of peasant revolts, messianic movements, nationalism and class consciousness. It occurred to me that Kurdish history would provide an almost ideal testing ground for many of these theories, because, in this century alone, Kurdistan has seen many rebellions by peasants, with both messianic and nationalist overtones. But somehow the Kurdish case seemed to be different from the other, more popular cases often adduced to illustrate theories. The Kurds, to put it simply, seemed to be right-wing, whereas peasant revolutionaries are supposedly leftists.

In the Kurdish war in Iraq, begun in 1961, popular participation gradually increased, and in the late 1960s several thousand Kurds, mainly peasants, took active part in guerrilla warfare against successive Iraqi governments. During 1974–75 their number was to exceed 50,000. Moreover, as I noticed on several trips through Kurdistan, most of the

Kurds who did not actively fight identified themselves in one way or another with those who did. This was true, not only in Iraq, but also in other parts of Kurdistan. In terms of numbers, therefore, this was certainly a people's war, a peasant war comparable to the six that Wolf described in his major work on the subject (1969b).¹ But whereas these six movements were progressive (the peasantry were mobilized, at least in part, on the basis of their class interests, against their exploiters; the movements were anti-imperialist and aimed at the abolition of social injustice), the Kurdish movement had, especially since 1966, a conservative, even reactionary appearance, in spite of the justness of its demands. The Kurdish leadership seemed to wish for *more* imperialist interference in the region rather than less. Mulla Mustafa Barzani repeatedly expressed his warm feelings for the United States, which he wanted Kurdistan to join as the fifty-first state, and to which he was willing to grant control of the oil in Kurdistan in exchange for support.

The movement was gradually purged of leftist elements and it seemed that the traditional leaders, whose authority had at first been challenged by young urban nationalists, were able to consolidate or recuperate their positions as a consequence of their participation in the movement.² The vast majority of Iraqi Kurds supported Barzani in these attitudes. His more leftist rivals were followed by a small minority only.

The Kurdish movement thus seemed to contrast with another liberation movement of a largely tribal people, that of the Dhofaris in Oman. This movement had the reputation of being very revolutionary; it was one of the favourites of the leftist press, as the Kurdish movement was that of the conservative British and American press. There were two obvious reasons for this difference: the former movement fought a reactionary, oppressive, pro-Western regime, the second an authoritarian, reformist, oppressive, pro-Soviet regime, and the leadership in both movements had completely different backgrounds. But did these two factors alone explain the difference? It seemed to me that there must also be internal reasons why the Kurdish movement in Iraq became more openly conservative during 1964–66.³ To what degree did tribal organization and other 'primordial loyalties' (Alavi 1973) prevent poor peasants from defending their own rights against tribal chieftains and landlords, and make them fight for interests not their own? Were these loyalties breaking down, and if so, how and under what circumstances? What precisely was the impact of imperialism on traditional Kurdish society, and could this explain the nature of the Kurdish movement? These and similar questions were at the back of my mind when I started preparing fieldwork (1973).

I decided to concentrate on traditional power relations at the local level and the effect of increasing state control and incorporation into the world market on class relations and on the class consciousness of the middle and poor peasantry in particular. I intended to do this in the form of a rather traditional anthropological study, staying for a

considerable time (more than one year) in a very limited area (three or four contiguous villages), so that I would be able to collect hard data rather than the vague impressions that abound in the literature on the Kurds.

The choice of an area to carry out this research was restricted due to political factors. It could be foreseen that in the spring of 1974 a new war was to break out between the Kurds and the government of Iraq, and I did not expect to be welcome there. Turkey seemed equally uninviting to an anthropologist interested in the Kurds. In 1972, the Turkish sociologist, İsmail Beşikçi, had been sentenced to thirteen years' imprisonment because of a sociological and political study on the Kurds that was considered to be separatist propaganda (Beşikçi 1969 b).⁴ Persian Kurdistan seemed to offer the only possibility. I had been there twice on short visits and had selected an area that appeared to promise good prospects for studying at least some of the phenomena in which I was interested. It was sufficiently far removed from the Iraqi border, I then believed, to stay clear of complications caused by the coming war in Iraq, in which Iran was clearly going to be involved — although I did not know then to what extent. I made a formal request for a research permit and, when I received no satisfactory answer, went to Tehran in July 1974 to try to speed up proceedings.

My original application was turned down for reasons which were unclear, so I revised it and applied again, repeating this several times until I received an ultimate refusal in November. Meanwhile, I had made several trips: one to Kurdistan and two to the northeastern province of Khorasan, where there is also a sizeable Kurdish population. During these trips, I was confronted with a problem I was to face on many later occasions. Not having a research permit, I could only travel around as a tourist, which meant I could not stay very long in any one place; and when staying in a place for a short time only, it is mainly the locally powerful people one meets. It is usually only with them that intensive contacts are made. This is because they want to know everything that happens in the village; they want to meet every visitor, especially if foreign, and to know the reason for the visit. Entertaining visitors is the traditional privilege and obligation of the village chieftain; any commoner who takes on this role trespasses on the chieftain's privileges. An additional reason for my relatively frequent contacts with the rich and powerful of the village was my apprehension that common people might run into trouble for talking to me, as long as I did not have a research permit. It is more acceptable for the educated and wealthy to be in contact with foreigners. I was aware that so much contact with the top of the social pyramid and so little with the bottom could result in considerable misrepresentations, or at least in exaggerating the importance of 'entrepreneurs' and other 'strong men'⁵ in society. I could not, however, avoid spending a large part of my time with village headmen, tribal chieftains and shaikhs.

Later I found a way to broaden my social contacts: I preferred villages where I already had an acquaintance, met elsewhere, usually a village teacher or a son of the village shaikh who studied in town. As a friend rather than a complete stranger I had greater freedom to talk to whom I wished; staying with the shaikh also allowed me to talk to many of the less privileged, since all the ranks visit the shaikh regularly. Nevertheless, the powerful and their views are no doubt overrepresented in my fieldnotes, and thus in the book.

My visits to the Kurds of Khorasan first made me aware of the narrow interrelation of tribal organization and administrative policies of the state: tribal confederations here appeared to be originally *created* by the state, and the paramount chieftains accepted by the tribes had, at least for the past century, received official titles from the shahs (see Chapter 3). At first I thought that this was an atypical situation and began to read historical source materials to discover how this had come about. I noted later that most Kurdish tribes have long been similarly affected by the surrounding states. I was more likely to hear this kind of information from chieftains than from commoners, and, in fact, collected much of it in this way. I supplemented my field research with a critical reading of primary and secondary sources of the past four centuries, which gave form to Chapter 3 of the book.

On my first two trips to Persian Kurdistan I spent much time with shaikhs and dervishes. Somewhat to my astonishment I found that there were many other travellers on the road, Kurds from Iraq who had come to Iran as refugees or on mysterious duty for 'the Revolution', as the nationalist movement was usually called. In Rezaye, over-zealous SAVAK officials had tried to prevent my seeing the Iraqi Kurds, but when I stayed in minor towns, such as Sardasht, Bane and Mariwan, it was impossible not to meet them: we usually shared the same hotel rooms. In this way I received my first impressions (apart from newspaper reports) of what had been happening in Iraqi Kurdistan since the outbreak of the war. I also became aware of the extent of Iran's involvement, which was even more considerable than I had expected. Iraqi Kurds I met suggested that I might be able to do research in the liberated areas of Iraqi Kurdistan if I applied for permission to the Kurdish representation in Tehran. This I did as soon as it was obvious that I would not receive permission for research in Iran. The Kurdish representatives were courteous and helpful, and responded positively. On 6 February 1975 I crossed the border into Iraqi Kurdistan, still intending to carry out research as originally planned. Although the war would restrict my freedom of movement, it would, nevertheless, provide a unique opportunity to study Kurdish society in a war situation — a situation more normal for the Kurds than peace. These would also be favourable conditions for studying the problem of national versus tribal or class loyalties. Six weeks after my arrival I had to leave again, together with all Kurdish fighters and a large number of the civilian

population, because the Kurdish movement had collapsed. The Shah, on whom the Kurdish movement had made itself completely dependent, had reached an agreement with the Iraqi regime, his traditional enemies, and immediately stopped all support of the Kurds – with dramatic consequences. The Kurds saw themselves forced to either surrender to Iraqi troops or take refuge in Iran. Some considered continuing partisan resistance; the Kurdish leadership forbade them to do so. Villagers fled en masse to Iran; by March 20 almost the entire Balik area, where I was staying, was evacuated.

The six weeks I spent in Iraqi Kurdistan left a deeper impression on me than any other period of my fieldwork. Every day I was confronted with human misery, despair, sickness and death. When the collapse set in, many conflicts within Kurdish society and the Kurdish movement – until then carefully hidden – came out into the open. It taught me much about Kurdish society, but it was a traumatic experience – I had become strongly involved emotionally. After my return to Iran I remained in close contact with refugees and had long interviews with dissidents who were then ready to talk to me more openly.

Because of these events and the difficulties in obtaining permission, I decided to continue my research by visiting a number of other parts of Kurdistan and surveying a variety of forms of social organization and processes of social change. My focus was to be mainly Turkish Kurdistan because of its large size and the greater freedom it offered for travellers.

From June 1975 to August 1976, I travelled in different parts of Turkish, Syrian and Persian Kurdistan, in most places unable to observe directly much that I was interested in. Interviews thus constitute a larger proportion of my field material than is usual in anthropological fieldwork, many of them dealing with situations and events in the past. My informants' imprecision regarding dates and concrete historical contexts was another reason to supplement my fieldwork with extensive reading of written sources.

An obvious problem in the approach I adopted is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find really comparable data from different times and/or places. Due to the short time I stayed in most places, I found it generally impossible to collect quantitative data. Similarly, the unstructured interviews that were part of my method gave me much material at each place, but never exactly parallel to that collected at others. The interviews were guided by my informants' interests as well as by my own. On the other hand, it was precisely by not leading the interviews too strictly that I obtained really interesting, unexpected material. My own views were significantly changed by my informants (be it not always in the direction they wished). I found it even more difficult to compare observations. One is not likely to witness, for instance, conflicts of the same kind in more than one place. The same may be said of the historical sources. The tomes that I read my way

through contained many gems for the collector of *curiosa*, but relatively little that I could use. In many cases the kind of material I was looking for, in order to compare a present state of affairs with that in the past, was lacking. This study, then, is largely an exploratory one, not one in which theories are put to the test. Only a fraction of the material I collected could be brought together in a more or less coherent framework. Even so, the descriptive material is very dense. It certainly does not suggest simple answers to the questions I posed, but I believe it may help at least in making our formulation of those questions more precise.

Subject of this study

This book deals with what Alavi (1973) calls 'primordial loyalties'. Alavi introduced this term to describe group ties such as kinship and caste that prevent poor peasants perceiving class contradictions and that make them act against their objective interests. In the Pakistani case he describes, these loyalties are those of kinship, caste, and especially patron-client ties. In Kurdistan, other, but equally primordial, loyalties profoundly affect politics. Primordial though these loyalties are, they operate within the context of the most important conflicts of modern world politics. The struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union and the conflicts related to the oil crisis affected Kurdistan more directly than they affected my own country, the Netherlands. It would therefore be naive to study these primordial loyalties without reference to the external factors that influence and modify them.

The primordial loyalties of Kurdistan are firstly those to the family and tribe and to the tribal chieftain or *agha*. Equally strong are religious loyalties, especially those to shaikhs, the popular mystics or saints who are also leaders of the religious brotherhoods (dervish orders). Strong efforts have been made to make a breach in these loyalties, largely in vain. In Turkey it was at first Atatürk who tried to break the power of the *aghas* and shaikhs by measures from above, while over the past decade a generation of young socialists has attempted to mobilize the peasantry along class lines. Nevertheless, Kurdish peasants and herdsmen continue to follow their *aghas* and shaikhs. In elections the successful candidates are nearly always *aghas* and shaiks or their men. Even where the relationship between tribesmen and their *agha* has become more openly exploitative and the exploitation is no longer compensated for by the *agha's* usefulness, loyalty to him persists for a long time. Capitalism is often said to be the most powerful agent in breaking up such ties of loyalty, but it certainly does not do so immediately. On the other hand, the existence of primordial loyalties and their apparent ubiquity do not preclude the functioning of other loyalties. Conversely, when new loyalties such as those of nation and class emerge, the primordial ones do not suddenly cease to function. It

often happens that these different loyalties interact with and mutually modify each other. The concrete situation then defines which of the loyalties will be most forcefully asserted.⁶

At a political meeting of immigrant workers from Turkey I once talked with a small group of people who were active in a socialist workers' union. They were quite class conscious men. When I heard that they were from eastern Turkey I switched from Turkish to Kurdish. Immediately the discussion became more cordial; we were temporarily an in-group from which our Turkish friends were excluded. After some time I told them that I was the friend of an influential shaiikh from their district, expecting that this would provoke them. To my astonishment, however, my standing with them rose even more: although they were not very religious, they associated themselves emotionally with this shaiikh.

Kurdish nationalism and the tribal and religious loyalties stand in an ambivalent relation to each other. On the one hand, the first Kurdish nationalists were from the ranks of the traditional authorities, shaiikhs and *aghas*. It was, in fact, precisely because of the primordial loyalties to these leaders and to the values they embodied that the nationalist movement acquired its mass character. On the other hand, the perpetual conflicts and rivalries between these traditional leaders prevented and still prevent the Kurds from really uniting. The very fact that a certain chieftain participated in the nationalist movement was often sufficient reason for his rivals to oppose it, and most commoners followed their chieftains without question. Even in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1974, when nationalist sentiment was quite general, and when a decisive war between the Kurdish national movement and the Iraqi regime broke out, it was in many cases the chieftains' position that decided whether a tribe would join the Kurdish movement, try to remain neutral, or actively oppose it.

This book deals in the first place with the primordial loyalties. I describe tribes and dervish orders as I found them functioning in Kurdistan, or as I reconstructed their functioning in the past from interviews and literature, and I try to explain some of their characteristics. Secondly, I try to establish how they were and are influenced by external factors, and to trace how Kurdish nationalism developed in interaction with these primordial loyalties. After a first chapter with some general information, Chapter 2 describes the structure of the Kurdish tribe, at first in the abstract, then with descriptions of specific tribes of different degrees of complexity. The role of the chieftains is studied, and it is shown how leadership and conflicts are closely interrelated. The importance of the shaiikhs is also connected with tribal conflict: shaiikhs are in an ideal position to mediate in such conflicts and their role as conflict resolvers in turn increases their political powers. Chapter 4 deals with the shaiiks and with the dervish orders of which they are the leaders. Both because so little has been

written about these orders and because of my own fascination with them, I describe more than only those aspects that have political relevance: philosophy and ritual receive much attention. I propose an explanation for the rapid rise of one order in the past century and the prominent role it has played in Kurdish nationalism since then.

The shaikh's association with the divine represents one external source of worldly power, another is constituted by surrounding states. Many aspiring chieftains derived power in their society from alliance with, or vassalage to, a neighbouring state. In Chapter 3, I present historical material to illustrate my thesis that the present Kurdish tribes are not autonomous units but are, in a way, creations of the surrounding states. Elements from these chapters are brought together in Chapter 5, where an important Kurdish nationalist revolt is discussed. Primordial loyalties, loyalty to the nation (still an ambiguous concept at that time), the resistance of peasants to economic exploitation, and tribe-state relations are shown in action and in interaction.

With its concentration on the primordial loyalties, this book cannot and does not pretend to give a comprehensive view of Kurdish society. Important aspects such as urbanization and migration, the activities of political parties and trade unions, and what is even more important, economic relations are not discussed. The topics that are discussed here are not sufficient, but certainly necessary for an understanding of the political events in Kurdistan during the past decades.

A note on the written sources

For all chapters of this book I have made extensive use of written material; the bibliography and the notes refer to these sources. A few words about the sources that I found most useful and to which I refer most frequently follow here. The two most important oriental works I have used are the *Sharafname*, by Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, and Evliya Chelebi's *Seyahatname* or 'Book of Travels'. The *Sharafname* was written in the final decade of the sixteenth century by the former ruler of the emirate of Bitlis, who had abdicated in favour of his son. It is a history of the Kurdish emirates, or rather of their ruling families. This chronicle is an extremely erudite work, the author (who had travelled much) had apparently spent a lifetime collecting the information contained in it. Its detailed accounts give a vivid picture of the political activities of the Kurdish rulers and of their dealings with the powerful states surrounding them. References are to the edition of the Persian text (by V. Veliaminof-Zernof) and the French translation (by F.B. Charmoy) that were first published in St. Petersburg (1860-75) and republished in England in 1969.

The *Seyahatname* is one of the most interesting sources on the social, political, economic and cultural life in the Ottoman Empire of the

seventeenth century. The author had travelled extensively throughout the empire and even to its neighbours, Iran and Austria. In 1655 and 1656 he travelled to many different parts of Kurdistan, taking notes on virtually everything. He showed himself to be a good observer, with truly catholic interests, and his notes (in books 4 and 5) are a rich mine of information. Unfortunately, the printed editions of the *Seyahatname* are highly unsatisfactory. A first printed edition was published in Istanbul (1896–1938), the first eight volumes in Arabic script, the last two in the Roman alphabet. The first volumes especially were seriously mutilated, both by Abdulhamid's censors and by the editor's inclination to leave out or 'correct' what he did not understand. There is no better edition yet, although Evliya's original manuscript has since been found, which should make it easier to produce an authoritative edition.⁷ A recent popular edition (by T. Kemel Kuran and N. Aktaş) follows the first edition closely. References are to this edition; where I wished to be sure of the precise terms used by Evliya I used my microfilm of the original manuscript.

Among the many secondary sources on Ottoman history one of the most important is still Hammer's *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches*. The author used a large corpus of primary sources that he had collected as manuscripts. It is a useful summary of the Ottoman historians, also on developments in Kurdistan. In many respects the work is still unsurpassed. The corpus of scholarly studies on Ottoman history is rapidly growing, but surprisingly few of these studies refer to Kurdistan. Persian history is less well explored, and here too the Kurds have received relatively little attention. Given this relative neglect, Minorsky's article 'Kurden' in the *Encyclopædie des Islam* is still an outstanding achievement, one of the essential secondary sources.

Reports by Europeans travelling through Kurdistan are sometimes interesting additional primary sources. There are enough of these to fill an entire library, and I have not been able to peruse all of them. Most useful I found those by Rich, Layard and Fraser.

When the British occupied Iraq in the First World War, the task of setting up an administration in the provinces and of establishing and maintaining the Pax Britannica fell into the hands of political officers and assistant political officers, several of whom were orientalist. Some of them published books or articles about their experiences, which make interesting reading. Edmonds' book (1957) is by far the best of the genre; he was an able linguist and a competent observer, and he acquired a profound knowledge of Kurdistan. Raw material of a similar kind is contained in the British Foreign Office files at the Public Record Office: consular dispatches, field reports from officials, etc. I consulted the FO 371 files for Turkey, Iraq and Persia for the years 1917–1938.

The last category of useful written sources is the local histories (usually written by local people). The ones most frequently used are those by Firat (1970) and Dersimi (1952).

Notes

1. These were the Mexican, Chinese, Vietnamese, Algerian and Cuban revolutions.
2. These aspects were stressed (and duly exaggerated) by official Iraqi propaganda. It should be noted, however, that the Iraqi regimes have also often allied themselves with such Kurdish traditional authorities in their attempts to counter the influence of Barzani and the Kurdish nationalists.
3. A watershed event in this gradual development was the split in the party and the virtual elimination of the urban radical elements from the leadership of the movement in 1964. See: Vanly 1970: 218–25; Kutschera 1979: 246–52; Jawad 1981: 163–73; Ibrahim 1983: 517–32.
4. Beşikçi had been tried during the martial law period of 1971–73. The first freely elected government after this period issued an amnesty law in 1974, under which he was released again. He continued his involvement in the Kurdish problem and published several books critical of Kemalist ideology and policies towards the Kurds, for which he was sent to prison again (1979). After he had completed this prison term, a letter he had smuggled out of prison and sent abroad became the pretext for another prison sentence, lasting until 1987.
5. For a well-made criticism of what its author calls the 'big man paradigm', as embraced by Bailey, Barth, et al., see Thoden van Velzen 1973.
6. I would not be doing Alavi justice if I did not mention that he also emphasizes this fact: 'We find that the factional mode of politics in peasant societies is not a repudiation of the model of class conflict; the two depict different modes of political alignments, in different conditions. Furthermore, primordial loyalties, such as those of kinship, which precede manifestations of class solidarity do not rule out the latter; rather they mediate complex political processes through which the latter are crystallized' (Alavi 1973: 59).
7. A part of Evliya's 'Kurdish' travel notes, dealing with Diyarbakir, has been edited, translated and annotated by myself and four colleagues at Utrecht University (Van Bruinessen and Boeschoten 1988).

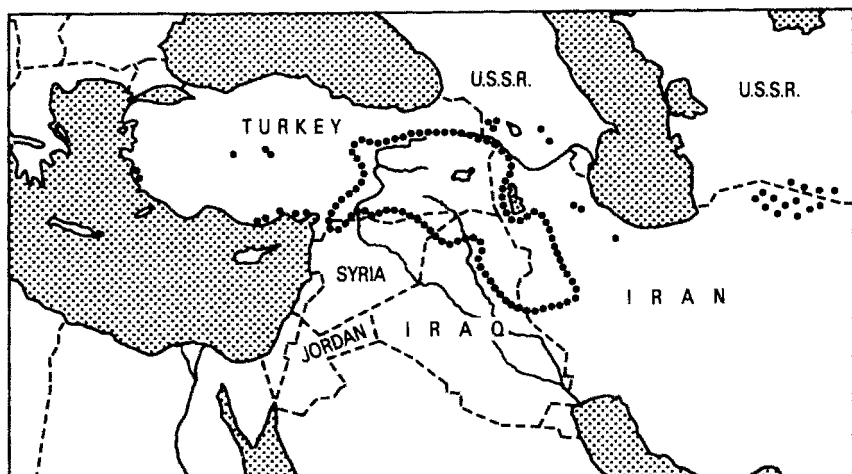
1. General Information on Kurdistan

Geography

Kurdistan ('the land of the Kurds') is a strategically located region of the Middle East, comprising important parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. There has never been a state of that name. In the Ottoman Empire the name of Kurdistan was used to denote only a part of the entire territory inhabited by Kurds (the province of Diyarbakir); similarly Iran has a province called Kordestan which comprises approximately a third of its Kurdish-inhabited territories. Map 2 shows approximately the area where Kurds constitute a majority of the population. It is based on a map presented to the United Nations by the Kurdish nationalists in 1948. I found this map correct wherever I had the opportunity to check it.¹ When I speak of Kurdistan in this book, I mean the area indicated in this map. Many Kurds live outside Kurdistan thus defined. There is a large Kurdish enclave (several hundreds of thousands) in Iran's northeastern province of Khorasan and the contiguous parts of Soviet Turkistan; there are other important enclaves in Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in western Turkey. Some of the latter, in the cotton-growing Aegean and Mediterranean coastal regions and in the big cities, continue to grow rapidly in numbers, due to labour migration.

The heart of Kurdistan consists of forbidding mountains that have always deterred invading armies and provided a refuge to the persecuted and to bandits. The eastern or Kurdish Taurus and the Zagros chain form its backbone, stretching roughly from the northwest to the southeast. On the southwestern flank a large number of parallel, often very high and steep folds gradually lower towards the Mesopotamian plains. To the north and northeast the landscape changes into a steppe-like plateau and highlands. The high plateau north of the gigantic Lake Van, where the Euphrates and the Tigris have their sources, used to be called the Armenian plateau because the population was largely Armenian; Kurds have lived there only for the last few centuries. Since the deportation and murder of many Armenians (in the First World War), and the flight of most others, this

plateau too is mainly inhabited by Kurds. The lowland plains in the south and the highland plateaus in the east form a natural boundary of Kurdistan. This reflects the fact that the Kurds are superior mountain warriors, whilst their Arab neighbours in the south and the Azeri Turks in the east are masters of war in the plains. In the northwest there is no such sharp boundary; Kurdish and Turkish groups merge gradually. The southeastern boundary of Kurdistan is rather arbitrary; the Lur and Bakhtiari tribes that live there share many cultural traits with the Kurds, and many Kurdish nationalists consider them to be so. I include only those Lur tribes that speak the Leki dialect and generally consider themselves as Kurds, while the others do not.



Map 2. The Kurds in the Middle East.

..... area inhabited by a Kurdish majority

•• sizeable Kurdish enclaves outside Kurdistan proper

Due to the continental climate and the high elevation, Kurdistan has extremely cold winters. Much snow falls in December through February, isolating many mountain villages. As late as April, communications may be seriously hampered by heavy snowfalls. It is these severe winters that are in part to blame for the rapid deforestation of Kurdistan; every winter many trees are cut down and burnt for heating (kerosene is cheaply available in Iran and Iraq only; but even there, wood is still commonly used as fuel). Another evil-doer is the goat, killing shrub and young trees by eating their green parts. From travellers' reports it is clear that a century ago much of Kurdistan's mountainous core was forest-clad. Little of these woods remains. The results are obvious: erosion and loss of fertility in the valleys because the water is no longer retained and distributed more evenly by forests. Kurdistan lies in an earthquake belt,

and almost every year parts of Kurdistan are struck by earthquakes. Recent serious quakes occurred at Lice (northeast of Diyarbakir) in July 1975, and at Muradiye (north of Van) in November 1976. Both caused many deaths; numbers of 4,000 and 10,000 respectively were mentioned in the press. In many cases, poor communications and political factors prevent aid from reaching the stricken areas in time or at all, which increases dramatically the number of victims.

Thus, in Muradiye, many more people died *after* the quake than *in* it. Forced to stay out in the open because the tents that were sent did not reach their destinations, many literally froze to death. Foodstuffs and other aid supplies that were sent disappeared before they reached the earthquake area. Villagers saw themselves forced to sell their animals because they could not feed them, so that many survivors of the catastrophe were economically ruined.

Geopolitical situation

The inaccessibility of Kurdistan and the fierce warring capacities of its inhabitants have always made it a natural frontier of the empires that emerged around it (see chapter 3). None of these empires could maintain sovereignty in more than a part of Kurdistan. As a consequence, Kurdistan became divided by the political borderlines of surrounding states. Wars between the Ottoman and Persian empires fixed the present boundary of Iran with Turkey and Iraq. The British and French conquests in the First World War cut Syria and Iraq away from the Ottoman Empire (see Chapter 4). These interstate boundaries cut Kurdistan into four parts, often dissecting tribal territories. I shall refer to these parts as Turkish, Persian, Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan. Another important borderline, which does not cut through Kurdistan proper but touches on it, is that of the USSR. The proximity of this border made Kurdistan an object of concern to both Soviet leaders and those of the capitalist world — a fact which had important consequences for the history of Kurdistan in this century. A country that does not have a direct border with Kurdistan, but has an obvious and great interest in it, is Israel. In times of Kurdish-Arab confrontation the Kurds seem a natural ally. From 1967 onwards, and maybe even earlier, the Iraqi Kurdish leader Barzani received financial aid from Israel.

There are two overland motor routes from Europe into Asia (apart from those through the USSR). Both pass through Kurdistan. Also the important rail routes Istanbul–Tehran and Istanbul–Baghdad pass through Kurdistan.

Very important oil deposits are exploited in Mosul, Kirkuk and Khanaqin (it is not accidental that all three are in Iraq; they were the very reason why Great Britain created the political entity, Iraq). Minor deposits are exploited in Rumailan (northeastern Syria) and in Batman

(Turkey). Other minerals found in Kurdistan in significant quantities are chrome, copper, iron, coal and lignite.

Population

Estimates of the total number of Kurds vary widely. In population censuses Kurds are either not counted separately, or a very narrow definition of 'Kurd' is employed, so that only a fraction are counted (for instance only those who do not speak Turkish at all, but only Kurdish). Thus, the 1955 census in Turkey found 1.5 million Kurdish speakers among a total of 24 million inhabitants,² which was less than half the number of Kurds then living in Turkey. The statistics published there later made no mention of Kurds at all. The situation is similar in the other countries, which do at least acknowledge the existence of Kurds there. It is, therefore, not possible to give any but the most crude demographic estimates. The figures in table 1.1, for the year 1975, are based on an interpretation of the existing older statistics.

Turkey From the 1970 census results per sub-province (ilche) and an estimate of the proportion of Kurds among the population of each of these, I calculated that there were 5.7 million Kurds living in Turkish Kurdistan in 1970 or, with a correction for overall population increase (13%), 6.5 million in 1975. To this should be added the number of Kurds living elsewhere in Turkey. Vanli (n.d.) estimated their number in 1965 to be 1.5 million, corresponding to 2.2 million in 1975. I found it impossible to check this estimate, but my impression from visits to the big cities and the coastal regions is that there were at least a million, and probably many more. An estimate of 7.5 million Kurds in Turkey in 1975 seems therefore reasonable, and even conservative. It should be noted that Kurds often claim that many persons in Kurdistan remain uncounted in the national censuses, which is not unlikely given the method of census-taking.³ On the occasion of the recent (1985) population count it was observed that in spite of massive migration to the west, the eastern provinces showed a more rapid population growth than the rest of the country, so that the percentage of the Kurds among the total population keeps increasing.

Iraq I am not aware of any recent reliable statistics. In the censuses of 1922-24 and 1935, when the number of Kurds was probably counted reliably, they constituted c. 23% of Iraq's total population.⁴ This percentage may have decreased slightly as a result of many years of war in Iraqi Kurdistan and the deportation of Kurds of supposedly Iranian origin to Iran by the Baghdad government. Iraq's total population was c. 11 million in 1975; I estimate the number of Kurds, reluctantly, at 2 to 2.5 million. Vanli, using recent official statistics and oral information

from provincial governors, but making low estimates of non-Kurdish minorities in Kurdistan and high ones of the Kurds elsewhere, arrives at an estimate of 3.1 million, which I believe is too high.⁵

Iran The censuses of 1956 and 1966 did not count the Kurds separately. However, some 10% of the population were registered as Sunni Muslims.⁶ This implies that the Kurds constituted well over 10% of the population. Apart from the Kurds, only the not very numerous Turkomans and some small minority groups in eastern Iran are Sunnis, while on the other hand many Kurds in the province of Kermanshahan and all those of Khorasan are Shiites. The estimate, made in the semi-official *Almanac of Iran*,⁷ of 3 million Kurds in the early 1970s, or 3.5 million in 1975 (because of natural increase), therefore seems an acceptable lowest estimate. The real number may be higher. Vanli's slightly biased calculations yield 4.5 million for 1965, corresponding with 5.8 million in 1975 (Vanli, n.d.).

Syria Here too, divergent estimates are made, but most fluctuate around 8.5% of the population, or just over 600,000 in 1975.⁸

USSR Approximately 100,000 according to the official count.

These figures are summarized in table 1.1.

1.1 Population estimates for 1975

	<i>total population</i> (millions)	<i>Kurds</i> (millions)	%
Turkey	40.2	7.5	19
Iraq	10.5	2 to 2.5	23
Iran	34.0	3.5	10
Syria	7.3	0.5	8.5
USSR		0.1	
Total		13.5 to 15	

Economies: peasant farming, transhumant semi-nomadism, pastoral nomadism

In contrast to the image many people have of the Kurds, only a very small fraction of their number are nomads. The majority are cultivators, although many also keep a few animals. Common crops are wheat, barley and lentils (staple food), tomatoes, melons, cucumbers and onions; greens and fruits differ from area to area. In the mountains, only little is produced above subsistence level; in the plains, a surplus of cereals is produced. The plains of Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan are the granaries of Iraq and Syria, respectively. Important cash crops are tobacco (especially east of Diyarbakir and in northern Iraq) and cotton

(introduced only recently in some parts of Turkish Kurdistan).

As a general rule (but one with many exceptions) it may be stated that peasants in the mountains own the land on which they work, while in the plains the land is owned by someone else, often a town-dwelling absentee landlord. The peasants of the plains were, until recently (the 1950s or 1960s), often share-croppers, i.e. they cultivated independently and paid the landowner a fixed share of the crop (varying from 10% to 80%, depending on the circumstances). Others were agricultural workers, who received a small fee for working under the supervision of the landlord or his bailiff. With the gradual introduction of agricultural machinery (which started in the 1950s), there has been a tendency to revoke share-cropping arrangements. Share-croppers thus become agricultural workers, who can only find employment for a fraction of the year. This encourages seasonal or permanent migration. Other factors lead to the same consequence in mountain villages. Land is scarce there and, as a result of the Islamic inheritance rules, which give all sons an equal share in their father's possessions, it is broken up into many tiny plots, too small to support a family. Deteriorating terms of trade further aggravate the peasants' lot: for their necessities (clothing, tools) or desirable items (a rifle, a radio) they have to pay increasingly more in terms of produce. Lack of work and need for cash compel many families to send one or more members to areas of intensive cultivation or to industrial growth centres, as seasonal workers or permanent migrants. Both types of location are situated outside Kurdistan. The prospects for an improvement of the mountain village economy are as yet not very hopeful. Most cash crops can only be sold in regional markets. Poor communications make transportation costs relatively high, so that they cannot compete in other markets. There are no local processing plants. One crop, tobacco, could be an exception. Soil and climate conditions are favourable, and Kurdish tobacco is much in demand. However, tobacco is a state monopoly in the countries concerned, and its cultivation is permitted in a few areas only.

In the mountain and hill villages ploughing is still done with the wooden-frame plough (with iron ploughshare), drawn by oxen (or, occasionally, a mule) and reaping with sickle or scythe. In the plains, tractors and harvesters are in use almost everywhere. Their arrival has changed the relations of production considerably. Small and middle landowners generally cannot afford to buy them. Big landowners can, but a typical phenomenon is the urban entrepreneur who buys the machinery and hires it out to landowners in exchange for a percentage (8 or 10%) of the crop. Frequently such an entrepreneur is also a money-lender and obliges the landowner, who borrows money from him, to rent out his land to him (in return for 50% of the crop) until the debt has been paid back. The work that remains for the former share-croppers is little indeed.

The villagers' animals (mainly sheep, but also goats and occasionally

cattle) are herded by young children or by paid shepherds. The totally sedentary villages have only small flocks, as there is not enough pasture for large ones. There are, however, villages where a more truly mixed economy is practised. The flocks are larger, and in spring the entire village (or a large part of it) sets off with the sheep for summer pastures higher in the mountains, where they live under the tent. The distance from village to summer pastures varies from a few hours to a few days. When work has to be done on the village lands, the men return to the village, but rejoin the tents with their families as soon as possible. This restricted form of (semi-)nomadism is called transhumance in the ethnographic literature; the term 'semi-nomads' in this book refers to those who practise transhumance.⁹ Typically, villages with this economy lie rather low in the foothills or the lower mountains (not in the plains). The summers can be oppressively hot there, and people say that they go to the mountain pastures (called *zozan* in northern, *kuhistan* in southern dialects) not only for the animals but also because of the freshness and cleanness of the air. Even villagers who own no sheep prefer to accompany the others to the *zozan*. In former days, the inhabitants of towns such as Cizre and Amadiye also used to spend the hot summer months in higher lying camps, where they erected tents or huts made of foliage.

Fully nomadic tribes are becoming rare. Many formerly nomadic tribes have settled (voluntarily or under government compulsion),¹⁰ while of the tribes that are still nomadic many individual members have become sedentary. In Iraq only some Herki (winter pastures in the plain of Erbil) are still nomadic, in Iran the Qalkhani and sections of a few other tribes of the same district (west of Kermanshah, near the Iraqi border). In Turkey there are several nomadic tribes; one group of tribes have their winter quarters in the district of Cizre, another in that of Urfa-Viranşehir. Their summer pastures are in the Kurdish Taurus (south of Lake Van) and in the mountainous districts northeast of Diyarbakir.¹¹

The nomadism of these tribes is rather restricted: they spend all the winter at one place and move in spring to the first summer pastures. Apparently the majority of tribes have two, or at most three, mountain pastures, which they use consecutively. The nomads whom I visited had two different tents: a heavy, warm and luxurious one on the winter pastures (which remained standing there all the year) and a lighter tent for travelling. Both are of the same black tent type encountered throughout the Middle East — with one minor difference.¹² Some nomads have built a house on or near the winter pastures. Thus the difference between nomads and semi-nomads is not a very sharp one. However, nomads do not, in general, resort to agriculture unless forced to. The tribe I visited (the Teyyan) owns arable land near their winter quarters, but this is cultivated by share-cropping peasants who do not belong to the tribe. Nomads also migrate over larger distances than the

semi-nomads, and own much larger flocks. Semi-nomadism, due to the restricted area of pasture land, apparently does not allow large flocks. On the other hand, pastoral nomadism is only a viable economy when the household owns more than a minimal number of sheep (estimated as 80–200, depending on other conditions).

Nomads have frequent trading contacts with villagers and urban merchants. In the past these were supplemented by raiding, a cheaper way of acquiring desired goods. Both villagers and merchants are sold some cheese and butter locally, but these are not much in demand and the prices are low. The important cash earners are wool and animals sold for slaughter; nomads sell both to middle-men, who give them only a fraction of the prices paid in town.

Other economic activities: crafts/industries and trade. Development and underdevelopment

Even under the most primitive conditions people use artefacts that they cannot (or at least do not) produce themselves: some clothes, parts of the house, agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, luxury items, etc. Until the beginning of this century Kurdish villages were self-sufficient in most artefacts: they were produced either in every household or by economic specialists in the village (or in a nearby village). Most of the specialized crafts were practised by the Christian and Jewish minorities in Kurdistan. The self-sufficiency of the villages was never total, there was always a certain degree of trade contact with the towns of Kurdistan, and through these with a world-wide system of trade. Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Van, Erbil, Mosul, Sanandaj and many minor towns were centres of craftsmanship and trade (see for example the description of Bitlis in the seventeenth century, in chapter 3). As a rule, the population of these towns was largely non-Kurdish. Besides being centres of such economic activities, the towns were (and are) also the seats of government (governors, law-courts, police and army) and centres of religious learning. Typical urban crafts were those of the weaponsmith, the jeweller, the tanner. Until the beginning of this century, however, contacts between village and town were relatively unimportant, and most artefacts were locally made.

Two factors have contributed to the rapid decay or even disappearance of crafts in this century. The first of these is the disappearance of many, if not most, craftspeople. As stated above, many of the crafts were practised by the Christian and Jewish minorities. During the First World War, the mass deportation and massacres of the Armenians resulted also in the general persecution of all other Christians and their evacuation from Kurdistan. Very few Christians now remain, especially in Turkish Kurdistan. Most of the Jews left Kurdistan for Israel soon after the latter's establishment.

There were only a few Kurds who possessed the skills necessary to take the place of the craftspeople who had disappeared.

The fine-woven woollen material out of which the traditional costume of central Kurdistan is made (*shal û shapik*) is still produced exclusively in the few remaining Armenian communities. The Christian minorities also possessed superior horticultural skills. Kurds who have taken their villages are often unable to maintain or repair their terraced mountain plots and complicated irrigation systems. This catches the visitor's eye, especially in central Kurdistan.

A second contributing factor is improved international communications. As early as the 1830s steam transportation was opened on the Black Sea, and cheap European products began to flood the Anatolian markets. Late in the nineteenth century German companies started the construction of the Istanbul-Baghdad railroad, which greatly facilitated transportation to and from western Kurdistan (which the railway reached early this century). The cheap foreign goods that became available — at first in the large Anatolian towns, and from there gradually penetrating Kurdistan — started to replace locally made ones.¹³ The construction of motor navigable roads accelerated this process, and the arrival of synthetic materials (after the Second World War) speeded it up even further. Earthenware was replaced by metal, this in turn by plastic; hand-woven materials were overtaken by cheap mechanical weaves, etc. Moreover, many new items that were introduced came to be considered necessities.

Thus crafts and craftsmanship gradually disappeared from the villages. In the towns of Kurdistan too, some crafts have disappeared or are disappearing, while others have been modified and turned into simple mechanized industries (textiles, leather, metalwork). Even these industries, however, find it increasingly difficult to compete with more advanced industries in western Turkey, Baghdad, Tehran or abroad. Lack of infrastructure, high transportation costs and other factors discriminate against them. In the struggle for survival they are compelled to exploit the workers even more severely than in the centre. Social legislation is evaded on a large scale.

These developments have also led to a proliferation of middlemen. Itinerant merchants bring razor blades from Germany, small gadgets from China, Hongkong, Japan or India, textiles from India, Japan or England, oil lamps from China, soap, biscuits and sweets made in the capital and many other products to the villages. Usually these have been bought from an urban shopkeeper, who bought them from a big merchant, who bought them wholesale in the capital from an importer, who ordered them from abroad. Sometimes even more middlemen are involved. Products from the villages reach the large towns through a similar chain of middlemen, each of whom takes a high percentage as his profit.

Another type of middleman often seen in provincial capitals (in

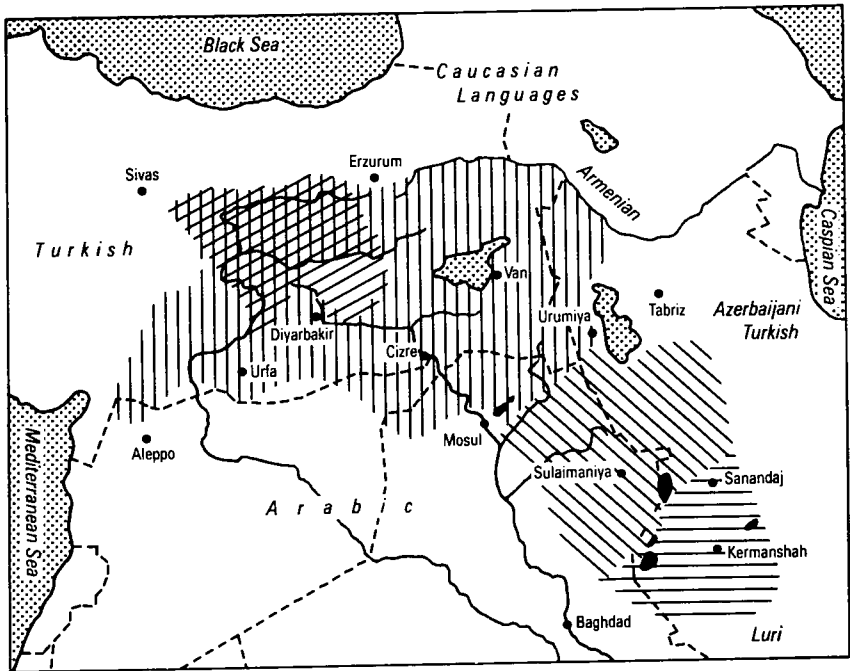
Turkey and Iran) is the agent of a foreign company. He opens a shop with the company's aid (co-financing, expertise, etc.) and undertakes to sell only that company's products. For the agent, it is a safe and profitable investment, for the company a good method of eliminating local as well as foreign competition. Trade is by and large replacing these towns' previous inherent industrial function.

These are aspects of a process that deserves the name of underdevelopment rather than that of development. Industrial progress is blocked. Kurdistan has become strongly dependent on the centres of the states that have incorporated it, and through these on the industrial centres of the world. The structure of the communication network clearly illustrates this. It is not a network grown out of economic contacts, but an unnatural one, constructed by the administrative needs of centralizing governments. Villages are not connected with each other (except by footpaths) but with district capitals and through these with provincial capitals and state capitals. From any given village in Kurdistan it is easier to reach Amsterdam than most other Kurdish villages. Villagers who want to visit relatives in another village some 100 km distant often have to travel to their district and provincial capital, then to another provincial and another district capital before reaching the village, thus covering 200 or 300 kilometres.

This network made communications very cumbersome for the Kurdish nationalist forces in Iraq, since the provincial capitals remained in the hands of the Iraqi government. Thus Badinan was virtually isolated in winter, resulting in famine. Similarly, guerrilla fighters moving from the Sulaymaniyah district to the Balik district further north had to pass through Iranian territory (district and provincial capitals!) because there were no good roads bypassing the district capitals of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Consequently many Kurds who had never seen more than a few neighbouring villages are now working in industrial centres in Istanbul, Germany and Holland. They left their villages because of land scarcity and lack of work; in Kurdistan itself there is no industry capable of employing them. Ironically, some Kurdish capital goes the same way. Rich people invest their money in land if they can get it (but it is scarce), agricultural machinery, commerce, or in industrial capital in the centre. Thus, there is both a Kurdish proletariat and Kurdish industrial capital, but both are outside Kurdistan. This, of course, has its effects on Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish workers in Istanbul, for instance, are more likely to unite with Turkish workers on a class-based platform than rally to vague nationalist appeals. On the other hand, the underdevelopment of Kurdistan makes the primordial loyalties more enduring, so that these continue to affect the Kurdish nationalist movement.

Not only have the industrial growth centres outside Kurdistan expanded, but also the towns inside Kurdistan. Kurds almost



Map 3. Dialects spoken in Kurdistan.

||||| northern Kurdish dialects

////// Zaza dialects

● Gurani dialects

==== southern Kurdish dialects

~~~~~ southeastern Kurdish dialects

everywhere now exceed other ethnic groups in numbers. Most immigrants attempt to earn a living in the 'informal' sector as hawkers, shoe-shiners, petty traders, etc. Others, with a school diploma, have found employment as ill-paid petty officials. The rate of unemployment is high, and these towns attract few new migrants, while others leave, so that in most the population is becoming fairly stable.

## Language

Kurdish is an Iranian language, belonging to the northwestern or southwestern group within that family.<sup>14</sup> There is a large number of different dialects which may be classified into a number of more or less distinct groups that are not, or only very partially, mutually understandable.

1. The northern and northwestern dialects, usually called Kurmanji (a potential source of confusion is the fact that some southern tribes also

call themselves Kurmanj, and consequently their language, Kurmanji, although it belongs to the southern group).

2. The southern dialects, often called Sorani, although Sorani properly speaking is only one of the dialects belonging to this group, which also includes Mukri, Sulaymani and many other dialects.

3. The southeastern dialects, such as Sine'i (Sanandaji), Kermanshahi and Leki. These dialects are closer to modern Persian than those of the other two groups.

These dialect groups show not only considerable lexical and phonological differences but also differ significantly in certain grammatical features, such as the treatment of the past tenses of transitive verbs,<sup>15</sup> the existence of a separate passive verb stem in the southern dialects (which is lacking in the others) and — particularly striking to outsiders as well as native speakers — the frequent occurrence of the suffix *-ewe* in the southern dialects. The latter differences may be due to the influence on Sorani of Gurani. Besides these three groups of proper Kurdish dialects, we find two other groups of dialects spoken in Kurdistan that belong to another branch of the Iranian family (MacKenzie considers them as northwest Iranian languages): Zaza and Gurani. Zaza is spoken by a large number of tribes in northwestern Kurdistan. There are at least three distinct sub-groups: those of greater Dersim (including Tunceli, Erzincan, parts of Bingöl and Diyarbakir), Siverak and Modki (near Bitlis; there is only a small pocket of Zaza-speakers in Modki, but their dialect is very different from the others).<sup>16</sup> Native speakers of Zaza learn to speak Kurmanji rather easily, whereas Zaza proves to be extremely difficult for native Kurmanji speakers. In southern and southeastern Kurdistan there are a few enclaves speaking dialects that are collectively known as Gurani or Masho (the latter being the word for 'he says' in those dialects). This language probably had a much wider geographical distribution in the past; now its dialects persist only in Hauraman, the mountainous Dalehū district west of Kermanshah and in a number of enclaves in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>17</sup> It has been assumed, on the basis of (I believe) tenuous evidence, that Zaza and Gurani are closely related, which may prove to be too hasty a conclusion; I was always struck by the many differences when I heard these dialects spoken and took my amateurish notes on them. To date, too little material has been published, especially of the Zaza dialects, to warrant a more definitive statement.

Map 4 shows approximately the areas where the dialect groups mentioned are spoken. It should be noted however, that no strict boundaries exist. Dialects merge gradually; groups speaking one dialect may live among a majority of speakers of another. At many places tribes speaking Zaza and Kurmanji share the same habitat.

## Religion

Most Kurds are orthodox Sunni Muslims, and among the four schools of Islamic law they follow the Shafi'i rite. They thus distinguish themselves from their non-Kurdish neighbours: the Turks of Turkey and the Arabs living to the immediate south of Kurdistan are in majority also Sunni Muslims, but follow the *Hanafi* legal school; Azeri Turks, Persians and Lurs are Shiites. Not all Kurds, however, are Sunnis and Shafi'is. On the southern and southeastern fringes of Kurdistan (in the provinces of Khanaqin and Kermanshah) several large Kurdish tribes, and probably even a majority of the Kurdish population there, embrace the orthodox Twelver Shiism which is the official religion in Iran. The Shiite Kurds of Iran have always kept aloof when their Sunni brothers further north engaged in nationalist activities, as in the 1920s, 1946 and the past few years since 1979. Among those in Iraq there was in the 1960s and 1970s an increasing level of participation in nationalist politics, however. The religious factor, although important, therefore does not seem to be decisive by itself in the political alliances and oppositions (cf. Bruinessen 1981).

Beside orthodox Shiite and Sunni Islam, we find in various parts of Kurdistan the adherents of heterodox, syncretistic sects, in which traces of older Iranian and Semitic religions, extremist Shiism (*ghulat*) and heterodox Sufism may be detected.<sup>18</sup> The largest group is that of the Alevis, in northwestern Kurdistan. The degree of heterodoxy varies, some groups have long been under the influence of Sunni pressure and propaganda; others, notably those of Dersim, can hardly be called Islamic at all.<sup>19</sup> It has often been noted that most of the Kurdish Alevis speak Zaza dialects. This is true, but there are also Kurmanji speaking Alevis, while the majority of the Alevis in Turkey are not Kurds but Turks. Conversely, only a fraction of the Zaza-speakers are Alevis.

In southern and southeastern Kurdistan one finds pockets of another heterodox sect, the *Ahl-e Haqq* ('People of the Truth'), or, as they are called in Iraq, *Kakai*. The present Ahl-e Haqq communities in Kurdistan, around Sahne east of Kermanshah, around Kerend west of Kermanshah, and in the districts south of Kirkuk, seem to be the remnants of a much larger community all over the area that is now southern Kurdistan and Lorestan. Many of the two last named communities speak Gurani dialects, which is interesting given a similar association of Zaza dialects and Alevism. Here too, the association is very incomplete: not all Gurani speakers are Ahl-e Haqq, and many Ahl-e Haqq are Azeri Turks or Persians. The Alevis and Ahl-e Haqq share a belief in reincarnation and in successive incarnations of the divinity in human form, and many of their rites are similar.<sup>20</sup>

The third heterodox sect is that of the *Yezidis* (*Ezidi* in Kurdish), often abusively and incorrectly called 'devil-worshippers'. Although ostensibly originating as an extremist Sunni sect, it has many traits in

common with the extremist Shiite sects and is even more clearly non-Islamic. This religion occurs only among the Kurds; the Yezidis speak Kurmanji.<sup>21</sup> They have always been severely persecuted by their Muslim neighbours. Many have therefore left their native soil, and many others have been converted to Islam or Christianity. Their relations with the local Christians are often better than with Muslims, and they seem to prefer conversion to Christianity. I met several recent converts to Islam who were themselves, or whose parents had been, former Yezidis turned Christians.

The Yezidis are concentrated in particular in the mountains (southwest of Mosul, astride the Iraqi-Syrian border) and the Shaikhan district (east of Mosul), where the important sanctuary of Shaikh Adi is located. In the 1830s and 1840s many Yezidis left the latter district because of persecution, and established themselves in Russian territory in the Caucasus. Sinjar, Shaikhan and the Caucasus are still the major centres of Yezidism. There are also Yezidi villages in Turkish Kurdistan (in the Tor Abdin mountains and near Batman). Many Yezidis from there migrated to Germany as immigrant workers in order to escape continuing oppression by Muslims.

There have always been Christian and Jewish communities living among the Kurds, frequently performing specialized economic tasks. In most cases they held politically and economically subservient positions; many Kurdish chieftains considered the Christian peasants and craftsmen of their villages their private property (even now, some still speak of *filehen min*, 'my Christians'). The protection which Russia and Britain offered these groups, for not unselfish reasons, was used as a pretext for a number of bloody massacres of these Christians. Very few members of these groups still remain, for many of those who survived the massacres fled to safer regions.

Before European involvement with the region began, there were three Christian ethnic-religious groups living among the Kurds. The Suryani, speaking Aramaic or Arabic dialects, belonged to the Syrian orthodox, or Jacobite, church and lived mainly in the Tor Abdin and the Jazira and in many of the towns of northwestern Kurdistan. The Ashuri (Assyrians) also spoke Aramaic dialects but belonged to the Nestorian church, almost the other extreme of the spectrum of oriental Christendom. They lived in central Kurdistan (Badinan and Hakkari) and in the plains around Orumiyeh. The Armenians, who had their own language and their own, the so-called Gregorian, church, were the largest group of Christians; they lived all over Kurdistan and well beyond its northern and western perimeter.

As early as the seventeenth century, French Catholic missionaries began their proselytizing activities among these Christian communities. They succeeded in making converts because the French king had acquired from the Ottoman court the right to protect all the Sultan's Catholic subjects. Many Armenians were converted, and the

westernmost half of the Assyrians. The latter converts were called Kaldani (Chaldaeans) after their conversion. In the 1830s, British and American missionaries started to work among the Assyrians who had remained Nestorians. This contributed to the exacerbation of tension between Christians and Muslims and was not unrelated to the massacres of Nestorians a few years later, as will be related in chapter 3.<sup>22</sup>

In the Tor Abdin too, Catholic and Protestant missionaries were active, but less successfully; the majority of the Suryani continue to adhere to the Jacobite confession. Large-scale massacres did not take place there until the First World War. In 1915 a general deportation of Armenians from eastern Anatolia was ordered. Armenians were outlawed, large numbers were massacred by Turkish soldiers and Kurds. Persecution was soon extended to the other Christian communities. After the war Iraq and Syria were created as British- and French-mandated territories; many surviving Christians (especially from the Tor Abdin and central Kurdistan) fled there. The British and French authorities further exacerbated tensions between these Christians and the Kurds by recruiting police forces from the former to keep the latter in check.

Many of the Armenians who survived the massacres went to the southern Caucasus, where they assisted in the establishment of an Armenian republic. Others still live in Syria or Iraq, where they or their parents had been sent by the Turks during the war. Others again have swarmed out over the world. Very small numbers have remained in eastern Turkey. The Suryani community in Turkish Kurdistan is also dwindling. Oppression by their Muslim neighbours and economic opportunities elsewhere have caused them to migrate, to Istanbul or abroad, in ever larger numbers.

## **The Kurdish national movement, 1960–85**

This book is not intended to be a study of the Kurdish national movement, but throughout the text there are stray references to it. In chapters 4 and 5, early phases of Kurdish nationalism will be discussed in connection with the political roles of the shaikhs. The later developments are less systematically referred to, and it seems therefore useful to sketch here an outline of the major developments during the past twenty-five years.

The period following the First World War had been one of feverish political activity in Kurdistan as elsewhere in the Middle East, and there were repeated Kurdish rebellions, not only in Turkey but in Iran and Iraq as well. All three states however successfully repressed Kurdish nationalism.<sup>23</sup> Persian and Iraqi Kurdistan were pacified by the end of the 1920s, Turkey quelled its last great Kurdish rebellion in 1938. Turkey was the most uncompromising in its attitude towards the Kurds,

and combined its violent repression of rebellions with a radical policy of forced assimilation. Its successes were to last longer than those of its neighbours. In Iraq and Iran, the Second World War caused the re-emergence of a Kurdish movement. Clandestine parties were founded, and a minor armed rising in northern Iraq in 1943–44, led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani, found a response and moral support among the urban Kurds of Iraq and even of Iran.<sup>24</sup>

In Iran, Mahabad was the centre of Kurdish nationalist activities, facilitated by the central government's weakness and a benevolent, even stimulating attitude on the part of the Soviet forces that had occupied Azerbaijan. In 1946 the Kurds of Mahabad declared an independent republic, in imitation of their Azerbaijani neighbours. They were also supported by Iraqi Kurds, among whom was Barzani with one or two thousand armed tribesmen. The republic did not last a full year; the Soviet troops evacuated Iran, and without powerful protection the armed forces of the young Kurdish republic were no match for the Iranian army. Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his men retired to Iraq, the others surrendered. President Qazi Muhammad, his brother Sadr and his cousin Saifi Qazi were condemned to death and hanged; the nationalists' party (KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party) largely fell apart, only a very small clandestine group remaining. Barzani could not maintain his position in northern Iraq and made his way to the Soviet Union in a long march along the Turco-Persian frontier.<sup>25</sup> He and the five hundred men accompanying him were to live as refugees in the USSR for the next eleven years, his name and that of Qazi Muhammad remaining symbols for the Kurdish aspirations that they had failed to realize.

In the following decade, Kurdish nationalism seemed to have declined as a social force in favour of class-based politics. There was a significant political mobilization in Turkey, whose new multi-party system drew many interest groups into active politics. Iran and Iraq also had their share of social and political unrest; in the early 1950s, Kurdish peasants rebelled against their landlords in both countries. The trend seemed to be towards the political integration of the Kurds into their respective states and towards class rather than ethnic confrontation. The 1960s, however, showed a re-emergence of Kurdish nationalism, at first in Iraqi Kurdistan and later also in the Persian and Turkish parts of Kurdistan.

### **Iraqi Kurdistan, 1958–78**

On 14 July 1958, a military coup, led by Abdelkarim Qassem, overthrew the Iraqi monarchy and the pro-Western government of Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id (who was, incidentally, a Kurd). Parties that had until then been underground, such as the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP, an Iraqi offshoot of Qazi Muhammad's party) were allowed to come out into the open. Barzani



was invited to return from the Soviet Union. A few years before, the board of the KDP, consisting mainly of urban intellectuals from the Sorani-speaking part of Kurdistan, had offered Barzani the honorary presidency of their party. Barzani had accepted, but it soon became clear that he considered himself as the only real leader of and spokesman for the Kurds. The roots of conflicts that would erupt years later were already apparent in the very beginning. Barzani was an experienced guerrilla leader from the Kurmanji-speaking northern districts, where the tribal mores were still very much respected. There could be no greater contrast to the party men, who were relatively sophisticated urbanites, self-professed socialists who considered tribalism a severe form of backwardness, and well-versed in the official rules of the political game but lacking a large personal following.

Qassem exploited the rivalry between the KDP and Barzani; he needed the Kurds' support but did not wish them to be too powerful. He tried to base his political power on an unstable coalition of Arab nationalist, communist and Kurdish elements. Since the interests of these three groups were not exactly parallel, conflicts seemed inevitable from the beginning. The Provisional Constitution of 27 July 1958 reveals the internal contradiction in what have remained basic principles of the republic of Iraq. On the one hand, the state is based on the association and cooperation of Kurds and Arabs, both of whose nationals rights — within the framework of Iraq — are guaranteed by the Constitution (art. 3). On the other hand, the Iraqi state is inseparably part of the Arab nation (art. 2).<sup>26</sup> In other words, all Iraqis are equal, but the Arabs more so than the Kurds. Kurdish nationalists have repeatedly pointed to the anomaly that in later years Egyptians and other Arab 'co-nationals' have been given full civil rights in Iraq, while Iraqis of Persian Kurdish descent have been expelled as unwanted foreigners. These implications of the original formulation have emerged fully under the Baath regime that has been in power since 1968. In Qassem's time they were not yet foreseeable. Qassem courted the Kurds and seemed determined to give them the national (i.e., mainly cultural) rights promised.

Conflicts were meanwhile omnipresent in Iraq: peasants, successfully mobilized by Communist Party activists, challenged their landlords and drove many of them away; there were coup attempts, clashes between rival military factions, ethnic confrontations in Kirkuk. As early as 1959, Barzani was engaged in tribal warfare against his traditional rivals, most of the tribes surrounding the Barzan region. His relations with Qassem, originally quite close, also gradually deteriorated as the latter manoeuvred to stay in power and conclude new alliances, gradually shifting towards the Arab nationalist right. Mutual suspicions increased. In September 1961 the first clashes between Kurds and Iraqi troops took place. When Qassem severely retaliated, open warfare between the Kurds and the Baghdad government could no longer be prevented. The

Kurdish war contributed to Qassem's downfall in February 1963.<sup>27</sup> A similar chain of events was to repeat itself a few times: Iraqi governments would first attempt to appease the Kurds, then be drawn into a war against them and be overthrown by a coup d'état. Abdessalam Aref (February 1963) and Hasan al-Bakr (July 1968) both started their rule with friendly gestures and promises to the Kurds, but were soon to send their air force and armies to northern Iraq because they could not or would not agree to Kurdish demands. Fighting went on with only minor interruptions until the beginning of 1970. There were also repeated negotiations, which on 11 March 1970 were crowned by an agreement that seemed acceptable to all parties, promising the Kurds regional autonomy and proportional participation in the affairs of the state.<sup>28</sup>

It should not be thought that the Kurdish war put all Iraqi Kurds in active opposition to the government. Not only did many stay aloof; until the very end many Kurds actively fought against Barzani and the KDP. The tribes against whom Barzani had been fighting before the war broke out continued to fight against him and allied themselves with the government, coordinating their attacks. Elsewhere in Kurdistan too, the government found many tribal chieftains ready to be sent against the Kurdish nationalists, either because of old conflicts or for more opportunistic reasons. Among the nationalists, moreover, the rivalry between Barzani and the KDP leadership continued. Both had their major spheres of influence, roughly coinciding with the Kurmanji- and the Sorani-speaking districts, and as long as they consented to a regional division of authority, serious problems could be avoided. But both tried to get rid of the other. The conflicts came to a head in 1964, when the central committee of the KDP, convened by the leadership, fiercely condemned a cease-fire concluded between Barzani and the government. The chief inspirers of the anti-Barzani position were Ibrahim Ahmad and his son-in-law Jalal Talabani, who dominated the politburo. Barzani responded by not recognizing the convention, organizing his own party congress and appointing a new politburo completely loyal to himself. Kurdish troops loyal to Barzani attacked the headquarters of the old politburo and forced them to flee into Iran.<sup>29</sup> This episode is important for two reasons: Barzani established his control of the party and found sufficient party cadres willing to obey him. He even showed that he could beat the old politburo militarily on its own (Sorani) ground. Furthermore, it was the occasion for the first contacts of the Iraqi Kurdish movement with the Iranian authorities. The latter at first gave Talabani and his men some protection and support, but, apparently, not much later provided Barzani with his first heavy arms. The following year, as a result of Persian mediation between the two factions, Talabani and his associates returned to Iraq and reconciled themselves with Barzani. They re-established themselves in the southern (Sorani speaking) part of Kurdistan and from there continued

to oppose Barzani; from 1966 on, they were even regularly engaged in combat with Barzani's men. The latter accused Talabani of collaborating with the government and began calling him by the insulting name for Kurdish mercenaries, *jash* ('donkey foal'). It is not clear how far these accusations were true at that time. Talabani was in a difficult position and had to manoeuvre carefully. He did have his supporters in the area, but Barzani had also gradually become powerful in southern Kurdistan. Talabani was therefore surrounded by enemies: Barzani's men to the north, the army and Kurdish mercenaries to the west and south. After al-Bakr's coup (July 1968), Talabani was quick to negotiate with the new president, who wished a settlement of the Kurdish question. Apparently expecting important political gains, Talabani joined forces with the government in its last attempts to subdue Barzani, which did not help to make him popular among the Kurdish public. Al-Bakr recognized that a settlement of the Kurdish question would not be possible without Barzani. The 11 March agreement not only brought Kurds peace and the promise of autonomy, it also consolidated Barzani's hold of Iraqi Kurdistan. Talabani and all of Barzani's tribal enemies had no choice but reconcile themselves with him, at least temporarily.

The 11 March agreement stipulated a period of four years in which its terms had to be implemented. Some of the promises were carried out almost immediately: five Kurdish representatives were made cabinet ministers in Baghdad, a land reform was carried out (affecting, I gather, especially those landlords who had collaborated with Baghdad!), health care was extended to the most remote districts, and Kurdish education made rapid progress: many new schools were established, a curriculum in Kurdish was developed and a Kurdish Academy of Sciences was founded. On the most sensitive issue, the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region, much less progress was made. The government and the Kurds never reached consensus on the delimitation of this region: the Kurds demanded that the oil-rich districts of Kirkuk and Khanaqin, where the Kurds then comprised the majority of the population, be included. The central government was understandably reluctant, not willing to delegate control over so vital a resource. Instead, the government began 'arabizing' the district, forcibly expelling Kurds and replacing them with Arabs. This has to be seen, however, against the background of international developments. Iraq felt threatened by Iran's imperial ambitions and was engaged in a confrontation with the West. In 1971, after the last British troops had pulled back from the Gulf, Iran tried to fill the power vacuum and occupied the islands in the Straits of Hormuz that control access to the Gulf. The relations between Iraq and Iran, which had never been good since the Shah's almost open military support of the Iraqi Kurds, further deteriorated. In the same year, 1971, Iraq nationalized the installations of the (British-Dutch-French-American) Iraq Petrol Company, to which

the Western countries responded with an economic boycott. The government probably saw the delegation of control of Kirkuk to the Kurds as an indirect way of relinquishing it to the West once again, and speeded up the arabization of the district. These developments made Iraq more dependent on the Soviet Union, with which it signed a Treaty of Friendship in 1972. In the same year, Barzani contracted a secret friendship with the other superpower; the Shah, whose ambitions would be served by a resumption of the Kurdish war in Iraq, secured covert CIA support for the Kurds, and Barzani met Kissinger in Tehran.

With promises of substantial American support, Barzani and his men were apparently less interested in working out a painful compromise with the Baghdad government, in which they would have to make ever more concessions. Moreover, they could point to numerous breaches of the agreement by the government, including the deportation of many Kurds, and several attempts against the life of Barzani himself. In October 1973, during the Arab-Israeli war, Barzani proposed to his patrons that he attack the Iraqi government; but they then held him back. In March 1974, the Baghdad government unilaterally proclaimed an autonomy law, which excluded significant parts of Kurdistan, notably Kirkuk and Khanaqin. Barzani rejected the law, and was clearly poised for a new armed confrontation.

Fighting broke out that very month, and was on an unprecedented scale. The Kurds had many heavy arms this time and were trained by foreign experts. It was no longer a guerrilla war but a conventional one, with wide fronts shielding 'liberated areas' that remained under Barzani's control. The war resulted in hundreds of thousands of villagers being displaced, many of them ultimately settling in refugee camps in Iran. Many Kurds from Baghdad and the government-held parts of Kurdistan joined the rebels and became Peshmergas (guerrilla fighters) or found themselves positions in the unwieldy Kurdish parallel government apparatus. In September 1974, the Iranian artillery entered Iraqi Kurdistan to reinforce the Kurdish fronts, while new target-seeking missiles kept the Iraqi air force at a safe distance from the Kurdish headquarters. Economic life in the liberated areas, however, was seriously disturbed by the war. The farmers were afraid to work on the fields because of the air raids. The Kurds had become completely dependent on Iran, which kept them on a short string. Everything, from ammunition to staple foods and clothing, was taken from Iran but in such quantities that no stocks could be formed.

Meanwhile there were several rounds of secret negotiations between Iran and Iraq during 1974, which resulted in a formal agreement concluded by the Shah and Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein at an OPEC conference in Algiers, on 6 March 1975. The agreement, though welcome to both, was generally considered a Persian victory. In exchange for his relinquishing the Kurds, the Shah was given major concessions on the control of the Shatt al-Arab and in other border

disputes. The next day, the Iranian troops and their heavy weaponry were withdrawn from Kurdistan and on 8 March the Iraqi army started a heavy offensive. The Kurds succeeded in staying the offensive, but the prospects for continuing resistance were bleak. Barzani, after meeting with the Shah, declared he would fight no longer. Within a few days the Kurdish movement collapsed, not militarily but politically defeated. The population of entire districts fled into Iran, where the Kurdish leadership also took refuge. By early April, there were an estimated 250,000 Kurdish refugees in Iran. The Iraqi government offered an amnesty to all who had joined the Kurdish rebellion; many Peshmerga surrendered directly; another 150,000 refugees returned from Iran during the following months. Those remaining in Iran were spread over the country and expected to gradually assimilate. Iraq's Kurdish problem seemed solved.<sup>30</sup>

The Baghdad government, while on the one hand carrying out its autonomy law, on the other hand took drastic measures to prevent future Kurdish uprisings. Its arabization policies were continued, and Kurdish sources reported mass deportations to the south as early as mid-1975. In 1976 the government began evacuating all Kurdish villagers from a 10-20 kilometre wide strip along the Persian and Turkish borders (a new policy, announced in Hussein 1977 b), and resettling them in camps or strategic villages.<sup>31</sup> There was spontaneous resistance by peasants, and these were joined and organized by politically minded young urban Kurds. Within months, a new guerrilla war had started, albeit on a very moderate scale. Once the news was out that there were Peshmerga in the mountains again, these were joined by peasants from elsewhere whose villages had been destroyed and by urban Kurds who were disaffected by the government's policies.

The new guerrilla struggle in Iraq was, however, not only a reaction to the Baghdad government's undeniably harsh policies towards the Kurds, it was also waged against a background of rivalry between the would-be successors of Barzani as the sole leader of the Kurds. The one who would be the first and most successful to organize Kurdish resistance stood the best chances. Barzani himself, terminally ill, had left for the USA. Jalal Talabani, who had lived in Syria as Barzani's representative during the last war and had given no signs of disloyalty, was biding his time. Barzani's sons, Idris and Masud, who had been in control of the movement during the past few years, could count on the loyalty of most of the Kurmanji-speakers, but Barzani's two right-hand men, Sami Abdurrahman and Mahmud Osman, also had personal ambitions. Talabani was the first to set up an organization, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which established contact with and then gave leadership to the first centres of resistance in southern Kurdistan. In 1977 the PUK headquarters were transferred from Damascus to Iraqi Kurdistan. The Barzani brothers followed suit. In Iran they began to rebuild their own party organization, calling it KDP-Provisional

Command. Several hundred of their men, led by Sami Abdurrahman, began guerrilla operations from bases on the Turkish-Iraqi border. In April 1978 there was a major clash between the two organizations. Talabani's men attacked Sami's headquarters but were beaten off with enormous losses. Both organizations were seriously weakened, their sympathizers demoralized. In the following year, Sami Abdurrahman was to break with the Barzani brothers and establish his own party. His rival, Mahmud Osman, had left them much earlier and set up his own organization, which in 1979 was to fuse with a breakaway section from the PUK into the Socialist Party of Kurdistan. By that time, however, the Iranian revolution had completely changed the international situation in which the Kurds had to manoeuvre.

### **Turkish Kurdistan, 1960–1980**

Kurdish national feeling, successfully repressed in the 1920s and 1930s, was gradually reawakened during the 1960s. Barzani's success in Iraq was undoubtedly a major contributing factor to this, but it was the political and socio-economic developments in Turkey itself that made the re-emergence of Kurdish nationalism possible. Migration from the villages to the big cities in western Turkey had many Kurds aware of both the cultural differences between eastern and western Turkey and of the highly unequal economic development. Moreover, increasing numbers of young Kurds found the opportunity to study and became politicized. In 1961 Turkey had received a new constitution that allowed unprecedented political freedom. A socialist party, the Workers Party of Turkey, was established and among other issues, took up the underdevelopment of eastern Turkey, which it attributed in part to anti-Kurdish policies of the past. Study of the Marxist classics put the question of national self-determination on the agenda. The party found many followers among educated Kurds and was to be one of the sources from which the later Kurdish movement of Turkey sprang. The other source was the clandestine Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (TKDP), established in 1965 by educated persons of traditional aristocratic backgrounds, who were under the influence of Barzani.

By the end of the decade, both currents were cooperating in establishing cultural associations and organizing mass meetings in various Kurdish towns. The military intervention of 1971 was followed by many arrests and forced the remaining activists underground. A number of them took refuge in northern Iraq and prepared for guerrilla activities in Turkey, but Barzani would not allow any adventures that might endanger his own position. Two leaders of rival factions of the TKDP were killed under circumstances that remain obscure,<sup>32</sup> and that was to cause much distrust in later years.

After Turkey's return to parliamentary democracy, in 1973, Kurdish organizations proliferated and rapidly became radicalized. Before 1970 the basic Kurdish demands had been concerned with economic

development of the Kurdish provinces and the recognition of elementary cultural rights, such as literacy in Kurdish. In the 1970s, the Kurdish organizations competed in putting forward ever more radical demands, and there was a general drift towards separatism. This tendency was reinforced because the Turkish left, formerly the closest ally of the Kurdish movement, shied away from the Kurdish question and took at best a patronizing attitude. The relative weakness of the central government made the years 1975–78, in effect, though not by legal rule, the most liberal period of Turkey's history, and left the Kurdish organizations considerable freedom to organize and make propaganda. Down to the smallest towns, branches were opened, political tracts read and discussed. Ideological differences and in particular personal rivalries caused many splits in the organizations; by the end of the decade there were about ten of them. When the guerrilla war action was resumed in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1976–77, some of the organizations allied themselves with their Iraqi counterparts and lent considerable logistic support; others concentrated their efforts on Turkish Kurdistan alone. Some came to dominate entire districts, which led to sometimes violent clashes with rival Turkish or Kurdish organizations in the same area. One organization, styling itself the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK in its Kurdish initials), declared the 'anti-colonial' struggle opened and directed its 'revolutionary violence' against the Turkish 'colonizers' and their Kurdish 'collaborators' and 'traitors'. The latter categories included tribal chieftains, politicians and even the members of rival organizations. By ruthlessly violent methods, strangely reminiscent of the brutal ways in which tribal leaders in the past had risen to prominence (see Chapter 2), the PKK took control of certain districts.

Not only in the east, but all over Turkey, radical politics grew extremely violent. In December 1978 martial law was declared, but this affected chiefly the organizations that were working legally, in trade unions and cultural associations. In spite of repression, underground activity continued unabated. All over Turkish Kurdistan the organizations continued their political propaganda. To those who travelled in the Kurdish countryside in the late 1970s (as I did) it appeared that Kurdish nationalism found unprecedented support there, although in several areas there was insecurity because of violent conflicts between rival organizations. On 12 September 1980 the Turkish army took over and made a clean sweep of the country. Mass arrests and military operations decimated the Kurdish organizations. In a concerted effort combining severe repression of separatism, forcible assimilation and (less successfully) economic stimulation, the military authorities attempted to wipe out Kurdish nationalism.<sup>33</sup>

## Iranian Kurdistan and the Islamic Revolution

After the defeat of the Mahabad Republic, the Kurdish movement in Iran lost its impetus. Kurdish political activities did not cease altogether but they remained on a very small scale. The Kurdistan Democratic Party, which had been established in Mahabad in 1945 by both Iraqi and Iranian Kurds, disintegrated. Some of its Iraqi members returned to Iraq and, while maintaining a low profile, kept some of the party organization alive there. The Iraqi KDP of the 1950s considered itself a continuation of the Mahabad party, although there appears to have been little continuity in personnel. Some of the Iranian members, too, carried on meeting clandestinely. Their branch of the party was henceforth called KDP-Iran, to distinguish it from the sister party in Iraq (and another party of the same name in Syria).

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the KDP-Iran cooperated closely with the Tudeh Party, Iran's communist party – so closely, in fact, that it became virtually the Kurdish branch of the Tudeh Party. The short period of democratic ferment in the early 1950s also witnessed a revival of KDP-Iran activities, closely following Tudeh directives. This period came to an abrupt close with the coup d'état that brought the Shah back to power. There was a clamp-down on the opposition, with mass arrests of potentially subversive elements. Most of the Tudeh Party organization was rolled up, and the KDP-Iran along with it. Several of the most important leaders of the KDP-Iran were arrested; others succeeded in fleeing abroad, mostly to Iraq and Eastern Europe. Only relatively small numbers of cadre members remained behind in Iranian Kurdistan.

There was a new period of activities, on a very moderate scale, during the 1960s, all directly connected with the Kurdish movement in Iraq. From 1962 on, the KDP-Iran organized logistic support for Barzani's *peshmergas* and collected money, food and clothes for them among the Iranian Kurds. Initially the loyalty of the KDP-Iran to Barzani was almost unquestioning, and the party subordinated its own political activities to the interests of the Iraqi Kurdish movement. When Barzani began to establish, from 1964 on, closer relations with Iran, some members, especially the younger ones, had second thoughts about the party's lack of independence from Barzani and its political inactivity at home. This group felt that Barzani, in order to receive support from the Shah, deliberately kept the KDP-Iran back from political struggle in Iran.

In 1967, a group of young KDP-Iran members who had been living in Iraqi Kurdistan and had become disaffected with the party's cautious line, returned to Iranian Kurdistan and prepared themselves for an armed insurrection there. They were inexperienced, and strongly influenced by Che Guevara's theories of guerrilla war. They believed that Iranian Kurdistan was ripe for a revolution, that could be triggered



by small bands of guerrillas. They failed miserably; the peasants in whom they had put their hopes never came out in their support. Within a year they were all captured and killed by special army troops and the gendarmerie (the rural police force); their dead bodies were put on display in the towns to deter other would-be revolutionaries. It is said that Barzani's *peshmergas* took part in the pursuit and capture of some of them. Whether that actually happened is hard to establish, but the accusation contributed to a strong and lasting anti-Barzani feeling among the younger generations of Iranian Kurds. Later, after the Iranian revolution, this resentment was to provoke several clashes between Iranian Kurds and Barzani followers.

The repression of this small insurgent movement proved effective. There was no organized political activity in Iranian Kurdistan for most of the decade that followed. The Shah's secret police (Savak) and the gendarmerie kept the area under tight control. Moreover, the economic boom of the 1970s allowed the state to coopt an important segment of the population, so that disaffection remained subdued. Salaries of teachers and civil servants rose considerably, and the private sector boomed. The Shah's 'White Revolution' broke the power of the big landlords and created a new rural middle class of smallholders. Landless peasants sought employment in the oil industry in southern Iran and the Gulf states or joined the army of construction workers in the large cities. The economic slump of 1977, however, left many of them suddenly unemployed.

When the waves of political protest swept the country during the revolutionary year of 1978, it was not only the population of Shiite cities that staged massive street demonstrations, but the people of the Kurdish towns and cities as well, showing that political frustrations had been strong beneath the quiet surface. The first protest actions in Kurdistan, in fact, took place as early as 1977. In a few regions, there were minor protest actions and land invasions, directed against the remaining landlords. They were organized by a left-wing underground movement, the Revolutionary Organization of Toilers, known for short as *Komala* ('The Organization'). The political demonstrations of 1978 were patterned after those in the Shiite cities, and they voiced similar demands: release of political prisoners and a change of regime. Since most of the political prisoners from the area were Kurdish nationalists, the demonstrations had implicitly nationalist overtones. The demonstrations were organized by ad hoc committees representing various segments of society; they were not dominated by any one political organization or tendency, and threw up their own charismatic leaders, such as Ezzeddin Husayni, the *imam jomeh* of Mahabad. Husayni had no political affiliations but had the support of both the religious-minded and radical left youth.

In the summer of 1978, the Kurdish political prisoners, the leaders of the KDP-Iran who had been arrested 23 years before, were released.

The other party leaders clandestinely returned from their foreign exile, and together they worked hard setting up a solid party structure, with Mahabad as its major centre. *Komala* leaders were doing the same further south, in Sanandaj and surroundings. Numerous other Kurdish organizations emerged, most of them left-wing, one or two Islamic. At the height of the revolution, many police, gendarmerie and army units simply left their posts; major bases were overrun by the population. Most of the arms fell into the hands of the Kurdish organizations, who established their own *peshmerga* units.

As soon as the first post-revolutionary government was established in Tehran, in February 1979, discussions and negotiations on the future status of Kurdistan began between representatives of the Kurds and the revolutionary authorities in the capital. In a series of mass meetings in various towns and cities, the Kurds had reached a consensus on their major demand of autonomy for the entire Kurdish-inhabited region, although different formulas existed on the concrete form this autonomy was to take. The new central authorities were, understandably, eager to assert their control over the entire country and severely distrusted the Kurds' intentions. Mutual understanding and confidence were further hindered by the fact that there were on both sides multiple and competing centres of power; concessions made by one of these centres were immediately rejected and condemned by the others.

In the following months, both the Kurds and the central authorities saw their mutual distrust confirmed. At several places there were violent clashes between Kurdish nationalists and supporters of the Islamic regime, both of which accused the other of provocation. Islamic committees and Revolutionary Guards supported local Shiite minorities and other groups that clashed with the nationalist Kurds. The Kurds' demand for autonomy was not the only reason they were distrusted by the Islamic authorities. Both the KDP-Iran and the *Komala* had explicitly *secular* programmes. These parties rapidly gained influence and between them came to control most of Kurdistan. The referendum on the establishment of an Islamic republic, in March 1979, was boycotted by these parties, with the result that almost no one in Kurdistan took part. The KDP-Iran, moreover, had a long-standing relationship with the Baghdad government, which was seen as the 'little Satan' by Iran's clerics.

Most of Iran's left-wing opposition groups established themselves in Kurdistan, which became an increasingly important base for them as they were under severe attack elsewhere in the country. Individuals and groups loyal to the Shah (including some of the most hated generals) had fled to Iraq, where they constituted a threatening presence just across the border; there were reports of such groups carrying out raids into Iran. As seen from Tehran, all the enemies of the Islamic regime were concentrated in and directly behind Iranian Kurdistan. A minor incident in a border town in August 1979 provided the excuse for the

first military offensive against the Kurds. The army and Revolutionary Guards occupied the cities and towns, killing hundreds in the first battles, while many others were executed after summary revolutionary 'justice'. Thousands of armed Kurds took to the mountains and successfully engaged the army and Guards in guerrilla warfare. After a few months the government agreed to a ceasefire and negotiations with the Kurdish leaders. Most of the towns were then again under Kurdish control, although there was also an army and Revolutionary Guards presence.

In March 1980, Iran held its first post-revolutionary elections. Although they were carried through only in certain parts of Kurdistan, the results showed that the KDP-Iran enjoyed overwhelming support there. This political victory (the KDP-Iran was interested in having its voice heard at the level of the central political institutions) remained without effect. The following month, the regime launched a new offensive against Kurdistan, and KDP-Iran leader Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the great winner of the elections, was declared *persona non grata*. Another uneasy truce followed; in the summer of 1980 I found Mahabad in the hands of the KDP-Iran once again, but surrounded by army units.

A split had meanwhile occurred in the party. Some leaders of the older generation, who had remained faithful to the Tudeh Party line, favoured accommodation with Khomeini and opposed the confrontational policies of Ghassemlou and the younger members. They had broken away, followed by only a small minority.<sup>34</sup> Ghassemlou and his associates, who had much wider popular support, were meanwhile bracing themselves for a new offensive by government troops – which came that very summer. The split in the KDP-Iran was not the only conflict among the Kurds. The relations between *Komala* and the KDP-Iran were also far from cordial, and there had been armed clashes between *peshmergas* of both parties, who were in some areas competing for supremacy. Both of them, moreover, had extremely bad relations with the Barzani Kurds, who were more or less allied with the central government, on which they were highly dependent.

There were still tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Iran, some living in refugee camps or in Karaj near Tehran, others in a few towns and villages close to the Iraqi and Turkish borders, the remainder dispersed over the country. In spite of their earlier relationship with the Shah, the KDP-Provisional Command leaders soon succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the new Islamic regime. Both were aware of being natural allies against the common enemy, Iraq. Moreover, the KDP-Provisional Command could not afford to antagonize the Iranian regime because the refugees were virtually hostages. It found itself therefore in the uncomfortable position of having to take sides in conflicts between the regime and the Iranian Kurds.

The KDP-Iran and Komala were, moreover, known to be in contact with Baghdad, and as we have noted, many of the young Iranian Kurds nurtured a hostility towards the Barzanis for their alleged role in the capture and killing of the revolutionaries of 1967-68. Mulla Mustafa Barzani himself died in the United States in early 1979; his body was flown to Iran and buried in Ushnuviya, a town in Iranian Kurdistan where many Iraqi Kurds lived. His grave became a place of pilgrimage for Iraqi Kurds; it was later desecrated. It never became clear who was responsible, but the incident further exacerbated the conflict between the Barzanis and the Iranian Kurds. When the war between Iraq and Iran broke out, the old pattern repeated itself with both hostile states attempting to use each other's Kurds.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Iran-Iraq war and the Kurds**

In September 1980, Iraq attacked Iran in the apparent belief that a rapid offensive would cause the fall of the Islamic regime. Iran's revolutionary propaganda directed at the Shiite majority in southern Iraq was the ostensible *casus belli*, but Iraq had its own expansionist aims. Saddam Hussein, who had by then established himself as Iraq's supreme leader, resented the fact that he had had to relinquish complete control of the Shatt al-Arab. He renounced the Algiers agreement. He also intended to 'liberate' the oil-rich, Arab-inhabited province of Khuzistan (called Arabistan by the Iraqis). The Iraqi invasion of Iran proved a severe miscalculation. Neither the Arabs of Khuzistan nor the Iranian Kurds rallied to Saddam's support, and the aggression served to rally the Iranians around the government. The Iranian counter-offensive started on the southern front too but, in the years that followed, major offensives were launched further north as well. Three major combat zones were located in Kurdistan.

Immediately after the Iraqi attack, the KDP-Iran announced its fundamental loyalty to Iran and proposed a settlement with the central government so that the army would have its hands free to fight the Iraqi aggressor. The authorities rejected the offer, and throughout the Iran-Iraq war, Iranian forces continued fighting the Iranian Kurds. The KDP-Iran and Komala became increasingly dependent on Iraqi logistic, financial and other support, but never cooperated militarily with the Iraqi army. Iran, on the other hand, gave increasing support to the Iraqi KDP (which shed the 'Provisional Command' from its name). Talabani's PUK and a new political formation, the Socialist Party of Kurdistan (KSP, a fusion of Mahmud Osman's party with a group that had split away from PUK) maintained for the first few years a delicate balance, negotiating with both governments without committing themselves either way. The real victims were the civilian population on

both sides of the border, who had to endure the harsh counter-insurgency methods employed by their own governments as well as bombings and shelling by the other side.

Both the KDP-I and Komala still controlled vast parts of the Kurdish countryside. Government troops alone, not accustomed to guerrilla warfare in such mountainous terrain, were incapable of defeating them. The Iraqi KDP with its experienced guerrilla forces came to play an increasingly important role. It remains unclear to what extent they were forced to join the fight against the Iranian Kurds or did so voluntarily. Clearly the Iraqi KDP was highly suspicious of its sister party's contacts with Baghdad, while Komala had repeatedly shown its hostility towards the Barzanis. In 1983, KDP and Iranian forces succeeded in jointly expelling the Iranian Kurds from their last 'liberated areas' inside Iran. Henceforth, both the KDP-Iran and Komala had their headquarters and base camps in the evacuated zone of Iraqi Kurdistan, although their *peshmergas* continued carrying out operations, sometimes very successfully, deep inside Iran.

The forbidden zone along the border, evacuated by Iraq in the late 1970s, became the area from which both the Iraqi and the Iranian opposition operated. One particular valley north of Sulaymaniyah, at Khrinewzeng or Nawzeng, became known as the 'Valley of the Parties'. Since 1978 the PUK and the Iraqi Communist Party had had their headquarters there; the Socialist Party of Kurdistan, when founded in 1979, also established its headquarters there, and they were joined by several Iranian small left groups. During the first Iranian offensives, Iranian Kurdish forces temporarily withdrew into that zone, and from 1983 established headquarters in areas not far from Khrinewzeng. The People's Mujahidin, the largest armed Iranian opposition group, also established a major base in this area. The Iraqi KDP meanwhile concentrated on its traditional zone of influence in Badinan, close to the Turkish border.

Old enmities between Talabani's PUK and the Barzanis took a long time dying. Attempts by various parties and personalities to bring about a reconciliation had, at best, a temporary success; mutual suspicions were too strong. From time to time there were clashes between *peshmerga* units of both parties, operating far from their headquarters, and up to the mid-1980s they kept competing fiercely for control of the districts between their respective bases. It is not surprising, therefore, that the KDP-Iran and the PUK, in spite of old mutual suspicions, entered a tactical alliance. In 1982-83, when the KDP-Iran was under attack from KDP *peshmergas* and Iranian troops, the PUK sent some of its own units in as support. The KDP-Iran, on the other hand, played a mediating role in negotiations between the PUK and the Baghdad government, that began in 1984 and dragged on inconclusively for over a year.

These parties were not the only armed Kurdish forces in the area. There were also numerous Kurdish paramilitary forces that had been armed by the central governments to fight the Kurdish insurgents. '*Jash*' (donkey foal), these forces were mockingly called by the other Kurds. In Iraq they were mostly recruited from among the large tribes, and operated under their own tribal chieftains. In Iran (where they were officially called '*Muslim peshmergas*') some units were tribal, but most were apparently recruited among the proletarianized peasantry. They were more feared by the Kurdish insurgents than the regular army, for they knew the terrain and were experienced in mountain guerrilla warfare. The tribal *jash* had no political motivations, and several had in the past repeatedly changed sides from the government to the insurgents and vice versa. At times, there were silent informal agreements between them and the peshmergas to avoid each other; at other occasions they engaged in fierce fights.

To complicate matters even further, Iran established and armed Islamic parties among the Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Iran. Relations between the KDP and the Iranian regime were cordial, but the KDP was a secular organization, which cooperated with the Iraqi Communist Party. Iran desired to have an ideologically closer political formation on the spot as well. These Islamic parties, although regularly featured in the pro-Iranian press, never amounted to much in Kurdistan itself, except for the '*Kurdish Hizbullahs*' of Shaikh Muhammad Khalid Barzani. Shaikh Khalid, who had lived in Iran as a refugee since 1974, was the incumbent shaikh of Barzan, the successor to the charismatic Shaikh Ahmad. As such, he could call upon the loyalties of numerous devoted followers. He was also a full cousin of Idris and Masud Barzani but had remained aloof from their political activities since his arrival in Iran. In 1985 he entered Iraqi Kurdistan with a large group of faithful followers, armed by Iran. Not much was heard of these '*Kurdish Hizbullahs*' in the following years, however.

There were several attempts to establish common fronts among the various Iraqi opposition forces in Kurdistan, and even Shiite groups of the south (or rather, the Shiite leaders in Iranian exile), combining in various permutations. However, the relations between the parties remained uneasy most of the time. The differences between the KDP and the PUK appeared irreconcilable. For some time, two almost identical fronts coexisted, one consisting of the PUK with most other organizations apart from the KDP, the other of the KDP with the same organizations. Neither proved very effective. By the middle of the decade, when the Iraqi military presence in Kurdistan was diminished because the Iraqi army was concentrated on the front with Iran, the KDP and especially the PUK expanded the areas under their control at the expense of the smaller organizations. Clashes between the two increased. The relations of the PUK with the Iranian regime had reached a low point and, incapable of fighting two armies at once, the

PUK was negotiating a settlement with Baghdad. Its rivals were apprehensive that the events of 1966 might repeat themselves and the PUK be obliged to fight the other Kurdish organizations as a condition for this settlement. The negotiations broke down, however, and in 1986 the PUK surprised everybody by giving a joint press conference with the KDP in Tehran and announcing that they would henceforth cooperate. The reconciliation had obviously been engineered by Iran. Contrary to the expectations of most observers, it proved to be a lasting one. Not only did the two parties refrain from further infighting, they even engaged in joint military actions. In spite of minor disagreements coming occasionally to the surface, the Iraqi Kurdish parties henceforth remained united.

The situation of the Iranian Kurds was only slightly less complicated. The KDP-Iran and Komala remained the only important organizations there, the former definitely the stronger of the two. Until the end of 1983, the Iraqi KDP was a formidable presence in the northern part of Iranian Kurdistan, taking part in several government operations against the Iranian Kurds. In the following years, however, it concentrated its efforts almost exclusively on Iraq. The smaller left-wing and Muslim Kurdish organizations active during the revolutionary period had virtually disappeared by the early 1980s. Both the KDP-Iran and Komala contracted alliances with non-Kurdish opposition groups, the People's Mujahidin and a few small left-wing (Maoist) organizations, respectively.

By mid-1981 the People's Mujahidin Organization had lost out in their attempts to gain a share of power at the centre and had taken up guerrilla warfare against the regime. Their leader, Masud Rajavi, fled the country together with President Bani Sadr. In French exile they established contact with the KDP-Iran (which Bani Sadr had strongly opposed when still president), and together they established the National Resistance Council, which aimed at nothing less than the overthrow of the Khomeini regime. The Mujahidin had had a certain presence in Kurdistan from 1980 on (although few of its members were Kurds; it is a distinctly Shiite organization). In the early 1980s they established base camps in Iraqi Kurdistan, in the evacuated zone. They were to establish much closer links with the Baghdad regime than the KDP-Iran ever did, and to become highly dependent on it. After a few years, relations between the KDP-Iran and the Mujahidin cooled considerably. The Kurdish party, aware that the Islamic regime was there to stay, made conciliatory gestures, striking the demand for a secular regime from its programme and indicating a wish to come to terms with the existing regime rather than calling for Khomeini's overthrow. The Mujahidin, on the other hand, remained adamant in their total opposition.

Komala merged in 1983 with three small Iranian organizations, to form the Communist Party of Iran, the very name of which indicated

that a negotiated settlement with the Islamic regime was out of the question. It interpreted the KDP-Iran's softer stand as a betrayal of the Kurdish cause. Proclaiming the KDP-Iran to be a bourgeois-feudal formation, it called for class struggle against it, even as both were being pushed across the border by Iranian forces aided by the KDP (a feudal band of traitors, in the view of Komala). In fact, the 'ideological' quarrels between the Komala and the KDP-Iran probably had more to do with territorial control. The KDP-Iran increasingly operated militarily in areas that were previously strongholds of Komala, and clearly intended to become the only force to be reckoned with in Kurdistan, which would significantly increase its leverage in negotiations. As Komala gradually became weaker and more isolated, it turned increasingly radical, and came to see itself as the vanguard of world revolution. The party split in the late 1980s, and many of its leaders sought refuge in European countries.

The KDP-Iran's policy of seeking a compromise with the government was not much more successful.\*Guerrilla activities were reduced in number, although from time to time raids were carried out deep inside Iran, to show that the party still existed and could strike where it wanted and that the government would never be in full control of Kurdistan as long as it rejected a settlement with it. By the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian government, in which Rafsanjani had consolidated his position, seemed at last willing to negotiate seriously. This time it was the PUK that acted as a go-between and organized a first round of high-level negotiations abroad. In 1989, the KDP-Iran was invited to a second round of negotiations in Vienna, this time without a PUK presence. It proved to be a trap; Ghassemlou and two other Kurdish representatives were shot dead while they were sitting at the negotiating table.<sup>36</sup> The murder left the KDP-Iran in disarray, for Ghassemlou was not only its most prominent and charismatic leader but also its major thinker, strategist, diplomat and organizer. This dependence of the party on a single person was its major weakness as well as the reason for some disaffection among some of the second-echelon leadership, resulting in a split in the party in early 1988. Both branches of the party still had headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan by the beginning of 1991 but their position was very delicate, and they seemed not to have any clear strategies.<sup>37</sup>

### **Saddam Hussein's solution to the Kurdish question**

For the first years of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq concentrated its military efforts entirely on Iran. Evacuations of strategic regions in Kurdistan were interrupted (as were development projects), and military control of the area weakened. The Kurdish guerrilla movements (KDP, PUK and SPK), strengthened by Iranian and Syrian support, could operate more freely and establish 'liberated areas'. In the north, near the



Turkish border, villagers even returned to the evacuated zones, to live there under peshmerga protection. Increasingly, the peshmergas coordinated their actions with offensives by Iranian troops; the Iraqi regime launched severe reprisals against civilians, intensified its military operations in Kurdistan and resumed deportations.

An important turning point was the appointment, sometime in early 1987, of Saddam Hussein's cousin, Ali Hasan al-Majid, as the chief of the Baath Party's Bureau for Northern Affairs. (Al-Majid was the man who later became known as the 'butcher of Kuwait'). He was given absolute powers and could overrule all other civilian and military authorities. Al-Majid drastically expanded the area that was to be evacuated (by 1989 it was thirty kilometers wide, while many villages further inland had also been destroyed). Under his command, Iraqi troops, consisting of regular army brigades as well as the elite Republican Guards) carried out three extremely brutal offensives ominously named *al-Anfal* ('Spoils'). The first two offensives, which began in early 1988, had the dual aim of destroying the Kurdish guerrillas and driving the civilian population out of most of the mountain villages. According to Kurdish sources, chemical weapons were used during these campaigns. Almost 15,000 villages were reportedly deported to desert camps, where many of them perished. The offensives drew surprisingly little attention abroad, in spite of Kurdish appeals to the United Nations.

It was the Halabja massacre, in March 1988, that finally drew international attention to the oppression of the Iraqi Kurds. Halabja was a small Kurdish town near the Iranian border, southeast of Sulaymaniyah. The Iranian army, aided by Iraqi Kurdish peshmergas, had made a breakthrough in its spring offensive and succeeded in occupying Halabja. Iraq retaliated with a chemical bombardment of the town, killing thousands of Kurdish civilians. The dramatic images and reports by foreign journalists, who had been invited to Halabja by Iran, aroused international indignation at last, but did not result in effective pressure on Iraq on behalf of the Kurds. Less than half a year later, Iraq once again used chemical arms against its Kurdish citizens, and it has effectively used the threat of such weapons of terror ever since. Not long after a ceasefire with Iran was signed, the third and most brutal *al-Anfal* offensive took place (in August 1988). It was directed against the districts controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, in the northernmost part of Iraq. Poison gas was used in the attack, killing thousands and causing the survivors to flee in panic. Around 65,000 crossed the border into Turkey before it was sealed off by Iraqi troops; unknown numbers fled to Iran.

The terror spread by Iraq's chemical arsenal (and the regime's proven willingness to use it against the Kurds) effectively pacified Kurdistan. The Iraqi Kurdish parties apparently renounced the armed struggle inside Iraq and concentrated on political and diplomatic efforts abroad,

without much success. The evacuation of ever larger parts of Kurdistan meanwhile went on; by the end of 1990, some 4000 villages (out of an estimated 7000 Kurdish villages in Iraq) had reportedly been destroyed. Even such towns as Halabja and Raniya had been razed to the ground, their population resettled in 'New Saddam towns' further inland. Some 30,000 Iraqi Kurds still remained in refugee camps in Turkey;<sup>38</sup> several times that number lived in Iran.

During the Kuwait crisis of 1990, the regime warned the Kurds to stay quiet or face something many times worse than Halabja. The threat was credible enough to be effective; during all the crisis and the subsequent Gulf War, the Kurdish organizations refrained from military activities, although they sent some armed men back into the country. The Iraqi defeat in Kuwait fostered hopes that Saddam's regime would fall; in March 1991, the Iraqi Kurds rose up in the most massive rebellion ever. This time it was not the Kurdish parties that took the initiative, but the numerous urban Kurds who had long stood aloof from overt politics or who had even collaborated with the Baath regime. Only in a later stage did the parties establish a certain amount of leadership over the rebellion. For a few weeks, a feeling of freedom prevailed; the Kurds dismantled the existing government apparatus in the north, Iraqi soldiers surrendered to the Kurds or simply went home. But then it suddenly became painfully clear that Saddam's military power had not been destroyed in the war, as had been hoped. Iraqi tanks and helicopter gunships attacked the rebellious towns. Bombardments with phosphorus and sulphuric acid, and the fear of Iraq's formidable chemical arsenal, quickly demoralized many of the Kurds, sending hundreds of thousands in panic into the mountains and towards the Turkish or Iranian borders. More than two million people – half or more of the Iraqi Kurds – fled from their homes.

Saddam Hussein almost succeeded in exporting Iraq's Kurdish problem, in the most literal sense, to his neighbour countries. These were understandably alarmed at the prospect of seeing their own Kurdish problems compounded, with the economic burden and potentially destabilizing effect of such large numbers of refugees. Turkey allowed several thousand Iraqi Turkomans in but kept the other refugees – around half million, altogether – waiting at the border, under very harsh conditions. Almost three times as many refugees arrived at the Iranian border; unlike Turkey, Iran admitted them all but proved incapable of providing adequate relief. Under the pressure of western public opinion, the United States engaged in a massive relief operation on the Turkish-Iraqi border, and then in a 'humanitarian intervention' inside northern Iraq. American troops, followed by those of other NATO members, occupied a narrow strip of northern Iraq, the Zakho and Amadiya valleys, to which the refugees on the Turkish border were expected to return. The allied forces insist that they will withdraw in a very short time and hand over this security zone to United Nations

observers; the Kurds, however, have indicated that they do not consider this sufficient guarantee for their security. The allied relief effort has concentrated on the refugees on the Turkish border, while much less was done for those in Iran, although these were far more numerous. This suggests that one silent objective of the allied intervention was to relieve Turkey of its refugee problem. There were no attempts to create a 'safe haven' in Iraq for the Kurds who had fled to Iran.

Kurdish leaders of all the major parties, believing not only that Saddam Hussein had survived the Gulf War but also that the allies no longer desired his fall, started negotiations with the Baath regime in April 1991. The regime reportedly made some significant concessions to the Kurds but, as in the past, one cannot predict to what extent and for how long these will be implemented. Refugees are returning to Iraq in large numbers – but many of them no longer have a home to return to. The parties wish them to return, in spite of insufficient guarantees for security, because they consider the prospect of becoming another diaspora nation without a homeland to be the greater danger. Even if all the Iraqi refugees returned, however, the question of Iraqi Kurdistan will never be a question concerning Iraq alone. The allies will find it hard to disengage themselves, while Turkey especially is more deeply involved now than ever before.

## **Recent changes in Turkey's attitude**

While in the early 1980s the very existence of the Kurds, let alone of a Kurdish problem, was vehemently denied in Turkey, the Kurdish question had by the end of the decade become the most hotly debated political issue. During the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq in March 1991, Turkey's president Turgut Ozal took the unprecedented step of inviting Iraqi Kurdish leaders for semi-official talks. He suggested that a federal state would be the best solution in Iraq, implying that such a solution might also be feasible in Turkey. Not long before, he had lifted the ban on the use of the Kurdish language and alleviated censorship of the Kurds' publications.

One factor contributing to this change of attitude was undoubtedly the pressure exerted by western Europe, and Turkey's desire to be accepted as a full member of the European Community. More credit is due, however, to the efforts of those Kurdish and Turkish journalists, lawyers and politicians who, at considerable risk to themselves, kept drawing attention to the Kurdish question and criticizing the official ideology. They effected an important change in Turkey's political discourse. The major factor behind these changes, however, was the guerrilla activity carried out by the PKK, which gradually forced the authorities to admit that Turkey does have a Kurdish problem. All attempts to eradicate the PKK have failed. The party has rapidly gained

in popularity during the last few years. The government's recent 'soft' stand on the Kurdish issue is probably at least in part inspired by the wish to prevent the PKK becoming even more popular and influential.

The PKK had been involved in violent activities even before 1980; in the following decade it remained true to its image of being the most violent of the Kurdish organizations, committing assaults on Turkish government personnel and Kurdish 'collaborators', on rival political organizations as well as on dissidents in its own ranks (see Bruinessen 1988). Since 1984 it has fought a guerrilla war of gradually widening scope, carrying out raids deep inside Turkey. The army proved not very effective against the PKK, and the government had recourse to the old method of arming Kurdish tribesmen (the so-called 'village guards') to fight the rebels. The village guards and the special army units that were formed to fight the guerrillas established a regime of permanent terror and repression in the countryside; the PKK added its own violence against those who refused to take its side. Initially the brutality of the PKK's violence (which was also directed against the wives and children of village guards) was much criticized, but gradually the PKK won a grudging admiration for its heroism. It was, after all, virtually the only organization that stood up to the army. Repeatedly the army declared that it had at last destroyed the PKK, and each time the PKK responded within days with a spectacular new attack. Many PKK activists were killed, but the party apparently had no difficulty recruiting new members. The authorities had to admit that this was not a mere problem of banditry but a real guerrilla war.

The guerrillas and the military repression made life insecure in large parts of Kurdistan, resulting in mass migration to western Turkey. Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara are now the largest Kurdish cities of Turkey; the presence of the Kurds there has a conspicuous impact on local politics, most clearly seen in local elections. This simple demographic fact has made it impossible further to ignore the Kurds. Politicians of all shades began to mention the Kurds explicitly, and later to criticize the oppression of their culture. Very little has changed in practice as yet: people are still prosecuted for singing Kurdish songs or writing about Kurdish history; magazines and books are banned; detainees are still tortured as a matter of routine, and mysterious deaths in custody keep occurring. But Turkey's political discourse changed drastically in the late 1980s. After the military's attempts to reinstate Kemalism by coup d'état in 1980, it became even clearer that this ideology is now rejected by society at large. This does not automatically mean more cultural and political rights for the Kurds, but it does mean that these can now legitimately be demanded. It has become possible to speak of the Kurdish question, and to define what it consists of. It is not improbable that in the following decade the Kurds of Turkey will take the lead in exploring solutions.

## Notes

1. Except for the fact that the makers of the original map also counted the Bakhtiaris and the Lurs as Kurds, which I think is unjustified. I have corrected this. The original map is reprinted in various publications, e.g. Rambout 1947, Vanly 1970.

2. Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *Genel nüfus sayımı 1955* (Ankara, 1956).

3. The census is taken on a single day in October every five years by a large number of semi-trained enumerators/interviewers. Since in Turkish Kurdistan many villages cannot be reached from the provincial centre in under two days, it is well possible that the census is taken less scrupulously there. Nomads whom I met said that they had never been counted.

4. Wilson 1931: 18n; Field 1940: 104–5.

5. Vanly in Chaliand 1978: 227–32.

6. 1966 census, summarized in *Almanac of Iran 1975* (Tehran, 1975): 336.

7. *Almanac of Iran 1975*: 428. The same figure had been given in the preceding years, and therefore a correction was made for population growth in the three or four years since this estimate was first made. Hence my 3.5 million.

8. Dam 1979: 15 gives the figure of 8.5%, based on demographic studies quoted *ibid.*: 28). Nazdar (in Chaliand 1978: 309–12) gives a reasoned estimate of 825,000 in 1976, or 11%.

9. A good description of this economy is given by Hütteroth 1959. He calls these semi-nomads *Yaylabauern*, after the (Turkish) word for mountain-pasture, *yayla*.

10. Both Turkey and Iran have followed policies of forced settlement of nomads, under Atatürk and Reza Shah, respectively see Beşikçi 1977 and Salzman 1971). These policies were by no means new; as early as the seventeenth century the Ottoman government attempted to settle nomad tribes (Orhonlu 1963). Apart from explicit settlement policies there have also been other political developments forcing nomads to settle, notably the enforcement of the political boundaries, which compelled those nomads whose summer and winter pastures lie in different countries to change their migration routes or to settle completely.

11. The nomadic tribes of the Kurdish Taurus, their migration routes, etc., are well described in Hütteroth 1959. The Turkish journalist Fikret Otyam wrote a fascinating report on the nomadic Beritan tribe and their many difficulties, which originally appeared in the newspaper *cumhuriyet* and was later reprinted in a book (Otyam 1976). The sociologist Beşikçi wrote an interesting thesis on the largest nomadic Kurdish tribe, the Elikan, and problems of social change (Beşikçi 1969 a).

12. Peter and Mugal Andrews drew my attention to the fact that the Kurdish black tent differs from those used by other nomadic peoples (Arabs, some Turkic groups, Pashtuns) in that the stakes stick out through the tent roof which they hold up by a strap, instead of supporting it from below. Indeed I found this to be true of all Kurdish tents, both in Kurdistan proper and in Khorasan.

13. These effects were noticeable very early for some industries. Around 1840 the missionary Badger noted that the 'many large calico printing manufactories' that had flourished in the [central Anatolian] town of Tokat a few years before had 'well nigh disappeared' because the owners could not compete with the cheaper and better imports from Liverpool and Manchester (Badger, 1:23). Von Moltke travelled aboard one of the Black Sea steamers in 1838, and noticed it carried over a million marks' worth of manufactured goods (Moltke 1882: 199). As a result of the new trade routes, several of the large towns of Kurdistan that had previously been important centres of trade (especially Diyarbakir and Bitlis) began to lose their importance — as noticed already by Badger.

14. It used to be commonly accepted that Kurdish is a northwestern Iranian language. MacKenzie however challenged this idea and showed that Kurdish may in fact have more in common with the southwestern Iranian languages (MacKenzie 1961 b).

15. See Bynon 1979. MacKenzie's excellent dialect studies (1961 a) deal chiefly with dialects of the southern group and those of the transition zone between the northern and

the southern group. His observations on the differences between these groups are the best of which I am aware. A few simple examples may show how wide the divergences between the dialect groups are:

'I eat bread' — 'I ate bread'

N.Kurdish: *ez nan dixwem* — *min nan xward*;

S.Kurdish: *min nan exom* — (min) *nanim xward*;

SE.Kurdish: *min nan exwem* — (min) *nan xwardim*.

'I see you well' — 'I saw you well'

N.Kurdish: *ez te çê dibînim* — *min tu çê dît*;

S.Kurdish: *min tû çak ebînim* — (min) *çakim tû dît*;

SE.Kurdish: *min tû çak ebînim* — (min) *tû çak dîm*

(-im and -î are the suffixes of the 1st and 2nd person singular, respectively; *xward-* and *xwe-/xo-* are the past and present stems of 'to eat', *dît-* and *bîn-* of 'to see').

16. The only serious study of Zaza consists of a number of dialect texts collected by Oskar Mann and analysed by Karl Hadank (Mann and Hadank 1932). These materials are still very unsatisfactory. A bibliography of the Zaza dialects and the Zaza-speaking tribes, compiled by Malmisanij, will be found in the Kurdish cultural journal *Hevi* (published by the Kurdish Institute in Paris), no 3, February 1985, 114–7. In the literature one often reads the observation that the Zaza speakers call their language Dimili. It is generally accepted by orientalists that this name is derived from *Daylami* by metathesis, and this has been used as evidence in the discussions on the origins of the Kurds, partially summarized in chapter 2. I found, however, that many of my Zaza informants had never heard the name of Dimili (notably those of Modki and Erzincan), while several of those who did know the name had heard it, indirectly, from European scholars. It seems that only those in the western parts of the Zaza-speaking region call themselves Dimili.

17. Studies on Gurani dialects: that of Hauraman has been relatively well described: Benedictsens and Christensen (1921), MacKenzie (1966), Mann and Hadank (1930). The latter work also contains material on two other Gurani dialects. Literary texts in Gurani were published and analysed by Soane (1921), while M. Mokri has edited, translated and annotated a great number of religious texts in archaic Gurani dialects (1970, 1971). The number and size of the Gurani speaking enclaves in Iraqi Kurdistan appear to be more considerable than has been noted so far. There is not only the Bajilan tribe east of Mosul, with scattered segments in the Khanaqin district, and the Chabak, Şarli, and Goran of the districts north and northeast of Mosul; also the rather large Zangane tribe and most of the Kakai, in the province of Kirkuk, speak dialects belonging to this group.

18. On these sects in general, see Müller 1967.

19. On the Alevis of Dersim, see Bumke 1979; other studies stressing the heterodox aspect of Alevism are Trowbridge 1909 and Melikoff 1982.

20. On the Ahl-e-Haqq, see Minorsky 1920, 1921, 1928, 1943, Ivanow 1953, Edmonds 1957: 182–201; 1969.

21. Essential literature on the Yezidis: Layard 1849: 1, 275–309; Layard 1853: 1, 46–95 (Layard was very friendly with leading Yezidis in the Shaikhhan district and interceded in Istanbul on behalf of the Yezidis); Menzel 1911, Lescot 1938, Drower 1941, Edmonds 1967, Furlani 1940.

22. An excellent study on the Assyrians is Joseph (1961); see also Yonan (1978). On the Suryani, see Anschütz 1984.

23. The Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s and the repression with which they were answered are described in: Rambout 1947, Kinnane 1964, Arfa 1966, Jwaideh 1960: 383–670; Kutschera 1979: 39–129, Bruinessen 1983.

24. Kutschera 1979: 133–53, Jwaideh 1960: 671–708.

25. On the Mahabad republic: Eagleton 1963, Kutschera 1979: 153–84, Jwaideh 1960: 709–74.

26. Quoted in Vanly 1970: 81.

27. Schmidt 1964, Adamson 1964, Dann 1969, Kutschera 1979: 200–28.

28. Text of the March agreement in Salomon 1970, Hajj 1977: 120–8, Ibrahim 1983: 815–20. See also Jawad 1981, Nebez 1972, Ghareeb 1981.

29. On the rupture between the KDP politburo and Barzani: Kutschera (1979: 244-52).

30. The 1974-75 war was extensively covered by the Western press, but there are as yet few serious studies. Kutschera 1979: 301-33 and Vanly (in Chaliand 1978: 263-87) are very impressionistic. The extent of US involvement was a well-kept secret until the Pike report (by a Congress committee investigating CIA activities) was leaked to the press. This report has since been published as a book: *The Pike Report on the CIA* (London: Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1977). The official Iraqi view is reflected in speeches and interviews by Saddam Hussein that were later published in book form (n.d.; 1977).

31. Some of these measures are summed up by Vanly (in Chaliand 1978), and they are described in greater detail in the Iraqi Kurdish organizations' foreign publications, *Peshmerga* (of the KDP-Provisional Command) and *The Spark* (of the PUK). A few short observations are made by a Polish anthropologist attached to an agricultural development project, in Dziegiel 1981.

32. One of them, Said Elçi, was found dead near the village where the other, the more leftist Kirmiztoprak, had his headquarters. The latter was then arrested by Barzani's men and condemned to death in a secret trial by an equally secret revolutionary court.

33. I have discussed the developments in Turkish Kurdistan in greater detail elsewhere: Bruinessen (1982, 1984 a).

34. This group called itself the 'Fourth Congress' group, after the party congress held that year. Its major leaders were Ghani Bolurian (one of those who had spent 23 years in prison) and Karim Husami (who had lived in Iraqi exile). They considered themselves the only legitimate party leadership. Like the Tudeh party (of which they were in fact members too), they considered Khomeini to represent anti-imperialism, and hoped to gain more by a tactical alliance with the clergy. They also fiercely denounced Ghassemlou's relations with Iraq.

35. More detailed surveys of the events of the first year after the revolution in: Van Bruinessen 1981, 1983 and Tilgner 1983.

36. Not much later, two other major opposition leaders, of Komala and the Mujahidin Organization, were also assassinated in Europe. Some observers have attributed these assassinations to factional rivalries within the Iranian leadership, believing them to be the work of 'radicals' who wish to embarrass Rafsanjani and sabotage any form of national reconciliation. This theory is not entirely convincing; in the Ghassemlou case there are indications that persons close to Rafsanjani himself were implicated.

37. Various aspects of the impact of the Iran-Iraq war on the Kurds are discussed in Entessar 1984, Van Bruinessen 1986 and Malek 1989. Dilip Hiro's excellent books on post-revolutionary Iran and the Iran-Iraq war (1987, 1989) are essential reading on the background of the developments sketched here.

38. Out of the 65,000 Iraqi refugees initially coming to Turkey, a relatively small number had (under a certain degree of Turkish pressure) returned to Iraq. Much larger numbers had left Turkey for third countries; tens of thousands had gone to Iran, where Kurdish refugees received better treatment than in Turkey, which proved very inhospitable.

## 2. Tribes, Chieftains and Non-tribal Groups

Due to its size, the variety of its natural habitats and the range of economies, and as a consequence of the fact that historical events have affected its regions in quite different ways, Kurdistan has given rise to a wide range of forms of social and political organization. The relevant anthropological studies<sup>1</sup> are different in approach and vary in depth, reflecting the authors' differing preoccupations as well as the limitations imposed on fieldwork in a politically sensitive area. However, the differences in the descriptions are not just the anthropologists'; they are at least partly present in the social reality. Nor have these studies exhausted the whole range.

None of these forms can in itself be thought of as typically Kurdish. Superficially seen there is no Kurdish social organization; the differences are too obvious and too wide. Certain patterns, however, can be observed in widely different systems, and I shall treat those first, as basic to the many real forms of social organization. From the abstract level of this discussion I shall move gradually to a more concrete description of specific examples.

The first of those general patterns is a structural one: the *segmentary tribe*, consisting of patrilineages with a preference for endogamy. Not all Kurds are tribal; in fact in some areas non-tribal Kurds form an overwhelming majority of the population. It should be noted that the distinction between tribal and non-tribal Kurds is generally made by the Kurds themselves and coincides with the distinction social anthropologists would make; non-tribal Kurds and their relations with the tribes will be discussed in a later section. In nearly all cases they are (or were until quite recently) subjected politically and/or economically to tribally organized Kurds, so that tribal structure is, as it were, superimposed upon quasi-feudal dominance relations.



## **The tribe and its subdivisions**

The Kurdish tribe is a socio-political and generally also territorial (and therefore economic) unit based on descent and kinship, real or putative, with a characteristic internal structure. It is naturally divided into a number of sub-tribes, each in turn again divided into smaller units: clans, lineages, etc.

If one looks from the bottom up instead of from the top down, the role of kinship is more obvious. At the lowest level there is the single household. Households whose heads are descended from the same father, grandfather, or ancestor see themselves as apart from the others, and under certain circumstances act together, separately from the other households; in anthropological terms such a group is a lineage. Obviously, there are lineages of different depths, depending on how many generations back the common ancestor is to be found. Kurds do not remember their genealogies as scrupulously as many other tribal peoples do, so that for kinsmen further remote than, say, second cousins one does not bother to trace the exact relationship. Actual political allegiance to a lineage becomes more important than real kinship. Therefore the distinction anthropologists often make between 'clan' (where common descent is putative) and 'lineage' (where a common ancestor can be traced) is rather artificial in the Kurdish context. I shall reserve the term 'clan' for those segments of the tribe that have a name of their own, and are said to be political units in their own right. The lineages of which I speak are smaller, of a lower level, than the clans, and have somewhat stronger claims of common descent.

Some people attach themselves to a lineage, and define themselves as members of it by acting in concert with it when the occasion arises; after one or two generations their descendants come to be accepted as full members and hardly anyone remembers their foreign origins. Some clans or lineages (even entire tribes) have arisen around a powerful family that, because of its military or political success, was joined by numerous adherents, individuals as well as entire lineages. After a few generations these origins tend to be forgotten; the present unity of the clan is projected back into history and the clan virtually behaves as any real descent group; common ancestors may even be invented. Rondot<sup>2</sup> describes this process for the two clans called Etmankan and Mahmudkan that together form the Omeryan tribe of the Tor Abdin mountains. Some of his old informants here still remembered that Mahmud and Etman were two quite unrelated chieftains whose *followers* were named after them; a dissident younger son of Etman went to live with the Mahmudkan who, because of his military prowess, later made him their leader so that both groups then had a leader from the same (Etman's) family. Eventually the two branches of the family were reconciled and the two groups merged; many people later claimed that Mahmud and Etman were brothers, and the eponymous ancestors

of the clans (or at least the central and more prestigious lineages thereof).

Some features of tribal structure are discussed below using a simplified graphic representation (figure 1), which can be read in two ways. First as an actual lineage tree, in which case the horizontal rows correspond to generations and the single triangle in row 1 represents the common ancestor of the lineage (and every other triangle also represents a real person, dead or alive). The simplification consists of the reduction of the number of generations and of the number of sons per generation. Secondly, it can be read as a representation of the segmentary structure of a tribe, in which case each row corresponds with a *level of organization*, rather arbitrarily to be labelled that of tribe (I), clan (II), lineage (III), sub-lineage (IV), household (V).<sup>3</sup> In this case the triangles do not represent individuals but social units: 1 represents a household,  $\alpha$  a lineage, etc.<sup>4</sup>

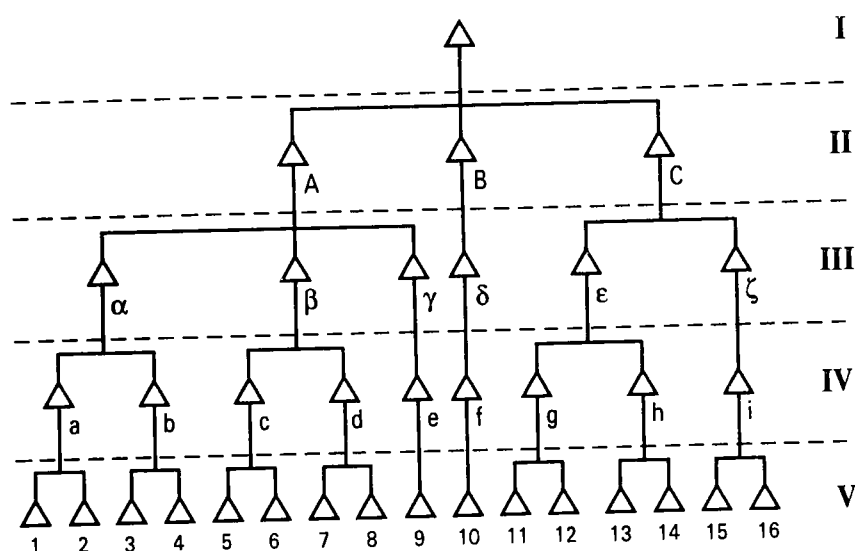


Fig. 1 Segmentary lineage structure.

### The household

The most obvious corporate unit is the household; nearly all economic activities (both among nomads and peasants) take place on this level. The household generally consists of the nuclear family only; husband, wife and (unmarried) children. If a man has more than one wife — a privilege of the rich that is gradually disappearing — the wives have separate rooms but form part of the same household: they cook together, go out milking together, etc. Among the nomads multiple wives have to live even closer together; the tents generally do have a

separate compartment for men and one for womenfolk, but within the latter each woman has very little opportunity for privacy.

An exception that often occurs is a son's remaining in his father's house during the first years of his married life, which gives rise to a hybrid situation. The newly-wed couple is as a rule not as fully integrated in the parent household as a second wife with her children would be. Some activities are separate, e.g. the son may own some private sheep which his bride milks separately and whose milk is not mixed with that of the parent household. In many other cases such a division does not occur however, and domestic tasks are as a rule performed by all women together.

Extended families such as these are relatively rare among the Kurds, although there seems to be some regional variation in the frequency with which they occur. In an inventory of the household composition of four villages in southern Kurdistan, Barth found that only just over 10% consisted of patrilineal extended families. In the only region where I was able to make a similar survey of the household composition, four villages in the Balik district (northeastern Iraq), I found an even lower percentage of extended families.<sup>5</sup>

In some special cases, extended families are the rule rather than the exception. Among the rich landholding families of the plains there is a tendency to administer their holdings as an undivided estate, not to be divided up by inheritance rules. Here the ownership is vested in the patrilineages whose common ancestor first appropriated the land as his inalienable property. Such lands are usually administered on behalf of the lineage by its most senior or most powerful member, who divides the income derived from them among his relatives as he sees fit (which means that they are highly dependent upon his benevolence). In these cases, admittedly rare,<sup>6</sup> there is not much incentive to break the household up into nuclear families.

Apart from such exceptions then, the Kurdish household consists of the nuclear family with occasionally one or a few close relatives. Among smallholders as well as share-cropping peasants, the right to the usufruct of land is usually thought to be vested in the household rather than in the person of the household head. Adult sons consider it as much theirs as their father's, and ideally decisions concerning the land are taken jointly by the household's male members.

### **The territorial unit**

Rights in land and membership in a particular tribe, clan or lineage are closely related, but in a rather complicated way. Traditional tribal law, Islamic jurisprudence, Ottoman and Persian feudal practices, the gradual introduction of the idea of full private ownership have interacted to create a rather confusing situation that will be discussed in chapter 3. Traditionally, every tribe is associated with a particular territory (or territories) and vice versa. A region is called after the tribe

inhabiting it, e.g. Elikan is both a tribe and an area (in northeastern Syria);<sup>7</sup> some place-names recall tribes that are long extinct or that have moved elsewhere. Although by now agricultural land has everywhere become private property, a saleable commodity, it cannot be sold to just anybody. In a way the land is still the tribe's and it should be sold to a tribesman, preferably even one from the same village. In northern Kurdistan (except the non-tribal and detribalized areas) this rule appears to be followed rather strictly.

In February 1976 armed clashes broke out at the village of Kanik, which belonged to the Reshkotan tribe, in the Batman plain. Someone had sold (or been forced to sell) his land to an outsider, a member of the powerful Bekiran tribe, which was settled in the Sasun mountains, and suffering from a shortage of land. When the latter tried to move into the village with some of his relatives the villagers, or the village head, prevented him, whereupon the Bekiran descended from their mountains and opened fire on the village. After twenty-four hours' shooting<sup>8</sup> Turkish gendarmerie and army troops intervened, with the result that the Reshkotan have been able to maintain their territory intact.

Rights in pasture land are more clearly collective; every member of the clan has the inalienable right to graze his animals on the clan's pastures and no one can monopolize these. Among the Teyyan (the only nomadic tribe I visited), migrating between Cizre and Van, each of the eight clans has its own pastures within Teyyan territory; they are expected to keep their animals away from the other clans' meadows. Thus the clan is the primary territorial unit, but the tribe is the more permanent one. Clans may split or merge, and the clan's pastures may be redistributed, but the tribe's territorial boundaries could formerly only be changed by conquest, and now only by recourse to the state. Smaller territorial units than the clan do not exist with this tribe. Both in summer and winter pastures the clan as a whole forms the tent group (15–50 tents). Among the large, formerly nomadic Jaf tribe of southern Kurdistan (now largely settled), tent groups are smaller and are not composed strictly along lineage-lines; all members of the tent group belong to the same clan, but one does not necessarily camp with one's closest relatives.<sup>9</sup> The same is true of the semi-nomadic Mangur and Mamash, (near Qala Diza, northern Iraq) whose villages split up in a number of tent groups in whose composition I could not detect much regularity; they told me that the composition changes from year to year. But here again each clan has its own pasture land; within it, the tent groups are free to choose a suitable camping place.

A different situation has arisen in the mountainous districts south of Lake Van in eastern Turkey. The settled population of this area consisted in the past to a large extent of Armenian, Chaldaean and Nestorian Christians. Most of these were killed or deported, or fled elsewhere during the First World War and the subsequent turbulent

events. Their villages have been repopulated relatively recently by small groups of individuals and by tribal sections moving there from other parts of Kurdistan. Since most of these newcomers cannot lay claim to traditional rights here, the legal regulations of the present republic of Turkey have become decisive. Most tracts of land belong *administratively* to a specific village, and the villagers (or the village headman) have come to consider this as a right of possession. Every village thus has its own mountain pastures, which it jealously guards against the inhabitants of neighbouring villages, even when these belong to the same lineage.

On their migration route nomads pass through territories belonging to other tribes. The migrating group (a clan in the Teyyan case) has to pay a collective fee; the nomadic clan chief exacts this sum from his clansmen and pays it to the village or lineage headman, who generally does *not* distribute it among his co-villagers. It rarely happens that nomads cross a settled group's territory without conflicts arising. There are frequent disagreements on the sum to be paid, and both groups accuse each other of stealing animals. The nomads are often accused of passing too slowly, with the result that their large flocks consume too much of villages' grassland or even feast upon the peasants' crops. It sometimes happens that the dispute cannot be settled and armed clashes ensue between nomadic clan and village, both soon reinforced by fellow tribesmen. After one or two days' fighting generally someone powerful (a religious leader, a neutral tribal chieftain, a gendarme commander) manages to impose an uneasy truce that may be broken at the next passing.

The territory through which the nomads pass is thus apparently considered the collective property of the sedentary lineage or of the village (both units claim it as theirs), since the lineage reacts corporately to the nomads' infringements. At least part of the usufruct, however, is appropriated privately by the lineage or village headman: the monetary fee the nomads pay for passing. A few chieftains have, aided by their good relations with the gendarmerie and the judiciary, obtained *de facto* rights to demand passage money from nomads for areas that did not traditionally belong to a sedentary tribe (or that belonged to a tribe that lost the power to maintain those rights). This represents a further step in the evolution towards private control over land. Something similar is the case with part of the summer pastures of a few clans of the Teyyan: these were usurped<sup>10</sup> by the Giravi, a very powerful landholding lineage (with political connections at government level) that dominates non-tribal peasants near Shataq in the province of Van. The Teyyan have to pay an enormous rent for these pastures,<sup>11</sup> but they still have traditional rights which the Giravi cannot deny them. The Giravi cannot suddenly refuse the Teyyan access and let another tribe graze there. These rights belong to the clan as a whole; the Giravi cannot refuse to admit certain individuals or assign the best part to a person they wish to favour.

Among the sedentary and semi-nomadic tribes too, units smaller than the tribe have their specified territorial rights. Quite often every clan in

the tribe possesses its own territory, which may again be divided into smaller corporate blocks, corresponding to the segmentation of the clan. There are exceptions, however. Rondot (1937: 22) found that the two clans of which the Omeryan tribe consists are co-residential throughout the tribe's territory. Similarly, I found the Iraqi branch of the Mamash (altogether only five or six villages) to consist of five clans, each of which is represented in all of the villages.

### The villages

The territorial unit that takes precedence over all others, and the only one that can properly be considered a corporate group (apart from the nomadic lineage and tent group, of course) is the *village*. Agricultural land has become fully private property but, as related above, not just anyone can buy it.<sup>12</sup> Grazing lands around the village (*mara*) are still considered communal property; among the semi-nomads south of Lake Van every village has its own summer pastures. As far as I could ascertain, a semi-nomadic village takes, at village level, the decision as to when it will start its annual transhumance or return, and not at the level of tribe, clan or village subdivision.

Governments also dealt with the sedentary population mainly at village level — that is, when they dealt directly with it at all. Some, but not all, taxes were in the past usually assessed as a lump sum for the whole village. Where feudal dues were levied (labour dues as well as exactions in kind), it was again from the village as a whole. Religious rites such as the Friday prayer and prayers for rain are performed at village level, thus strengthening village solidarity.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the village fits into the pattern illustrated by fig. 1, corresponding to a segment somewhat below the clan level; small villages often contain just a single shallow lineage. Among the Iraqi Mangur, each of the seven clans is dispersed over two to ten villages, roughly along segmentary lines, although most villages can boast some 'foreigners' from outside the tribe or from other lineages or clans. Most of these foreigners had originally settled there to find refuge after quarrels in their own villages.

Similarly, among the Balik, the small clan Shekir occupies one narrow valley of a tributary of the Balik river in northeastern Iraq. Originally there was only one village here. When the population increased a segment split off and formed a second village higher in the valley; a later split led to the formation of a third village, again higher. The original population of the mother village had come from diverse origins. They had settled at this spot because it was the location of the shrine of a holy man, and a minor centre of pilgrimage. When the village broke up, it was at least partly along kin lines; one man settled at the new spot and was soon joined there by his closest relatives and friends, later also by other people who left the mother village because of a conflict. Thus the present villages are genealogically rather more homogeneous than the original one.

In villages where a tribal and a 'non-tribal' population are co-resident, as among the Dizayi and Hamawand (see below), the tribal element usually consists of one or two very shallow lineages, while their non-tribal co-villagers obviously do not belong to these tribes at all. The village here clearly does not equal a specific level of segmentation of the tribe. We have already seen something similar to be the case with the Omeryan and the Iraqi Mamash, where the clans are dispersed across the entire tribal territory, and in each village members of several, or even all, clans live together.

### Corporate action on levels other than the village

Below the village level one rarely finds corporate groups. Among the Omeryan the villages are divided into a number of units called *bavik* (from *bav*: father), lineages reinforced by a sometimes large number of unrelated adherents; each *bavik* belongs to one of the two clans (Mahmudkan and Etmankan), and each possesses a specific, spatially separate, part of the village land.<sup>14</sup> Corporate *action* is rare, however; the *bavik* act as unities only when in conflict with each other.

I encountered a similar composition of the village among the Goyan of Uludere: a number of mutually not very closely related *bavik*, each consisting of a real lineage with some followers. I could only recognize it as such, however, because of a blood feud between two of the *bavik* (see below).

Similarly, tribes, clans and lineages above the level of the village rarely act as groups. All examples of such action that I encountered among sedentary tribes were cases of conflict. This is so in the perception of the tribesmen themselves too. When I asked questions about the function of the units at the various levels of organization, the occasions when they assembled and acted together, or about the tasks and duties of the headmen of these units, I always received answers that referred to disputes, feuds or tribal wars.

### Boundaries of the tribe

Boundaries of the tribe and of the clan are rather vague: each has its hard core of central lineages, but there is also a number (often much larger) of free-floating individuals and lineages that sometimes act in concert with the tribe and at other times do not. When a tribe's fortunes are good, it is soon joined by men of adventure or breakaway sections from other tribes that come and seek its protection and a share in its fortune. The first European to notice this was Claudius Julius Rich, resident of the British East India Company at Baghdad, who in 1820 was invited to southern Kurdistan by a Kurdish ruler and made some extremely interesting observations. I shall often have occasion to quote him in this book.

On the powerful Jaf tribe, many of whose leading personalities he knew, he recorded that, out of the several thousand tents that composed

the tribe, only 600 were Jaf proper; the others belonged to sections of other nomadic or 'renomadized' tribes from the same frontier district (at that time disputed territory between the Ottoman and Persian empires). Rich sometimes called these client clans Jaf too; at other times he referred to them by their original tribal names.<sup>15</sup> A century later, in 1921, when some of the Iraqi section of the Jaf had settled, 5,400 tents of nomadic Jaf were counted. Apparently most of the client clans had, by that time, become 'real' Jaf. Edmonds, who is generally very careful in his distinctions between tribes, does not mention those to which a part of the 'real' Jaf must originally have belonged, although he mentions other client clans/tribes that had *not* merged with the Jaf.<sup>16</sup> The Jaf were then (in 1921) hierarchically organized, with a 'royal' lineage and commoner clans; but that already seems to have been the case in Rich's time.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1860s F. Millingen commanded a Turkish army unit in another frontier area, Qotur in northern Kurdistan (between Van and Urumiya). He noticed similar processes: 'the tribes of Koordistan are formed of two distinct elements — one permanent, the other fluctuating. The permanent element consists of the stock of families which are closely connected with the chief, while the fluctuating element consists of a lot of adventurers and deserters who attach themselves sometimes to one tribe, sometimes to another'.<sup>18</sup> How generally applicable this statement was at that time is hard to guess since it appears to be based largely on his close acquaintance with a single tribe, the Milan, who ran into bad luck precisely because of their prosperity and success. A coalition of the Turkish pasha of Van and jealous neighbouring tribes drove them from their lands and inflicted a serious military defeat on them. Their numbers decreased dramatically: 'when prosperous, under the leadership of Omar, (the Milan) mustered 1,600 tents. After two years of disasters, the same tribe was reduced to 500 tents only. All the others had melted away with the apparition of ill-luck'.<sup>19</sup>

The third case of similar dramatic increases and decreases in the membership of a tribe that came to my notice is that of the Milan of northern Syria, under their leader Ibrahim Pasha. Around 1860 the Milan were a tribe on the decline; they were tributary to the powerful Arab Shammar tribe and counted 600 tents, a mere fraction of the size they had thirty years previously when their home district was a no-man's-land between the rebellious Egyptian forces and the Ottoman armies. In 1863, however, Ibrahim succeeded to chieftainship; he led his tribe in a number of successful campaigns against Arab tribes, ultimately even defeating the Shammar. The tribe's numbers then increased tremendously; numerous small tribes avowed themselves to be Milan.<sup>20</sup>

These three cases are not unique, but they are the most spectacular ones known to me. It may not be accidental that all three occurred on a



frontier where there is more insecurity, but there are also more opportunities for the political entrepreneur to engage in adventures and thus build up a following.

We find indirect evidence of such processes in the past in the fact that clans of the same name may be parts of different tribes in the same region. This may, but does not necessarily, mean that these clans have a common origin and that at one time some of their members joined one tribal leader and the others one of his rivals.<sup>21</sup> If we compare the lists of the tribes recorded in one area at different times, we notice that some tribes show a remarkable longevity but that many disappear while new ones keep emerging.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that the above processes are very common indeed; tribes do not die out but fade away as their members join promising newly emerging leaders, or are conquered and subdued by a powerful tribe from elsewhere, thus losing their tribal status.

The unity of the tribe (or, from another perspective, its boundaries) is only asserted on rare occasions. Among some of the nomad tribes this used to become apparent during their collective migrations to and from the summer pastures, but such collective migrations no longer take place; parts of these tribes have settled, and the remainder migrate in smaller groups, rather independently from each other. Among the semi-nomadic and especially among the settled tribes, it was only in the case of a confrontation with another tribe or with an external power (such as the state administration, armies, or European missionaries) that the tribe might act as one body and that it became clear which of the lineages and individuals in the periphery belonged to it. Such mass confrontations also now belong to the past.

The same may be said of clans and lineages. They act corporately only in the case of a conflict with a unit of the same level of organization. Their headmen, generally, act as leaders at such times only. Conflicts are not simply a consequence or concomitant of tribal social structure; this structure is by and large defined by them. It is only in conflicts that the segmentary character of tribal structure becomes perceptible. Tribal conflicts are not all of one kind, of course. There is one type of conflict that illustrates better than any other the processes of opposition and alliance of tribal segments, and that occupies a central place in the tribal ethos: the blood feud. The tribal Kurds themselves continually refer to the blood feud when explaining clan and lineage solidarity. It will shortly be discussed extensively, but first an analysis will be made of Kurdish terminology employed for the tribe and its sections, to find out whether this adds anything to our understanding.

## Kurdish terms

The terms of standard anthropological usage, 'tribe', 'clan', and 'lineage', appear to be a straightjacket that ill fits the social reality of

Kurdistan. Possibly, inspection of the terms used by the Kurds themselves and the way they are applied will provide a better insight. A first glance over the previous ethnographic literature makes clear that much confusion exists. Not only are the terms used ambiguously at any given place, they are also applied differently in different parts of Kurdistan. Most of the terms are used in certain areas only, elsewhere other terms being preferred. In addition, most terms are loan-words from Arabic or Turkish (and possibly Persian), and may have brought with them some of their original connotations. This confusion is illustrated below.

Leach noticed that among the Balik the terms '*ashiret*', '*tayfe*' and '*tire*' were used, and without much discussion identified them with the concepts of 'tribe', 'clan' and 'lineage' he brought with him from England although he remarked that '*tayfe*' and '*tire*' were sometimes employed interchangeably. The *ashiret* is the political group, and *tayfe* and *tire* are kin groups, he claimed; every *ashiret* consists of one or more *tayfe*, every *tayfe* of a number of *tire*.<sup>23</sup> Barth, who did fieldwork among the Jaf and Hamawand, comments that Leach's scheme does not fit. When he asked someone to which *tire* he belonged, the man answered 'Jaf', which is the name of the entire tribe. Usually however this term is reserved for the major sub-divisions of the tribe, while the term *ashiret* is preferred for the whole. Barth claims that the *tire* 'approximates the maximal lineage' although not every maximal lineage is called '*tire*' (this suggests, by the way, that the *tire* is seen by the Jaf themselves as a political entity rather than as a kin group). A lineage is called '*hoz*' and is named after its common ancestor. Thus the *hozi Brahim* is the lineage consisting of the descendants of Brahim. Barth believes that the (Arabic) term '*tayfe*' precisely corresponds with (Kurdish) '*hoz*'.<sup>24</sup>

Rudolph (1967) gives a more thorough analysis of these terms, and shows how they are employed in different parts of Persian Kurdistan. He claims that '*tire*' and '*tayfe*' are used to denote the same units there (with which I cannot fully agree), but adds that '*tire*' apparently is used as a '*formaler Gliederungsbegriff*', while '*tayfe*' may have other connotations.<sup>25</sup> This is, I think, an important observation. '*Tire*', a word of Iranian origin, can also be used in other contexts to denote fission. In Persian, '*do tire shodan*' means 'to split into two'. Therefore it seems evident to me that a group is called '*tire*' when it is thought of as being a sub-unit of some larger entity; 'section' would be the appropriate translation. It does not correspond to our 'tribe', 'clan', or 'lineage' but it can be used for all of them, depending on the context. The Jaf as a whole can be called a '*tire*' when one realizes that they share their habitat with other groups.<sup>26</sup> Usually, however, one does not think of these other groups but just of the Jaf, and then the term '*ashiret*' is more appropriate.

The term '*tayfe*' (Ar. *ta'ifa*, pl. *tawa'if*), on the other hand, implies real or fictitious kinship, somewhat similar to our 'brotherhood'.

Throughout the Middle East it is in use for the extended family and lineage (here Barth is correct in identifying it with '*hoz*'), as well as for aggregates that are obviously not real kin groups, such as the mystical orders. Especially in Iran this last usage is quite general; if one asks a dervish to which *tayfe* he belongs he will not mention his tribe or clan but the order that incorporates him in a brotherhood more lasting than worldly kinship.

The Ahl-e Haqq of Dalehu<sup>27</sup> – a religious sect very different from orthodox Sunni and Shiite Islam, the religions to which the neighbouring tribes adhere – call themselves '*tayfe*', 'the family'. Tut-shami, where their chief religious leader resides, is sometimes called '*paytakhte tayfe*', 'capital of the family'. The Ahl-e Haqq distinguish themselves physically from their orthodox neighbours by not clipping the moustache; my own moustache was rather long, so that often people when they first met me asked, 'Are you also a member of the *tayfe*?' This explains why Rudolph, asking an Ahl-e Haqq Kurd which *tayfe* lived in the direction he pointed at, was answered '*tayfe sunni*'.<sup>28</sup>

It is not strange, then, that the term '*tayfe*' is not only used for real lineages, but, by extension, also for clans and even tribes. Razm-ara in his survey of the tribes of western Iran<sup>29</sup> calls the tribes '*tayfe*' (even so large a confederation as the Guran), and their sub-divisions '*tire*'; personally I have rarely heard the word '*tayfe*' in this sense, except abstractly in the plural, 'tawayefe Kurd': 'the Kurdish tribes', or '*tawayefe filan mantaq*': 'the tribes of region so-and-so'.

'Ashiret' (Ar. '*ashira*', pl. '*asha'ir*') is used throughout Kurdistan and denotes the entire tribe. A confederation of tribes is also called '*ashiret*'<sup>30</sup>; the term is thus again not strictly limited to one level of integration. Throughout Kurdistan it also denotes 'being tribal' as opposed to 'being non-tribal'. Sandreczki, travelling through the territory of the Herki (near the spot where the Turkish-Persian-Iraqi borders now join) in 1850, remarked on the two-caste system prevailing there. Non-tribal peasants (called *guran*<sup>31</sup>) were lorded over by a military caste or nobility called *sipah* (the standard term for the feudal military in the Ottoman empire) or Assyreta, a name in which Sandreczki recognized Assyrians, but which is evidently a misspelling of *ashiret*.<sup>32</sup> Rudolph too recognizes this dimension of meaning of the term, especially in the plural, '*ma 'asha'er*', 'we tribal people', as denoting a social stratum above that of the non-tribal serf-like peasantry.<sup>33</sup> Hay – who served two years in Iraqi Kurdistan as an assistant political officer, remarked that the statement 'I am a tribesman' conveys a meaning similar to 'civis Romanus sum'.<sup>34</sup> Further implications of the tribal/non-tribal dichotomy are discussed below.

The term '*il*', sometimes used in Iran as a synonym for '*ashiret*', seems not to convey this second meaning.<sup>35</sup> The only Kurdish tribes that I have seen or heard being referred to as *il* are the large confederations of the

Za'faranlu and Shadlu of Khorasan. The paramount chieftains of these confederations have for centuries borne the official title of *ilkhani*. The same applies to other large confederations in Iran, such as the Bakhtiari and the Qashqa'i. In the case of the tribes of Khorasan, the *il* were deliberate creations of the state. The other *il* also seem to consist of rather heterogeneous elements that owe their unity to state intervention.<sup>36</sup> The term '*il*' seems to me to be an administrative one that has acquired somewhat wider currency.

In northern Kurdistan the terms '*tire*' and '*tayfe*' are not used; the Teyyan and other tribes in central Kurdistan call their subdivisions *qabile*. (Ar. *qabila*, pl. *qaba'il*). The *qabile* is the unit immediately below the level of the tribe; here it is also the tent group. The Miran (originally nomadic in the same area, but now living in northeastern Syria) use '*fekhr*' (Ar. *fakhdh*) in the same sense – except that here the subdivision of a *fekhr* is again called *fekhr*. In both cases it was rather difficult to elicit these terms, some people could not produce them even after prolonged interrogation and discussion. The terms are rarely used; people just call the clans by their names. It was agreed, however, that the term '*bavik*' (or '*babik*') which the sedentary Kurds in these parts employ, is inappropriate for such clans. The *bavik* is a rather shallow lineage that may be reinforced by unrelated adherents; generally it is of the sub-village level. I have not heard of *bavik* made up of or dispersed over more than one village. Clans were thought too large to warrant the label *bavik*.

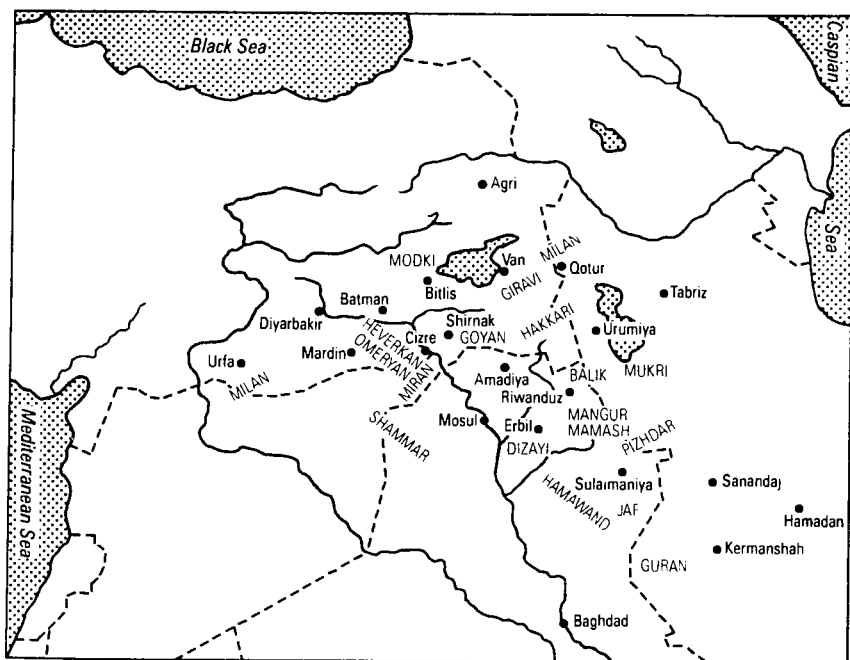
'*Mal*', 'house', comes quite close to '*bavik*': it is a pure lineage (i.e. adherents are not included), but only lineages descending from very powerful persons are thus called. Thus, for example, the competing families of aghas in Shirnak (see chapter 6) are not called *bavik* but are referred to as the *mala Tatar Agha*, the *mala Sulayman Agha*, etc.

A few remarks to conclude this section:

1. It is striking that nearly all terms used are foreign borrowings (we shall see the same phenomenon in the discussion of terms for leaders); only those for the smallest units are of Kurdish origin: '*hoz*', '*bavik*', '*mal*'.

A possible though very tentative explanation is that the *hoz* and *bavik* are the units that frequently manifest themselves politically at the local level, whereas the *tayfe* and *ashiret* are potential rather than actual groups, only mobilized in confrontations with other similar units (including non-Kurdish tribes) as well as governments. They were the units with which states dealt primarily, and it was their leaders who frequently became incorporated in military and/or administrative 'feudal' hierarchies.

One should not exclude the possibility that what I discussed here as a secondary meaning of '*ashiret*' is in fact the primary one, that the term



Map 4. Places and tribes mentioned in chapter II.

originally referred to the warrior aspect of tribesmen, and only later was applied to the units into which these warriors organized themselves or were organized by the state.

2. Leach called the *ashiret* a political group, and the *tayfe* and *tire* kinship groups (Rudolph, somewhat hesitantly, follows him in this). Probably he made this distinction because the *ashiret* is so obviously *not* a kinship group, but he seems to overlook the fact that its sections have more political functions than the tribe itself, and that many *tayfe* and *tire* are demonstrably not all of one kin. If a tribe is stable (i.e., has existed for a long time) its sections will approximate to lineages, because fissions usually take place along kinship lines. But in tribes that have recently been formed (or have recently incorporated many outsiders) the sections are clearly genealogically heterogeneous, even those as shallow as the *bavik*. An anthropological training may easily lead one to overstress the importance of kinship in tribal organization.

Two other competent observers, the government officials Hay and Rondot, stressed quite other aspects:

A tribe is a community or a federation of communities which exists for the protection of its members against external aggression and for the maintenance of the old racial customs and standards of life. Some

tribes have no recognized chieftains, some have many (...) The large tribes are divided into sections.<sup>37</sup>

Hay continues then with a discussion of leadership in the tribe as its most important institution (which for the administrator it certainly is). Rondot echoes Hay; according to him the tribe is:

a small world, inward-looking; an organism of defence; a traditional and conservative institution; a community which, with regard to groups that do not have the same character, has feelings of its superiority.

A chieftain, he continues, acquires authority by his deeds only, for 'in the essentially defensive institution that the tribe is, the principal activity is warfare'.<sup>38</sup>

These two authors ignore the role of kinship, which leads to another misrepresentation of the tribe. Precisely for this reason, however, they saw more clearly its political significance.

3. None of the terms used refers strictly to any specific level of organization. The abstraction of figure 1 thus exists only in the anthropologist's mind, not in the minds of the Kurds.

'*Tayfe*' implies both *real* and *metaphorical kinship*, '*tire*' and '*fekhr*' the *principle of segmentation*. The latter two are relational rather than absolute terms: while '*tayfe*' refers to 'being a (tribal) unit, belonging together', the other two terms refer to 'being part of a larger unit'. If once more figure 1 is taken to represent a fictitious tribe, then a tribesman may one day refer to  $\alpha$  as a *tayfe* and to  $\beta$  as one of its *tire*; another day he may call  $\alpha$  a *tire*, and in another context again,  $\beta$  a *tayfe*. Kinship (not necessarily biological) and segmentation, then, are the basic characteristics of tribal organization suggested by the Kurdish terms. It is not the levels of organization themselves — largely imposed by our model — that are important, but the fact that at each of these levels a number of sections confront each other or cooperate.

### Blood feud and other conflicts

The Koran reiterates the old-testamentic invective, 'a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and a wound for a wound'. Another verse commands, 'Believers, retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed: a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave, and a female for a female'.<sup>39</sup> The Kurds claim that until recently their habits were much harsher than this command permits, as were presumably those of the pre-Islamic Arabs. 'When one of us was killed by someone from another tribe his close relatives went after that

tribe and killed the first man they saw. Sometimes they killed not one man but four or five. Then of course the other tribe came to take revenge, killing some of us. That could go on for years and years; sometimes 50 to 100 men got killed before peace was finally made'; thus an informant from Modki. I was told substantially identical stories in many other parts of northern Kurdistan. Most of the tribes here have at times been involved in protracted feuds. In southern Kurdistan blood feud seems to be much less frequent, if Barth's findings may be generalized.<sup>40</sup> In Persian Kurdistan too, I never heard it mentioned spontaneously, but in northern Kurdistan it is still endemic, though less widespread than formerly. The numbers I was given may be exaggerated; the stories told were rather inexact because memory had embellished them and brought them more in line with what the events should have been like.

Note that neither in the Koran or in the stories that I was told is there any suggestion that the murderer himself should be killed for revenge. In the tribal milieu a murder is not primarily an individual affair, but one between groups. The difference between tribal custom and Koranic law is that more than just one eye is taken for an eye and that revenge is answered by counter-revenge (which the Koran forbids). In areas where government control is incomplete and/or corrupt, such as the mountainous southeast of Turkey, such feuds still persist.

In the large village of Uludere, formerly populated by Assyrians, and since their departure repopulated by Kurds of the Goyan tribe, there are a number of seemingly unrelated *bavik* (lineages) of quite unequal strength living in physically separate quarters (*mahalle*). A year before I visited Uludere a member of a small, rather weak lineage had eloped with the daughter of a powerful member of another, large lineage. Elopement is a rather risky affair requiring quite some daring, even recklessness. When the young man ran off with his beloved — whom he had to kidnap from her own house — he was discovered, and a fight ensued in which he or one of his helpers wounded a relative of the girl's. The young couple is far away now, living somewhere in the west in Turkey, but that was no impediment to revenge, which was severe. Two men of the eloper's *bavik* were killed; not just any two, but two of the *bavik*'s most able men.

Since then peace, or rather a truce, was made between the two lineages, the smaller one realizing that it would always remain the loser against the much stronger one, and therefore preferring to leave persecution and punishment of the murderers to the state (it was also a government official who negotiated the peace). But the atmosphere was still very tense, partly maybe because the murderers were still at large. Members of the two *bavik* concerned avoided each other as much as possible; they would never set foot in the tea-house frequented by the other (there are two in Uludere). There was occasionally some shooting between the *mahalles* where these *bavik* live. Since I left, the feud has resumed and at least two more people have been killed.

When killer and victim are socially far apart it is often not even possible

to take revenge against the original culprit. If a tribal chieftain were killed by a non-tribal, subjected serf and the chieftains' relatives' only revenge would be to kill that serf, they would in fact be lowering the chieftain to the rank of a serf. But the idea that a serf would kill a lord just on his own account is incongruous to tribesmen. They would immediately suspect another chieftain of instigating the murder, and this chieftain would be the legitimate target for revenge. This is a highly hypothetical case though. Neither in the literature nor during my fieldwork did I come across a single case of a chieftain being killed by a person of much lower status. Attempts at the lives of aghas are not very uncommon events, but the perpetrators are usually relatives, or others of more or less equal status – some very recent cases of class conflict excepted.<sup>41</sup>

The reverse, a person of low status being killed by an agha, was not an everyday occurrence but was not very uncommon either in the past. The non-tribal Kurdish peasants, as well as the various Christian minorities living amongst the Kurds, were always in a weak position *vis-à-vis* the tribesmen and were often virtually defenceless against violence by the latter. They were usually economically subservient to a tribal agha, and formerly their position was not unlike that of serfs in medieval Europe. Their lords considered them as their private property, owned in the same way as their sheep and mules (even now, some older aghas still speak about *filehen min*, 'my Christians'). And just as killing someone's sheep is an act that calls for revenge by the owner, so was killing someone's Christians.

Taylor, the British consul at Diyarbakir in the 1860s, related that, in his time, the Christian peasants in the district of Botan (called *zerkiri*, 'bought with gold') were bought and sold together with the land on which they worked. Each of them thus 'belonged' to a (tribal Kurdish) lord. With horror, Taylor told how, after a *zerkiri* had been killed by (or at the instigation of) another chieftain, his lord, as a revenge, killed two of the culprit's *zerkiri*, 'although they had no part in the assassination of their co-religionist'.<sup>42</sup>

Taylor was apparently not aware that it was only in killing two instead of one *zerkiri* that the lord transgressed Koranic law ('... a slave for a slave ...'). Killing someone's serf is indeed like killing his mule or stealing his sheep. No one would expect animals or serfs to take their own revenge; that is the lord's affair. Besides, the Christians were not allowed to carry arms, so they would hardly be capable of taking revenge. Tribal law is by definition law from the viewpoint of the tribesmen, not from that of the subjected. Taylor noticed this particular case because the serfs were Christians (Chaldaeans). Subjected non-tribal Kurds, however, were in the same position. It is always their overlord who takes revenge on their behalf, up to the present day. This is precisely one of the reasons why non-tribal peasants rather lived in serfdom than in independence; 'belonging' to a powerful tribal chieftain



is the best protection one can enjoy, whereas independence would make one vulnerable to forays by any robber.

When killer and victim belong to the same tribe, clan, or lineage, the range of possible targets for revenge is more narrowly circumscribed. This can be illustrated with figure 1 again, where we interpret the triangles as households, lineages, etc. Suppose a man from household 2 is killed by one from household 14; then the whole clan C would be the target for revenge, and the whole of A would be the revengers (in practice only the victim's closest relatives will actively try to take revenge, say lineage *b*. If the killer belonged to household 7 the lineages  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  would become opposed in a blood feud (and  $\gamma$  would stay out of the quarrel now), whereas if the killer were a member of household 4, the range of possible targets would have narrowed down to *b*, and only *a* would be the revengers. A blood feud thus implies a confrontation of segmentary groups on the level defined by the degree of relationship of the original killer and his victim.

Now in most parts of Kurdistan it has become unacceptable to kill just any member of the target-lineage thus defined. Only the killer himself or his immediate relatives (brothers, sons) are thought to be legitimate targets. But the enmity accompanying the feud is still one between lineages, as is shown in the mutual avoidance by the members of the two lineages. The communal character of the feud shows even more clearly when a settlement is reached by which blood-money (*bezh*) is to be paid to the relatives of the victim, who then renounce further revenge. The Koran recommends this solution: 'He who is pardoned by his aggrieved brother shall be prosecuted according to usage and shall pay him a liberal fine'.<sup>43</sup> This blood-money is to be paid by the lineage as a whole, and in settling the amount the negotiators take not only the status of the victim and of the killer into account, but also the size and affluence of the killer's lineage. The distribution of the burden of the *bezh* within the lineage is usually unequal and varies according to circumstances, but every member should make at least a token contribution. The *bezh* is not distributed among the members of the victim's lineage. If the father is still alive, he is the one who should receive it, otherwise the brothers or the other relatives who take care of the victim's family.

### Ending feuds by mediation

Such a peaceful end to the conflict is not spontaneously reached, it is the result of *mediation* by an influential person. The threatened party takes recourse to someone whose authority it knows or expects to be acknowledged by those from whom it expects a revenge attack. Sometimes this is the chief of the clan or tribe; if this chief belongs to one of the feuding lineages, however, he is himself involved in the conflict and cannot at the same time mediate. The higher the level of confrontation between feuding units, the more difficult it will be to find an acceptable (and sufficiently powerful) mediator.<sup>44</sup> An informant

from the Modkan district, near Bitlis, told me that blood feuds between real relatives there were commonly settled by negotiation and the payment of *bezh*. Feuds between different tribes, however, could never be settled in that way: 'the only way to pay for blood was with blood'. Because there was no one in the area whose authority was recognized by both feuding tribes, such feuds could go on interminably.

Sometimes the chief of a neighbouring tribe may try to intervene in a feud between large clans or tribes, but the powerful men in the feuding groups are very reluctant to let this happen, as this gives the mediating chief a certain leverage over their tribe(s): it adds to his prestige at their expense. 'Chiefs there are many, but rare is the chief to whom (other) chiefs listen', says a proverb from northern Kurdistan.<sup>45</sup>

Two well-known aspects of the political organization of Kurdistan are directly related to the difficulties of settling tribal feuds. One of them is the conspicuous and influential political position of certain religious leaders, shaikhs. The leadership of the first really nationalist Kurdish rebellions was, significantly, in the hands of shaikhs. The other phenomenon is that many of the chieftains of large Kurdish tribes are, or claim to be, of different origins than their tribes. Some originate from other parts of Kurdistan; more typically, many chiefly families claim descent from Arabs who played a glorious role in the history of Islam: companions of the Prophet, heroes of the Arab conquests, or founders of great ruling dynasties. Apart from the religious legitimation provided by such a pedigree, the very fact that a chieftain is not related to the rest of the tribe also places him above feuds between component clans or lineages. Because he does not belong to any of the feuding lineages he is in the position to mediate in such feuds. Many tribal chiefs in fact derive their power largely from this mediating role.

Shaikhs are even more clearly outside the segmentary tribal organization, and this is precisely why many of them have been able to play prominent political roles in tribal society. Many shaikhs are in fact not related to any of the tribes in the region; the founders of shaikhly dynasties usually established themselves as religious teachers far from their regions of origin. This lends credence to their usual claims that they are impartial and are not bound by common interests to any particular tribe as against others. However much the reverse may be true in actual practice, a shaikh will claim, and attempt to show, that he has no narrow worldly interests at all and devotes himself to worship to God, the maintenance of religion and the well-being of the community of believers. More than ordinary divines and religious scholars, these shaikhs, as teachers of mystical exercises, are seen as intermediaries between mankind and God. This, together with their position outside the tribal structure, makes them the ideal persons to turn to for mediation in tribal feuds and conflicts. In most cases where such conflicts between different tribes have successfully been resolved, this was due to the mediation or intercession by a shaikh. This peace-making

role in turn enhances the shaikh's standing and political influence.

In the years between 1820 and 1860, Kurdistan saw a significant increase in the number of shaikhs, while at the same time their political prominence became more marked. As will be argued below (chapter 4), these developments were related to the disappearance of the last semi-independent Kurdish rulers in the drive for administrative reform and centralization in the Ottoman Empire. Until the early nineteenth century, these Kurdish rulers had administered justice; they had sufficient legitimacy and power to impose solutions to conflicts between the tribes under their rule. When they disappeared, society needed a new type of authority enjoying sufficiently wide confidence and legitimacy for peace-making roles, and the shaikhs were the most obvious candidates.

When the various central governments attempted, during the past century and a half, to establish direct control over their Kurdish provinces, they forbade revenge, replaced (or rather, tried to replace) tribal law with modern civil and penal codes and courts of justice, and attempted to take the ruling and mediating roles away from tribal chieftains and shaikhs. The most radical of these attempts were made in republican Turkey, where, in the wake of the Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s, many of the traditional authorities were killed or sent into exile. Even these extreme measures did not have the desired effect. The central government officials were, and are, distrusted, and have not been able to replace the traditional authorities. Sometimes they may be able to *impose* a peaceful solution to tribal conflict, they have hardly ever been in the position to *negotiate* such a settlement. Government officials are occasionally, in fact, even accused of inciting one tribe against the other instead of making peace between them. In many parts, new chieftains have arisen and the central government officials have recognized the benefits of working together with them. Where aghas and shaikhs have definitively been removed, it would seem that Kurdish society has become more conflict-ridden than before.

Dargund (a pseudonym) is a village in the Modki area, northwest of Bitlis. In 1935 the small tribes of this region revolted against the Turkish government, believing that a general Kurdish revolt was at hand. They laid siege on Modki, the regional centre and seat of administration, but the first Turkish troops arrived before they could take it. Repression was severe; most aghas and shaikhs were executed, and entire villages were exiled to Thrace after a bloody military campaign. Houses were destroyed and the walnut trees cut down to prevent people who had escaped from coming back. Over the remaining villages a tight control was established, with a gendarmerie post for every two or three villages. As one of my informants put it, 'this is how we gradually became civilized, real Turks'. The people of Dargund belong to the Kiburan tribe and in the village there are two lineages named Memo and Silo. No new tribal, lineage or village chieftains have yet arisen, nor is there

anyone who is economically much more powerful than the others (all are small-holding peasants). A neighbouring village used to have a resident shaikh but he was killed after the revolt. A son of his still lives there. He is still called 'shaikh' and occasionally writes an amulet that protects children from the evil eye, but he has no serious authority, is not a 'real shaikh'. Moreover, he has become the village imam, which is a distinctly lower position than that of shaikh, and in this capacity he receives a salary from the state. Minor conflicts (e.g. on the demarcation of plots) are sometimes settled by the gendarmerie, but this also lacks the authority and credibility to play a conciliatory role in serious tribal conflicts. There is thus a sort of power-vacuum, or rather an influence-vacuum. The social organization and ideology are tribal, but the only law-enforcing body present belongs to a quite different system of social organization, and acts from another ideology. As a result, conflicts can go on endlessly, and at best peter out very slowly.

In 1973 someone of the Memo lineage killed a Silo, apparently by accident (as accidents go). The culprit and his brothers, fearing revenge, immediately fled; they are somewhere in western Turkey now. All other relatives still live in the village; they know that revenge will not be taken on them personally. But the Silo feel they are wronged, and a severe tension exists between the two lineages for which there is no release, since the killer is out of reach. (He was jailed for a short time but was freed in the general amnesty of 1974, and wisely does not let anyone know where he now lives). There is no accepted authority who can bring the lineages to agree to a settlement with blood-money. Members of the lineages still avoid each other and mutual distrust prevails. In the evening people rarely leave their houses. When there is a wedding there is no loud party with outdoor music. The only place that is visited by both Memo and Silo is the village school where the teachers (outsiders) live and where I also stayed. But when some Memo were present and a Silo entered, the Memo usually left, and vice versa, sometimes even without finishing their tea.

It is likely that the existing tension will only very slowly dissipate. The younger generation, who through their school education are exposed to value systems different from the tribal one — and in the 1970s these value systems included not only Turkey's official Kemalism but also Islamicist and socialist alternatives to it — may be expected to take a more conciliatory stand. But even with their greater openness, a sense of discomfort remains, as the following observation suggests. One day, five of the more 'progressive' young people, two belonging to the Silo and three to the Memo, announced that they would go fishing together, using the forbidden but popular technique of throwing dynamite into fish-rich waters. I gathered at first that this implied a measure of mutual trust, and that they apparently did not care much for the conflict existing between their lineages. But when I saw them march to the village where they were going to buy their dynamite, I noticed that the Memo walked

on one side of the river and the Silo on the other. Arriving at the village, one of each entered to buy the explosive. Jointly they walked then to the chosen spot where they split up again, Memo and Silo throwing their dynamite separately.

In the above case, no new authorities of the traditional kind have arisen, probably because gendarmerie control has been very strict in that area and no chieftains were allowed to emerge. The modern authority of the state and its organs on the other hand is not really accepted, with the result that conflicts cannot be resolved in either the traditional or the modern way.

In other parts of Turkish Kurdistan, notably in the far southeast, other conditions have given rise to a new class of petty chieftains and brokers, most of whom owe their position to some form of cooperation with the local military and civilian government officials. Few of these chieftains can make a claim to the unchallenged authority required for the role of a peacemaker between different tribes. The perpetual rivalries between these ambitious and jealous chieftains seem in fact to increase rather than decrease the incidence of tribal conflict.

In the ideological 1970s, a favourite theme of discussion among the educated village and small-town youth in Kurdistan was that tribal morality was obsolete and tribal feuds had to be abandoned because they prevented a Kurdish national awareness from emerging, obscured class contradictions or weakened Islamic unity. Whatever the ideology embraced, in tribal feuds they perceived machinations of their ideological enemies. Abjuring tribalism and feuds in the abstract was much easier than abstaining when one's own tribe became involved. Thought constructions by which tribal enemies were somehow associated or even identified with the ideological enemies made it possible to reconcile actual behaviour with the abstract ideal. Only once did I hear of a case where young people deliberately violated traditional norms in befriending someone with whom they should continue a feud.

Kemal, who told me of this case which involves himself, was a young worker in Diyarbakir and an active member of a Kurdish political organization. His family had left their original village near Agri several years before because of a blood feud, in which they feared becoming targets for revenge. No one of the older generation had ever been back to the village, but Kemal told me he went there regularly for some political activities about which he did not wish to be specific. He never felt threatened in the village because most of the young people there had some education and were socialists and Kurdish nationalists like himself. Their understanding of socialism might be superficial but they were serious about it, and they deliberately opposed the older generation's 'tribal mentality'. This was true, Kemal claimed, even of members of the 'enemy' lineage, who cultivated their friendship with him precisely because it gave them a sense of pride in being modern.

### Marriage preference and tribal conflict

A factor that may contribute to making conflicts between tribal sections more severe and enduring in Kurdistan than in many other tribal societies is the fact that tribal sections of all levels are largely endogamous. There is a clear preference for marriage with the father's brother's daughter (real or classificatory). In fact, a girl's father's brother's son has the theoretical right to deny her to anyone else. If her father wishes to marry her to a stranger, he has in theory to ask permission to do so from his nephews, unless these have already renounced their right of first proposal. I never witnessed a concrete case where this happened, but I have heard of this custom in various corners of Kurdistan. And if a father's brother's son proposes, the girl's father finds it difficult, if not impossible, to refuse him.

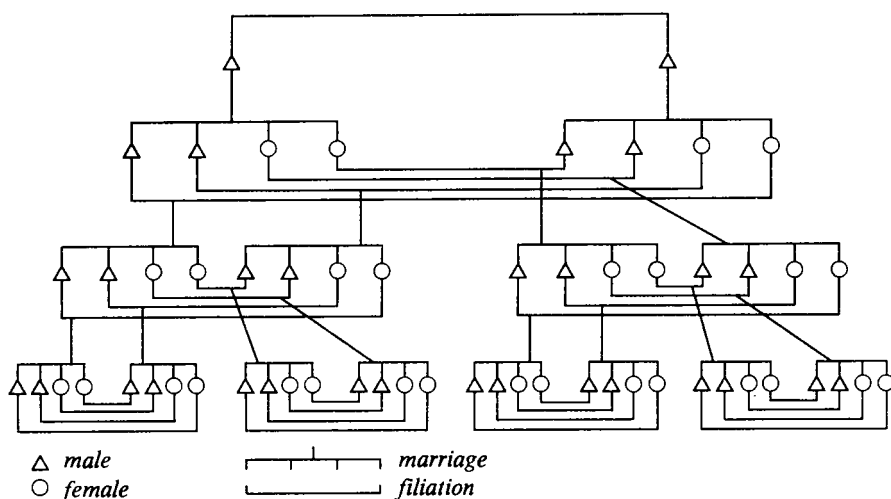


Fig. 2 Consistent father's brother's daughter marriage.

Everywhere in Kurdistan the bride-price a father's brother's son has to pay is considerably lower than that for strangers, which — quite apart from what the *origins, causes or functions* of this custom are — favours the choice of a father's brother's daughter as a marriage partner. It is evident that a consistent practice of this marriage type leads to extreme segmentariness (see figure 2). Whereas cross-cousin marriage (especially where both cross-cousins may be married) cements multiple relationships between the lineages, the strict endogamy resulting from father's brother's daughter marriage only enhances the segmentary character of the lineages. As the extreme example of figure 2 shows, the lineages are completely isolated; there are no affinal relations to soften the potential conflicts between them.<sup>46</sup>

The actual practice is of course less rigorous than the preferential rule prescribes. Not every man marries a father's brother's daughter, although I was surprised by the number of marriages that I found to conform to this pattern, even among urbanized Kurds. Unfortunately I have not been able to collect systematic statistics anywhere. The only figures known to me are those of Barth for southern Kurdistan, where, in a sample, 40% of tribal male Kurds and just over 10% of non-tribal male Kurds, had married a father's brother's daughter.<sup>47</sup> I have the strong impression that among the tribes of northern Kurdistan this proportion is considerably higher.

When a girl is not married to a first parallel cousin, second or more distant (patrilineal) parallel cousins are preferred over other relatives, and distant relatives over unrelated persons. There is usually a strong social pressure to marry within the lineage; at some places, village endogamy rather than lineage endogamy (not always distinguishable from each other) seems to be the desirable pattern.

In northern Kurdistan I found an interesting custom expressing the rights of the young men of a village to the girls of that village. If the girl is married to an outsider (i.e., a young man of another village), the young men of her village do not let her go with her bridegroom's father unless the latter has paid them a symbolic sum of money. On days of such marriages I saw roadblocks (manned by very young boys!) at the exit of the bride's village, where the party that came to take the bride was held up and 'forced' to pay small bribes.

### Other sorts of conflict

I have treated the blood feud here rather than any other tribal conflict for two reasons: it is often used by the Kurds themselves to illustrate what it means to belong to a *tayfe* (i.e. it is part of their own definition of tribal social structure), and the collective responsibility expressed in the payment of *bezh* expresses better than anything else the principle of segmentary opposition. Many other conflicts follow more or less similar patterns but provide less insight into segmentation. Often such conflicts are between units that are already well articulated under ordinary circumstances. An example is the stealing of animals from a certain village by nomads belonging to a certain tent group. In such cases retaliation (with a generous rate of interest) is again collective, and may in turn lead to counter-revenge.

Many other tribal conflicts are strongly leader-oriented: they are between two competing chieftains with their followers, rather than between tribal sections as such. This latter aspect is rarely absent from tribal conflicts; even in 'pure' blood feuds it often plays a part.

All kinds of conflict may result in blood feuds; as a conflict escalates blood is due to be shed.

## Higher than the tribe?

### Units larger than the tribe

It might be supposed that the principle of segmentary opposition and alliance, as vigorously displayed within the tribe, would also operate on higher levels; confederations of tribes, emirates (such Kurdish principalities, headed by a *mir* or *bey*, and composed of quite large numbers of tribes, existed well into the nineteenth century), or even the entire Kurdish nation (as opposed to other nations, such as the Turkish, Persian, Arab, Armenian).<sup>48</sup> As far as the Kurdish nation is concerned — and we should be reluctant in the use of this term even as late as the beginning of this century — this is obviously not the case. Every Kurdish nationalist movement was opposed not only by central governments (that were Turkish, Persian or British/Arab), but by quite large numbers of Kurds as well. Even in the 1974-75 war in Iraq, when active participation was on an unprecedented scale (over 50,000 men in arms plus a large number who contributed in other ways), the movement was fought not only by the regular Iraqi army, but also by Kurdish irregulars who apparently numbered tens of thousands. There were various reasons for this opposition, of course, but the most important single reason was that success of the movement would bestow additional power and prestige upon its leaders and those traditional authorities close to the leadership, to the inevitable detriment of their traditional rivals. The interest of the latter lay, therefore, with the powers inimical to the movement; its defeat would add to their own power — as long as nationalism had not become a stronger motivating force than tribal loyalty. At the level of the nation, the principle of segmentary alliance and opposition has never worked, except in propagandistic representations.

A case could be made for the emirates; in some the *mir*'s authority appears to have been strong and unquestioned, his commands to have been obeyed by all his subjects. As will be shown in chapter 3 however, the unity of these emirates was in many cases precarious, and broke down in confrontations with other (Kurdish) emirates or the central government. One of many examples is the following. In 1832 Muhammad Pasha Miri Kor ('the blind emir') of Soran overran the neighbouring emirate of Badinan and placed his brother Rasul in command of its capital, Amadiye. The tribes of Badinan did not put up much of a defence of their emirate against the conquerors. The former *mir* of Badinan, Ismail Pasha, attempted in vain to enlist the support of the emirates of Botan and Hakkari and of the Ottoman governor of Mosul in order to reconquer his capital, and his attempts to raise his tribes against the usurper were equally fruitless. These events meant the end of the emirate; its unity was never restored. Some of the petty chieftains of Badinan collaborated with Rasul Beg, others with the Ottoman governor, while others again were loyal to none but



themselves.<sup>49</sup> The principle of segmentary alliance and opposition clearly did not work in this case.

### **Internal rivalries and external sources of power**

Even at the level of the tribe, unity against outsiders may remain restricted to the domain of ideology. The tribe should be one against outsiders (especially against other tribes), as everyone admits, but in fact it very often is not. In cases of conflict between two tribes it may happen that a section of one makes common cause with the other. This may be either because of an internal blood feud that is taken very seriously, or (more frequently) because the section's headman has an axe to grind with the paramount chieftain. Especially before central governments severely curtailed the chieftains' powers in this century, there were perpetual struggles for leadership of the tribe. Each of the rivals tried to manipulate the socio-political environment in order to get the better of the others. For such ambitious chieftains the important dichotomy was not between 'the rival tribe' and 'my own tribe' but 'the power sources my rivals are tapping' vs 'the power sources I might tap'. From a very early date this environment included not only other tribes and powerful chieftains but also powerful states. The manipulation of the central state in order to get the upper hand in a local, tribal conflict is a recurrent theme in Kurdish history.

### **Dichotomy of the social universe**

In fact, beside the primary ideological concept of segmentary opposition and alliance (and of solidarity of the tribe against outsiders) one sometimes finds traces of the concept of a dichotomy of the social universe that cuts across this tribal segmentation.

In the emirate of Hakkari the tribes were grouped as those of the left and those of the right. Central in each class was a confederation of tribes, the Ertushi and the Pinyanish, in the west and the east, respectively. A number of smaller tribes, interspersed among or at the periphery of these confederations, were also classed with one of the two 'halves', and so were the small lineages living in the two towns of the emirate, in such a way that not only the entire emirate, but also each region of it as well as the towns contained both 'right' and 'left'. The *mir*, of course, was beyond this classification; he could rule by playing one against the other.

Even now, 130 years after the last *mir* of Hakkari was deposed, the same dichotomy is still observable; most clearly so in time of elections for Turkey's parliament, in which the province of Hakkari has one representative. The Pinyanish and the Ertushi usually put up one candidate each, attached to rival parties (which are not always the same ones). The actual number of parties existing in Turkey is much higher, but in Hakkari only the two to which the two confederations happen to attach themselves play a part in the elections. Because of the amount of

patronage available in election time, this has also become the crucial period in the local political process, with sudden shifts in the power balance between individuals. Latent conflicts break out into the open. Petty chieftains who are in conflict with the leaders of their own tribe or confederation commonly seek an alliance with the opposing party. If one of the tribes not belonging to either of the central confederations is split by an internal feud (which is the case quite often), the rival sections usually wait for their opponents to ally themselves with one party, whereupon they immediately join the other one.

In this way all existing conflicts, rivalries and oppositions, in normal times existing independently one of the other, are in election time arranged into a complete dichotomy of society that does *not* precisely correspond with the simple segmentary model. This dichotomy is permanent as a structure: there are always two factions, never more, and they are always organized around the two confederations. Allegiance or membership, on the other hand, fluctuates; it is not completely determined by affiliation with one or the other confederation. A chieftain may suddenly change sides, for instance, because of spoils offered or because of a family conflict; his friends and followers will then follow him, and some of his rivals or enemies will move to the opposite side.

In another context, Rondot (1937: 25–26) describes an even clearer example of a dichotomy cutting through a tribe and its wider environment, thus placing two sections of the tribe against each other rather than the entire tribe against other tribes.

The example is again from the Omeryan, whose division into two clans, Mahmudkan and Etmankan, that live side by side throughout the tribe's territory, has already been mentioned as slightly anomalous. Rondot was told by one of his informants that not only the Omeryan but all neighbouring tribes as well were divided into these two clans, and that the tribes further away were in fact all either Mahmudkan or Etmankan. This informant thus extrapolated the division within his tribe to all of Kurdistan as he knew it.

In this dichotomy there is an echo of a well-known and widespread legend about the origins of the Kurdish tribes, according to which there were originally two tribes, the Zilan and the Milan, culturally different, from which all later tribes are the descendants. Many tribes still count themselves as one or the other and classify all their neighbours also accordingly.<sup>50</sup>

These examples show that elements of a dualistic social classification are present, although this is not well-developed. It is secondary to the segmentary view, and, where it exists, is combined with it. It is worth noting that Rondot's same informant told that a Mahmudkan *bavik* in his own village had once nearly gone over to the Etmankan, because the other Mahmudkan *bavik* of the village did not help them to boost their chieftains position.<sup>51</sup> Here too, belonging to one of the two factions is

less than permanent; that much the 'halves' of both mentioned dichotomies have in common with the tribe.

But why a dichotomy; why not three or more factions? A model like Barth's for coalitions among Pathan political entrepreneurs (Barth, 1959) might go some way towards explaining why the rival petty chieftains of Hakkari align themselves in two coalitions, but in the Omeryan case a similar explanation would not be satisfactory. The question is not entirely theoretical, since — in my opinion — the dualistic world-view is one of the reasons why the Barzani-led nationalist movement took the particular course it did. The whole environment (tribes, political parties, factions within the nationalist movement, the Iraqi and neighbouring governments, the superpowers) was placed into a simple dualistic classification, in which my enemy's enemy is, temporarily at least, my best friend. There was never a strategy based on a theory of revolution or national liberation, only tactics that consisted of attempts to move units in the environment from the one half of the world to the other (i.e. from Barzani's opponents' side to Barzani's side).

### **Rivalries of chieftains and the collapse of tribal unity**

In connection with the earlier observation that the unity of a tribe may at times break down because of the rivalries among the chieftains, who each seek outside alliances, two related observations concerning the politics of Kurdistan should be made.

1. The phenomenon mentioned has often made it relatively easy for other governments to establish nominal authority in Kurdistan by simply supporting favourite chieftains against their traditional rivals and buying their loyalty with titles, robes of honour, salaries and law-enforcing gendarmerie that sometimes developed into the chieftain's private army. Full control, on the other hand, appeared extremely difficult to achieve, since every chieftain who became 'loyal' had his rivals, who were thus forced into 'rebellion'. The British administration in Iraq in particular managed unwittingly to polarize many tribes.<sup>52</sup> Honestly believing in the superiority of their rule, they mistook chieftains' pragmatic allegiance for love of themselves and called it 'loyalty'. Of course they were horribly shocked when a supposedly loyal chieftain rebelled. The best known example is that of Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji, a leader both power-greedy and sincerely nationalistic, whom the British never forgave for trying to use them in order to establish an independent Kurdistan, instead of allowing them to use him in order to subdue it.

2. In the case of influential families there may also be other reasons, besides internal conflicts and rivalries, for certain of their members to ally themselves with some outside power that is considered to be the family's opponent or enemy. The wise counsel not to put all one's eggs

into one basket is well known and heeded throughout the Middle East. It perhaps was put into practice most conspicuously by Iran's aristocratic families when that country still had a multi-party regime. These families then took proper care to have at least one of their members in each party, including sometimes illegal formations, so that, irrespective of the political vicissitudes, the family always had someone close to the political power of the day. This phenomenon can also be observed in Kurdistan, although more in urban circles than in the tribal milieu proper. Thus several of the great families of southern Kurdistan were, under the Iraqi monarchy, represented in the government as well as in the legal opposition. When the monarchy was overthrown and the communist party emerged from clandestinity, some of these families suddenly appeared to have someone there too, which proved especially useful when this party started a campaign against the landlords. These family members quite successfully directed the agitation away from their own towards other land-owning families.

### **Leadership and conflicts**

Leadership and conflict are closely interrelated. Disputes generally need the intervention of popularly recognized authorities in order to be settled, and a leader's authority is confirmed and increased with every serious dispute he resolves. On the other hand, disruptive tribal conflicts result from power struggles between rival leaders. An important task of tribal leaders (in the case of paramount chieftains it is virtually the only one) is to lead in conflicts, to wage war with other tribes or lineages. In periods of peace the function of the tribal chief does not amount to much, and the unity of his tribe exists in name only. Often, therefore, ambitious chieftains actively seek conflicts, in order to re-affirm their leadership and the unity of their tribe, and to enlarge the scope of both. It is no exaggeration to say that, barring recourse to outside supporters, quarrelling and mediating in other people's quarrels are the most important activities by which one can establish, consolidate and extend one's authority.<sup>53</sup>

The central governments that brought Kurdistan under closer control in the course of this century understandably claimed a monopoly in the exercise of physical violence. As their control became more effective, the road to power through the manipulation of violent conflicts was gradually closed. In order to rise to power in the tribal domain, knowing how to deal with government officials, which had always been a useful skill, became essential. It seems that chieftains began to depend even more than before on external support in order to prop up their positions.

Outsiders who had spoils to distribute that could change the local or regional balance of power (such as the British political officers in Iraqi

Kurdistan during the occupation and mandate) saw a multitude of petty and not-so-petty chieftains whose main occupation seemed to consist of intriguing with and against each other, in ways often too intricate and machiavellian for the naive foreigners to gauge their full depth.<sup>54</sup>

As the traditional methods of achieving political dominance are rapidly disappearing, much of the following sections refers to situations that no longer exist, and is based on interviews and written materials. Some aspects of the change in methods and style of leadership are illustrated later in this chapter by an extended description of two cases.

### **Who becomes the leader?**

In a tribe there are usually several contenders for leadership, since there is no unique rule as to who should be made leader. Lineage structure is symmetrical in that, within any one generation, all individuals occupy structurally identical positions. Let the triangles in figure 1 represent persons; the whole diagram then obviously represents a lineage. There are no structural considerations that could point out any one man in the present generation (row V) as the leader; apparently everyone can make equal claims. If there is no other mechanism that unequivocally determines who will be appointed, a struggle for leadership may ensue, ending in survival of the fittest. This is a problem all tribal societies face; a solution many have adopted is the principle of primogeniture, which establishes a consistent ranking of the members of each generation. If we assume that in figure 1 the left-to-right dimension gives the order of birth, the members of the present generation are drawn exactly in order (number 1 to 16), from 'high birth' to 'low birth'. Where social status depends on genealogical seniority there is usually a tendency for people far left in the diagram to intermarry, which leads to a definite social stratification. Lineages of this type are known as 'conical clans'.

Conical clans seem never to have developed in Kurdistan. The principle of primogeniture is recognized, and people often pay lip-service to it, but in practice it is only at the level of the household that it is more or less systematically applied, and even there exceptions abound. When the head of a household dies, his eldest son succeeds to this position, unless there is an unmarried or widowed brother of the deceased living in the household. This uncle, however, is generally supposed to cede when the son comes of age.

Leadership of the lineage or the tribe is generally inherited within the same family, but there is no fixed rule of succession. In some tribes the eldest son is thought to be the most appropriate successor (but then the rule is still applied quite flexibly), in others it is the elders of lineage or tribe who — in theory at least — choose the brother or son or nephew they consider most fit to succeed to the position. He should be a 'man' in the full meaning of the word: strong, courageous, just and generous, a good strategist and a wise judge, and nowadays it is also important that he know how to deal with 'government people' (to avoid excessive

taxation, to help his dependants evade military service, etc.). In practice often sheer power, even brutal violence, and shrewd manipulation are involved. This is truly *a fortiori* when leadership is taken over from one family by another, as often happened in the bigger tribes; thus the very large Heverkan tribe was ruled by three different dynasties in the past century (the career of its last great chieftain, Hajo, will be discussed below).

Somewhat different is the situation among other large tribes (such as the *Herki* and the *Jaf* <sup>55</sup>) where a more or less stable chiefdom has developed; each of the clans, of diverse origins, has its own chieftain or chieftains, but paramount leadership is vested in a separate 'royal lineage' called *Begzade*. The *Begzade* enforce their rule through a kind of praetorian guard consisting of the best fighting men of the tribe or even from outside the tribe. Any paramount chieftain should be a *Begzade* (who form something of a separate caste, not intermarrying with commoners). Dynastic changes are here between different branches of the same *Begzade* lineage. <sup>56</sup>

An even more developed political system was that of the emirates, which possessed many of the characteristics of a state. Here too there were fierce struggles for power, but since very few families had such a reputation as to be accepted widely enough as supreme leaders, such struggles were mainly between branches of the same ruling family (see the case studies in chapter 3).

## Leadership: titles and functions

It has been said before that it is difficult, or even impossible, to decide which unit should be labelled 'tribe' or 'tribal confederation', 'clan' or 'lineage', and that the Kurdish terminology does not strictly correspond with the levels of organization in our abstract model. Similarly Kurdish terminology does not distinguish between leaders of the tribe, clan or lineage: all are simply called *agha* – with a few exceptions: the heads of shallow lineages such as the *bavik* of the Omeryan are called '*mezin*' ('great' or 'big man') or '*maqul*' (Ar. *ma'qul*, 'wise man'), not '*agha*'. The village head among the Omeryan is generally the *mezin* of the largest *bavik* (among the Goyan this *mezin* is also called '*agha*'). Every lineage has a number of elders or *ri spi* (lit. 'white-beards'), who are supposed to advise the *agha* and elect his successor but have no real power. An *agha* is apparently a leader who *rules*, <sup>57</sup> but by extension his close relatives may also be given this title. In southern and eastern Kurdistan leaders of the tribe or clan are alternatively called '*reis*' (Ar. *ra'is*, pl. *ru'asa*, 'headman') *Khan* and *beg* are originally feudal titles bestowed upon paramount chieftains of the tribe. They are usually added to the name, e.g. 'Ali Khan', 'Rasul Beg'. They have gone out of use now, with the feudal roles to which they belonged. I have never

heard anyone talk of a chieftain as a khan or a *beg*, even when the person referred to had a right to one of these titles. The term '*beg*' was often employed for urbanized Kurds with administrative positions who were at the same time absentee landlords. One of my key informants described the difference between these titles as it existed around Diyarbakir in the 1920s: 'the agha is the tribal leader who lives in the mountains among his tribe; the *beg* lives in town, he may be and may not be a tribal chieftain originally. A *beg* is literate, an agha illiterate. The *beg* is civilized and he engages in politics, the agha fights. *Begs* often possess large land-holdings (in the plains, cultivated by non-tribal peasants), the agha of the mountains is *not* the landlord of his tribesmen, who possess their own parcels of land'.<sup>58</sup>

Among the semi-nomadic and sedentary tribes – to which I shall restrict this discussion mainly — the village is the most conspicuous unit, and it is to be expected that the political and economic landscape in which the villagers live is dominated in the first place by village leaders (tribe and clan leaders are also the leaders of their own village). Leach distinguished village agha, *tayfe* agha and *ashiret* agha, but it is only the village agha of whose functions he could give a coherent description. Leach noticed two things about the village agha among the Balik tribe:

1. He 'owns' the village (in some sense of the word):
  - a) he can evict villagers when he wants to (which Leach rightly doubts, since the agha is closely related to most of them);
  - b) the villagers pay him part of the yield.
2. He is responsible for the upkeep of the guest-house.

Of these two, the more significant for traditional leadership is the guesthouse. It is one of the bases of an agha's reputation, and it mirrors his status. Therefore, before discussing Leach's analysis, a few words about this institution.

### The guest-house

Every traveller passing by a village can make a claim to the proverbial Kurdish hospitality. Most aghas have a special room or separate building where travellers can rest, are entertained, given tea and a good meal, and a bed for the night. If the traveller wishes to stay for a few days nobody will object, the agha will say 'my house is your house, stay as long as you wish' — although there are quite a few subtle ways to make a guest feel he has overstayed his welcome.

Since the agha represents his people to the outer world, his treatment of foreigners is the honour of the village (or lineage, or tribe). Generosity is a requirement for any agha, and rarely will a miser rise to much influence (unless by brute force). The lavishness shown in one's

guest-house adds to one's reputation.<sup>59</sup> The degree of this show of hospitality depends on the status of both guest and host. A village agha who is more generous than the agha of the clan encompassing his village becomes a serious rival of this 'superior' agha, and will soon enjoy loyalty from others besides his co-villagers.

Entertaining guests has other advantages as well: travellers are the carriers of news, and this despite the availability of modern media such as the radio. This means of information-gathering is still very important.<sup>60</sup> Aghas who desire to play a wider political role particularly need the kind of intelligence only travellers can provide. Sometimes aghas send their own men on travels to collect information in others people's guest-houses.

The guest-house has a number of other functions too, as already implied by the names it is given in Kurdish: sometimes *mevankhane* (guest-house), but usually *diwan* or *diwankhane* (court), sometimes *odaye gund* (village room). In their heyday all male villagers came and sat here in the evenings, and discussed daily matters. Minor disputes were brought here before the agha, decisions regarding the village (or lineage, or tribe) were taken here, the young were taught traditions and etiquette; and entertainment was also centralized here.<sup>61</sup>

It should be added that the agha thus monopolized social life in the village; common villagers, for instance, were not allowed to lodge guests in their own houses, but had to bring them to the guest-house, so that the agha kept close control of what was going on.

The elaborateness of the *diwan* varied from time to time and from place to place. Among nomads it was — and is — simply a section of the agha's tent, furnished with carpets and cushions. Even such a *diwan* can be quite awe-inspiring, as is shown by the picture of the *diwan* of the *Milan's* paramount chieftain in Montagne (1932). In the Balik area it was in summer 'a shady pergola ... erected close to the agha's house and furnished with carpets, seats and cushions', while in winter the guests were accommodated in the agha's house.<sup>62</sup> When I visited the same area in 1975 most villages had a *diwan* in a separate room of the agha's house, as in most other parts of Kurdistan.

The most elaborate *diwans*, and the most luxurious ones, I found among the Kurds of the northern Cizre (the northernmost part of Mesopotamia, west of Mosul). The Kurds who settled here at the beginning of the century went through a half-century of great prosperity. With the re-introduction of agriculture early this century, aghas usurped the ownership of the extremely fertile land (formerly held collectively as the tribe's pasture) and demanded a share of the peasants' crops. Much of this income was spent on the *diwankhane*. In fact, the first solid houses of newly established villages were usually the agha's house and the *diwankhane*; the others still lived under the tent, half shepherd, half cultivator. Some of the guest-houses were well-known hundreds of kilometres away through the songs in which



they occurred. They were maybe not representative, but certainly exemplary; that is why I shall give here a description of these, rather than other *diwans*, as the most fully developed form.

The *diwan* is always rectangular, and has a 'high' and a 'low' end; the entrance is near the low end. All around, along the walls there are mattresses or cushions to sit on. An honoured guest or respected old villager may also be given many comfortable cushions to lean against; for young men, leaning is an offence. The agha's place is, of course, at the high end, and near him the esteemed old men and important guests are seated. The younger and lower the status of a villager or guest, the further down he has to sit. Really low-status men do not even sit, but squat near the entrance. When someone enters, everyone of equal or lower status rises to his feet and waits for the newcomer to find an appropriate place and sit down. Then, one by one, they greet and welcome him, and he returns each greeting. Sometimes the agha, too, rises to show his deference to a newcomer, in spite of the latter's lower status; all others then rise.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, when someone leaves people get to their feet.

Near the lower end of the *diwan* stands a brazier with huge brass coffee pots or a samovar with tea, always ready for the guests that might come. It is served by the *qahweji*, a man specially employed by the agha for this purpose. Really great aghas had a number of servants for the *diwan* alone: a *tutunji* for the tobacco that is passed around for rolling cigarettes, another to serve food to the guests, or to light and refill the lamps, or to spread the guest's bed. Usually however the *qahweji* performs all these tasks.

The *diwan*, as it was until recently, provided a powerful mechanism of social control. The villagers were obliged to come every evening. If someone skipped a day he was asked why he had not come; and the person who had remained absent for a few days was severely rebuked by the agha or the elders: 'What kind of man are you? You are not interested in the talk you hear here? You prefer to listen to your little woman's useless chatter? Are you a man or a woman?' Apart from the fact that most men do find men's talk more interesting than women's, and that important matters are frequently discussed in the *diwan*, it would be hard to resist such pressure. Similarly young men were criticized in front of all other men present if something in their behaviour was disapproved of. The pressure was all the harder since, being the younger men, they were not allowed to speak freely and answer the accusations as they wished.

The older men present provided the example of what a man should be like. The young had to sit there motionless and listen, while their elders spoke; they could only whisper among themselves, never speak out loud. They had to sit perfectly straight, cross-legged; leaning against the wall was not done; it would give an impression of weakness. And so they would sit there night after night, and hear the older men discuss daily

matters, plan production, discuss disputes, and organize raids, when necessary. Sometimes an important decision was taken: the agha asked advice from the old and experienced men, but ultimately made the decision alone. And the old men would talk about the old days, usually about the exploits of some great chieftain. Many aghas had a *motirb*, a minstrel, who would know a hundred songs and tales and epics. Accompanying himself on the fiddle (*kemenche*) he would sing of love and war. Also, a few times a year, wandering dervishes came by, staying for a couple of days and singing, accompanied by hand-drums (*erban*), religious, mystical and pious songs, many of them in praise of some great miracle-working shaikh. Thus they provided the kind of religious education that stimulated 'saint worship', something different from the scholastic teachings the village imam (if there was one) gave. Sometimes too, the formal atmosphere would relax somewhat, and all men present, young and old, would play communal games ('guess who has the ring' etc.).

I have not seen a single *diwankhane* that still fully operates this way. Rapid decay apparently set in during the 1960s, for even young people in their early twenties remembered them as described here. In the Syrian part of the Cizre they were closed under government pressure, apparently because they were considered hotbeds of Kurdish nationalism. This can, however, not be the sole reason for their decay. Aghas continue to entertain guests in their private homes, but attendance is not at all what it was like before. The same may be observed in the strip of Cizre that belongs to Turkey; guest-houses still exist here, but remain nearly empty (that is, in summer when I was there. People told me that in winter, when they have nothing else to do, the villagers still spend most evenings in the guest-house). The underlying reasons of the *diwankhanes*' decay lie in the rapid change of the economic relations between the aghas and their villagers. The mechanization of agriculture (first introduced in the 1950s, becoming more widespread in the 1960s) made the aghas less dependent on the villagers' labour. New relations of production emerged. Share-croppers were generally evicted from at least part of their plots, and small landowners as well as many aghas who did not have enough land for the necessary investments became dependent on entrepreneurs who bought advanced machinery. In many cases the owners of the land saw themselves forced to let such entrepreneurs cultivate their land along capitalist lines, in exchange for a part of the crop only. Many villagers for whom no work remained, except maybe a few days per year, now work elsewhere as seasonal labourers during most of the summer. Thus social ties between the villagers loosen rapidly;<sup>64</sup> this is reflected in the decline of the *diwankhane*.

In southern Kurdistan Barth noted another form of decline (1950). The most important aghas had moved to town. They had their *diwankhanes* there, but these were evidently lost to the village. In the

tribal villages there was a small *diwan* visited by one faction only; in the non-tribal villages a number of ambitious men each had a minor guest-room in their private houses.<sup>65</sup> The latter was already true of many parts of Turkish Kurdistan in the beginning of this century: the guest-rooms were not very elaborate, and were visited by a limited number of men only. The owner of a *diwankhane* was not necessarily an agha, but could at least mobilize a faction, a sometimes amorphous sort of clientele.

In central Kurdistan, guest-houses proper hardly exist any more. Guests are accommodated in the agha's private house, and villagers close to the agha visit his house regularly.

### Economic aspects: tribute to the agha

To pay for the upkeep of the guest-house the agha usually takes a contribution from the villagers. Very often this amounts to a share of 10% of the cereal crop, and if the villagers own large flocks, one out of every forty sheep or goats. This contribution does not necessarily mean that the agha is the landowner and the villagers his tenants or share-croppers. There is a difference between the rent tenants pay and the contribution made for the upkeep of the guest-house, as the following interesting case makes clear:

In Sinar, a village in the Turkish part of the Jazira, the former agha was also the landowner of the village. In a partial land reform in the 1950s some plots had been redistributed among villages, so that it was possible to distinguish between land belonging to the agha and the villagers' land. When the old agha died his two sons divided the inheritance: one became the agha, the other one took most of the land. Share-cropping villagers have to cede two-thirds of the produce to the owner of the land; everyone, share-croppers as well as small owners, pays 10% of his net income in kind to the agha for the upkeep of the guest-house.

The distinction between these two kinds of prestations is not always so clear, however. Frequently landowners take the same amount of 10% from the villagers as rent. In the case of absentee landlords, who obviously do not have a *diwankhane* in the village, it can hardly be called anything else but rent. Other landowners, (e.g. in the Syrian Jazira) collect the same amount and call it *rent* (they also claim the right to evict peasants), but also run a guest-house without demanding any extra tribute from the villagers. The specifications most frequently given for the agha's dues are identical with those of the *zakat*, the Islamic alms tax. Throughout Iraqi Kurdistan the agha's dues go by this name,<sup>66</sup> although the agha certainly does not distribute them among the poor and deserving categories who should be the beneficiaries of the *zakat*. This suggests that either aghas have usurped a previously existing

Islamic tax, or they attempted to lend religious legitimation to the dues they exact by giving them this Islamic name. Among tribes where the agha's share is called *zakat* I noticed that the villagers do not also pay an annual alms tax through the *mela* (village 'priest'), as is done elsewhere in Kurdistan, even in landlord villages. Some of my informants explicitly referred to usurpation of the Islamic *zakat* by the aghas. In Shirnak I was told how the local aghas used to collect their dues by brute force, and how demanding they used to be in their exactions: 'They even took 10% of the onions', and 'they even took the *mela*'s share' (i.e., part of the *zakat*).

### **The Balik tribe as an example**

The exaction of tribute and responsibility for the guest-house are what Leach calls the 'functional characteristics of the village agha'. His account suggests that the Balik villagers were at that time landless, share-cropping on the land that belonged entirely to the village aghas. If that is true<sup>67</sup> it would be an atypical case, for among the tribes of the mountains small ownership is the rule. Only some non-tribal and non-Kurdish groups can properly be called share-croppers there; they are generally subjected to a tribal lineage (more exactly, to its agha). Leach is justly sceptical about another aspect of the agha's 'ownership' of the village: the right of eviction the agha claims to possess must be difficult to exercise, for the vast majority of the villagers are his close kinsmen.<sup>68</sup>

The *village agha* owes allegiance to the clan agha, who in turn stands in the same relation to the tribe agha. Leach noted that all three claimed to be the sole owners of the villages. According to Iraqi law, much of the land there was still state land then, to which the tribes had usufruct rights *qua* tribes. *Tapu* registration<sup>69</sup> was expected to take place soon, and Leach thought the clan aghas stood the best chance to register the land as theirs. It was only the village agha, however, who could levy the tithe.

The *clan agha* 'receives gifts in proportion to his usefulness'; his main task as the clan agha was 'to arbitrate in small-scale feuds, settle disputes between neighbouring villages over grazing rights or water, settle divorce disputes and so forth', for which he was recompensed by the litigants.<sup>70</sup> Even in Leach's day these functions largely belonged to the past, as they now do in most parts of Kurdistan. As a description of the aghas' previous roles it has quite general validity however.

The *tribe agha*'s functions are even vaguer. He is also a clan and village agha, but 'his function as tribal agha does not ever seem to have amounted to very much except in time of war, in which he automatically became leader of the whole group and doubtless received economic benefits accordingly'.<sup>71</sup> The more distant tribesmen would in time of peace only send him small token payments. In most tribes these 'token payments' were more institutionalized than Leach seems to have

realized. At the two great feasts of the Islamic calendar (the feast ending Ramadan and the feast of sacrifice), village aghas and other representatives of every village used to visit the tribe agha and present him with gifts. Hay says this included a pregnant ewe from every major flock annually;<sup>72</sup> this practice may still be observed among some tribes, but among most the gifts are more modest, and consist of (smuggled) sugar and tea.

Among the Balik the gradual establishment of external administration in the region concentrated much power, economic and political, into the hands of the paramount chieftain (whom the British found the most loyal chieftain in the area). He received a salary and his authority was backed up with state power. When this practice was given up, the agha's influence eclipsed rapidly. In 1975 he was no longer alive; his surviving son lacked all authority, and informants of the Shekir section claimed that there had been no tribe agha for a long time.

Leach thus gave a beautifully simple description of the Balik's political organization. He saw a three-tiered hierarchy, consisting of: a) village aghas, who decide on local affairs and disputes and levy the tithe or rent from the peasants, who are their relatives; b) clan aghas, who judge in inter-villages disputes and are recompensed accordingly; c) the tribe agha, who represents the tribe to the outer world and has no practical duties in daily life.

The simplicity is slightly clouded by two other observations of Leach which suggest some of the dynamics of leadership:

1. An agha belonging to the tribe agha's own clan (where the tribe agha is also the clan agha) did not admit his superiority, although the tribe agha claimed him as a 'vassal' (Leach 1940: 17). This agha claimed it was he, and not the present tribe agha, who had led the tribe against the invading Russians in the First World War (Leach 1940: 18). 'On all sides it was maintained that [this agha] was more of a man ... than his nominal overlord' (Leach 1940: 28). This agha lived in the smallest village of the district (only two houses!), but he had a reputation for great hospitality. *The tribe agha's main rival was thus not another clan agha, but one of the poorest village aghas!* Thinking too much in terms of levels of organization and corresponding leadership (village, clan, tribe) could obscure the real processes.
2. Some village aghas among the Balik 'own' more than one village. They live in one, and have a caretaker or agent (called *chukha*, *kikha*, or *kökha*) in the others, who collects the contribution for them.

### Leadership situation among a number of different tribes

The social organization of the Balik tribe is simpler than that of most other tribes, although not so neat and systematic as Leach's description

makes it seem. In this section a number of tribes with a more complex social organization will be discussed.

### The Mangur

The Mangur are a semi-nomadic tribe who spend the winter in permanent villages in the foothills north of Qala Diza. Between the Mangur villages, but especially in the plains below, there are villages of non-tribal peasants who are dominated by the Mangur. In the Mangur villages there are no village aghas. There are clan aghas, but the chieftain who used to appropriate the villagers' feudal dues was the tribe agha, who among the Mangur had considerable power, backed up by an armed retinue. In each village the agha appointed one villager as his *kikha* or steward, responsible for collecting the zakat, etc. The retinue was a wild bunch of tough men, recruited from the tribe's clans. They lived permanently with the tribe agha, and were said to be so loyal to him that they would kill their own brothers if he ordered them to. If a village was in doubt whether or not to pay the zakat, this retinue proved a very convincing argument. It also enabled the tribe agha to exact another feudal due, unpaid labour (*begar*); the tribesmen, and even more so the non-tribal subjects, were obliged to work several days every year on the agha's extensive lands, reaping wheat, mowing grass and hay as winter fodder, or carrying out repair and construction work. *Begar* was experienced as especially humiliating, at least in retrospect. From the 1950s, when anti-landlord agitation started, people systematically tried to evade it. But then the agha's retainers carried out raids and rounded up the workers they needed.

The tribe agha's power was not the same throughout his territory; some of the clan aghas had considerable political and economic power as well. Thus the agha of the Chinarei, the clan among whom I spent a short time, also 'owned' a village in the plain. Its non-tribal inhabitants were considered share-croppers only, and had to pay him 50% of the yield. The villages around this one, some of which were tribal, others non-tribal, only paid zakat. Sometimes it was this clan agha, sometimes the tribe agha, who exacted the tithe, depending on the balance of power between the two.

Minor disputes in a village used to be discussed and settled by the village elders; more serious ones were brought before the tribe agha, Ali Agha. The latter would demand some money from both litigating parties and impose fines upon offenders — to be paid to him personally, not to the offended party.<sup>73</sup> People rarely resorted to an official court of justice, and there were no shaikhs of great repute in this particular area. Ali Agha was, therefore, the ultimate judge and arbitrator in the entire area. The small neighbouring tribe, Mamash, which has historical connections with the Mangur,<sup>74</sup> also used to bring some of its most important disputes before Ali Agha, thus recognizing his authority.

Two events of the past decades caused great changes in the internal distribution of power among the Mangur.

After Qassem's coup in 1958 there was a considerable, officially encouraged anti-landlord agitation; peasants refused to pay the tithe or rent, and rejected above all *begar*. Small armed bands of students, petty officials and the most activist of the peasantry roamed the countryside and threatened the landlords. Many rich shaikhs and aghas fled to Iran; Ali Agha was one of them. After the storm was over he came back and tried once more to exact *begar*. He failed, but the villagers continued to pay him *zakat*. After the Kurdish war started in September 1961 he managed to safeguard his position by joining the nationalist bandwagon, like many of the aghas in the region did for some time.

Then, in 1966, a forceful personality, Haso Merkhan, one of Barzani's right-hand men, was appointed military commander of the region. Haso, the son of a poor peasant from Badinan, tolerated no other authority, neither an agha's nor the party's. He made an end to the payment of *zakat* to Ali Agha, and exacted the same as a tax for the nationalist movement instead. He also required the villagers to work for him (for the movement) sometimes without recompense. Further west, commander Ali Shaban acted similarly. This of course antagonized the aghas. Some of them (*not* Ali Agha, apparently) took sides with the government, hoping in this way to regain their old position. They were forced to leave the area with their most faithful followers, and some of their land was distributed among poor villagers by Haso. For the common Mangur little changed: in the winter quarters, their villages in the foothills north of the Qala Diza plain, Haso simply replaced Ali Agha. The *kikha* was re-baptized '*mes'uli de*' ('responsible man of the village', the title of the local representative of the Kurdish administration) and was appointed by Haso (not elected, as he should be). In the summer pastures however, far from Haso's headquarters, Ali Agha continued to exercise his traditional authority as the supreme judge and sole representative of the Mangur in dealings with other tribes.

From the above it is clear that a rather decentralized political organization, as among the *Balik*, where powers are divided among tribe, village and clan aghas (and where the role of the village agha is the most conspicuous), is not universal. The existence of an armed retinue among the Mangur gave the tribe agha a strong central control, at the expense of local leaders.

This armed retinue or praetorian guard is a very significant institution. It is in plain conflict with the kinship ideology of tribal society, as the retainers will fight against their own kin if their lord orders them to (common tribesmen talked about them with moral indignation). For this reason several authors consider the formation of a retinue system as 'a decisive preliminary step in the gradual transition from a tribal towards a feudal order'.<sup>75</sup> A discussion of the question as

to how 'feudal' Kurdish society is seems rather pointless to me, but I wish to draw attention to the fact that, in Germanic tribes, such retinues (of seminal importance in the formation of European feudalism) arose as a consequence of these tribes' contacts with the Roman Empire.<sup>76</sup> This suggests hypotheses that will be further discussed in chapter 3.

### The Pizhdar

Another type of central organization, combined with a clear stratification, exists among the Pizhdar. Here, as in the Balik country, each village (or a small number of contiguous villages) had its own agha, to whom it paid the tithe (who 'ate the village', in the plastic Kurdish idiom). These village aghas, however, were not related to the villagers here, but all belonged to one and the same lineage (called Mirawdeli, after an eponymous ancestor Mir Awdel Agha, who flourished around 1840). In the 1920s six branches of this lineage could be recognized, two of which were perpetually competing for paramount chieftainship. The candidates were Babakr Agha Abbas (d. 1959) and his second cousin Abbas (d. 1945). In some areas, however, members of other branches had an important share in regional power. It seems that conflicts and disputes were brought before the village agha, and if they were more important, before the strongest agha of the locally most powerful branch of the chiefly family (who was not necessarily of their own agha's branch). Disputes between the branches were, prior to 1918, checked by external expansion. Originally the Mirawdeli ruled over just one tribe, called Nureddini, but later they 'planted squireens or agents on an ever widening circle of villages to which they had no shadow of legal title whatever'.<sup>77</sup> After the occupation of southern Kurdistan by the British (1918/1919) this physical expansion was stopped (to be resumed, however, in the 1950s). Conflicts between Babakr and Abbas then became quite serious. The British assistant political officers (A.P.O.) all felt strongly attracted to the personality of Babakr,<sup>78</sup> who became the prototype of a loyal Kurdish chieftain. Abbas became equally prototypical: the untrustworthy, treacherous type. It was the role he was forced into by his rivalry with Babakr, on whom the British bestowed great powers, and whose not entirely disinterested advice they asked on all occasions. Even when, after a short unsatisfactory period of indirect rule, all other regions were again administered directly by A.P.O.s, Qala Diza and Nawdasht were still being controlled by Babakr Agha, 'who held the official rank of Qaimmaqam (governor) of Qala Diza but acted also as the A.P.O.'s counsellor on matters affecting tribal politics across the frontier ... or in other areas'.<sup>79</sup> The whole tribe now virtually split into the factions of Babakr and Abbas, who were consistently cast into a pro-government and anti-government role. The split was not along lineage lines of the rank-and-file, it was simply between the two rival branches of the leading family. The other branches sometimes stayed neutral, sometimes took sides with one of



the two, depending on the credit the British had at that moment. When the British seemed strong Babakr was joined; when their prestige was low, Abbas. All opponents of the British (e.g. Shaikh Mahmud when rebellious, and the Turkish agents who were engaged in anti-British propaganda in the early 1920s, hoping to regain southern Kurdistan and incorporate it into the new Turkey) could count on support from Abbas' faction. Because the Pizhdar were the most powerful tribe of the whole of southern Kurdistan, and because Babakr was a staunch ally of the British, Abbas was an obvious candidate for recruitment by anti-British groups. The balance of power between the rivals was always unequal, and in favour of the British and their man Babakr, who had indeed previously also been the stronger of the two: in 1919 he could put 1,000 armed men into the field, Abbas only 500.<sup>80</sup>

At a later stage these tribal or factional disputes were crosscut by conflicts of another type, those between aghas on the one hand, and their common tribesmen and non-tribal peasants on the other. Even among the tribesmen there were great differences in the degree of loyalty and obedience to the chiefly family. There was a faithful hard core (probably mainly consisting of their oldest subjects, the Nureddini), while others, more recently integrated, resented their subjection and the high dues exacted from them. The Mamash, who managed to escape complete subjection, still talk with deeply-felt hatred about the Pizhdar aghas. It is understandable that others who were less fortunate have similar feelings. In the 1950s, when a definitive land registration was taking place, and the ownership of each plot of land was being settled, fierce legal battles over the land broke out between the Pizhdar aghas and the commoners. As in other parts of southern Kurdistan, there were some minor peasant revolts. Lands held by aghas were invaded and occupied by landless peasants. After Qassem's coup, the anti-landlord movement found strong support among the Pizhdar subjects, and after some clashes, most of the Pizhdar aghas fled to Iran. They came back after the growing tensions between Kurdish nationalists and Qassem's government had forced the class antagonisms below the threshold. For some time the aghas could benefit from the rather widespread nationalist emotions and play down the class difference by associating themselves with the nationalist movement. Gradually, however, they lost their traditional powers to the new authorities, military commanders of the Kurdish guerrilla army. In 1969 at last they went over to the government's side, together with their loyal followers, and actively fought against the nationalists. Their considerable landholdings were confiscated by the guerrilla leaders and partly distributed among landless peasants. But after the peace settlement of 1970 they returned and regained their lands — up to the ceiling set by the new land reform law of 1970.<sup>81</sup>

The social organization of the Pizhdar is thus more clearly stratified than that of the Balik and the Mangur: there is a ruling lineage, the

Mirawdeli, to which all aghas belong, and among their subjects we may distinguish the 'original' commoners (the Nureddini), a number of more peripheral lineages or clans, who had either attached themselves to the Pizhdar voluntarily or were incorporated by conquest, and at the bottom in some districts a non-tribal peasantry, which had been subjected by force.

### **The Hamawand**

An even more rigidly hierarchical organization, in many respects similar to that of the Pizhdar, is that of the Hamawand.<sup>82</sup> This tribe, once notorious robbers, already had a disciplined military organization when they entered the Ottoman Empire from Persia and conquered their present territory, subjecting the sedentary, non-tribal peasant population (now called '*miskén*', i.e. 'poor', 'servile'). The tribe is led by a Begzade lineage (like the Jaf); the other lineages have, moreover, their own aghas. In the past, each village had to contribute a number of fighting men (10–15), led by the village agha, to the tribe's army. These small units were integrated into larger ones under the aghas of more comprehensive sections, etc. Raiding parties were organized by individual aghas, by a number of aghas communally, or — in the case of important operations — centrally by the head of the Begzade lineage. Conquest of *miskén* villages was apparently the work of individual aghas, who organized a war-party with their tribal followers.

The village was then made tributary to the agha that organized the war-party. Some of his men (usually a relative with some followers) settled permanently in the village, collected revenue and passed part of it on to this agha. In a later stage the local representative(s) of the agha often completely usurped these taxes. The *miskén* thus do not own their land. They are share-croppers, and are separated by a caste-barrier from the tribal inhabitants of the village. Theoretically they do have the inheritable right of tenancy of specific plots, but 'such rights may easily be infringed upon'.<sup>83</sup> The *miskén* are not necessarily poor; the plots held by some of them are so large that they employ completely landless agricultural workers (usually of foreign origin). Exploitation by the Hamawand was not much worse than that of tribal peasants elsewhere by aghas of their own lineage: 10–20% of the cereal crops and a third of irrigated crops (greens, tomatoes, etc.) were exacted. Thus, in *miskén* villages we find a stratified society: agha, tribal Hamawand commoners, *miskén* with inalienable occupancy rights and agricultural workers.

Before external administration became effective the 'feudal' relations of the Hamawand and the *miskén* were mutually beneficial. The latter were not only exploited but also protected against other tribes. The *miskén* moreover derived economic benefits from acting as middlemen and selling in the bazaars the goods that the Hamawand had looted in their raiding parties. But when the government made its power felt more effectively, these relations became antagonistic. The Hamawand

could no longer raid, so that they had to support themselves by taking to agriculture too, and probably by aggravating the economic exploitation. Being of higher status, they had better contacts with government officials, and could manipulate the administration in order to get advantages at the expense of the *miskén*. Thus, *miskén* claimed that the Hamawand helped the police with military conscription by giving them all *miskén* names, and were in return exempted themselves.<sup>84</sup> When Barth visited the area in 1950, he found that conflicts between the *miskén* and the Hamawand dominated the scene. They were very intense then because of the land registration that was in progress. Unfortunately I have not been able to collect concrete data on the participation of these *miskén* in the later peasant movement.

### The Dizayi

Conquest pure and simple is not the only way non-tribal peasants were subjected, as the Pizhdar and Hamawand examples might suggest. The Dizayi are a case in point. Political and economic power are in the hands of the descendants of a certain Ahmad Pasha from Diza who became an Ottoman governor of Erbil early in the nineteenth century, and as such managed to appropriate much land in the fertile plain of Erbil, and to impose his domination on the sedentary population. It is not clear whether his family's chieftainship over the semi-nomadic, tribal population also dates from that time, or whether they had been tribal chieftains from earlier times. The only thing that is certain is that they are from a different origin than the tribesmen themselves. Written sources rarely make the distinction between the tribal and non-tribal element.

According to Hay (1921: 77) the commoners numbered nearly 30,000 in 1920, and there were four rival branches of the leading family. The semi-nomadic tribesmen lived in villages at the edge of the plain, which they left for the mountains in summer.<sup>85</sup> The *miskén*, in villages in the plain, were submitted to an agha of the leading family, who was their landlord. The aghas between them used to own more than half the Erbil plain. Their ownership was not the result of conquest (the Dizayi tribe 'is respectable and does not raid'<sup>86</sup>), but of the collusion of the leading family with the Ottoman administration. This gave them the opportunity to acquire legal title to the land, after which the state apparatus could help them to maintain this ownership effectively — which proved repeatedly to be necessary.

Hay, who had many dealings with the Dizayi, called Ahmad Agha, the second most important agha, 'more a successful merchant and profiteer than a tribal chief', who had become extremely rich through corruption, shrewdness and extortion.<sup>87</sup> He soon became anti-government because the British proved less corruptible than the Ottomans (as Hay thinks) or, more probably, because the British favoured his rival Ibrahim Agha, whom they considered the paramount

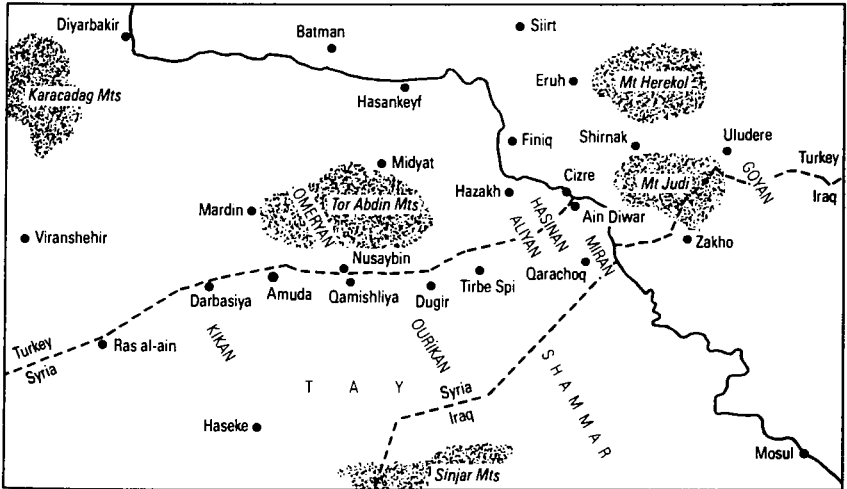
chieftain. The aghas were already quite unpopular with the *miskén* at that time. Late in 1918 the British held a modest opinion poll in the occupied part of Kurdistan on the expectations and wishes for the future, especially on whether or not southern Kurdistan should be included in a mainly Arab independent state. From the plains of Mosul and Erbil it was reported that 'the view of the country population is that though we have freed them from Turkey, we have yet to free them from the tyranny of landowners, who are the only class in favour of Arab Government'<sup>88</sup> — an interesting mixture of nationalist and class sentiments. Hay (1921: 68) mentions an occasion 'where the Dizayi refused to assist their aghas in a struggle against the authorities'; he is not clear as to whether these disloyal Dizayi were tribesmen or *miskén*. Under the Iraqi monarchy the Dizayi aghas secured their overlordship by close connections with the Baghdad authorities. Some of them became members of parliament, even cabinet ministers. In 1953 a serious peasant revolt shook the Erbil plain, probably the most serious one in recent Iraqi history. The frightened landlords (most of whom were already absentees living in towns) fled from the district and were later brought back under protection of the army.

In the Iraqi-Kurdish war few of the *miskén* joined the nationalist ranks. This did not change even after some members of the leading family had started to play leading roles in it (the family was wise enough to keep a few irons in each fire). The general situation in the plains was that the *miskén* (who never were fighting men) abstained, while some of the *tribal* peasants and semi-nomads actively joined or opposed the nationalists, usually under the leadership of, or at the instigation of, their aghas. Besides their lack of fighting capabilities the *miskén* had another reason for not participating. Their main wish was to become the owners of their lands and to achieve some economic betterment, needs more immediate than national and cultural rights or autonomy. They were more liable to obtain land reform from the Baghdad government than from Barzani, for the simple reason that Barzani would never be able to defend the open plains militarily.

### **Power as a process: the colonization of the northern Jazira**

It has been argued that the 'purest' form of west European feudalism existed not somewhere in Europe itself but in the Crusader states in the Levant, where this mode of production and political organization was implanted in a vacuum, as it were, and could develop to its systemic consequences unhampered by any previously existing modes.<sup>89</sup> This would imply that a close study of the Crusader state adds to our understanding of the logic of feudalism as it actually existed and developed in Europe itself. A similar laboratory for Kurdish tribal and quasi-feudal organization is provided by the northern Jazira, where

some tribes from Kurdistan proper have recently (in the course of the twentieth century) settled in previously un- or very thinly inhabited areas. One should be careful in extrapolating findings from this area, but some of the dynamics of tribal political life may become clearer here. This section is largely based on interviews made in the Jazira, May 1976.



Map 5. The northern Jazira.

The northern Jazira (the northern part of the Mesopotamian plain, corresponding with the extreme northeast of modern Syria and the adjoining strip of flat lands in Turkey south of the Karacadag and Tor Abdin mountains), is one of the most fertile areas in the world. In antiquity it supported a much more numerous population than at present. Raids by Beduin tribes from the south and Kurdish nomads from the north and from the Sinjar hills had made cultivation a risky and unprofitable affair. Vast areas had been completely deserted, and only numerous *tells* (the artificial hills risen as the result of centuries of habitation in the same spot) were there to remind of more secure times. It was the most dangerous stretch of the caravan route that linked Baghdad via Mosul with Aleppo and Istanbul. Early travellers attest to the insecurity, the perpetual danger of being waylaid by marauding Beduin or Yezidi tribes.<sup>90</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, energetic governors of Mosul and Diyarbakir made an end to raiding by the Yezidi Kurds of Sinjar, and somewhat bridled the Beduin. Gradually the northern Jazira began to be resettled, partly by nomadic Kurdish tribes who had always used these low and warm lands as their winter quarters and most of

whom were still tributary to the Beduin Shammar tribe at the turn of the century,<sup>91</sup> partly by individuals and tribal sections that came from elsewhere, attracted by the rich lands. The process of settlement was accelerated by the closure of the border between Turkey and the new mandated state of Syria (effective around 1924). Nomads could no longer make their full annual migration, so that some settled south of the border. The persecution of Kurds in Turkey forced many to leave their native lands and come to Syria. Thus in the district of Qamishli, 'one town, 28 villages, 48 hamlets, 29 isolated farms (locations of future villages) rose from the ground in less than five years'.<sup>92</sup>

Among the first to settle was the leading family of the Durikan, at that time a nomadic tribe belonging to the Heverkan confederation. Most of the commoners of this tribe have since settled much further north, near their summer pastures, but still send their chieftains the traditional gift of sheep at the annual holidays. Some of them have individually settled in the Jazira as peasants. The first of this family to settle was Abbas (see figure 3); this must have been around 1850. In his lifetime the first land-registration took place. He had a very large territory registered in the names of his eldest three sons (the youngest, Shuways, was not yet born). This territory coincided more or less with the traditional grazing area of his tribe.

Abbas was not alone, of course, when he settled; a Kurdish chieftain never is. With him were some lesser relatives, a retinue, shepherds for his considerable flocks, and dependent peasants of very diverse origins. A large proportion (maybe even the main body) of this peasantry were Jacobite Christians (Suryani) from the Tor Abdin mountains. It is not clear whether these Jacobites were already living in the plain when Abbas settled there. A few may have been there already, but it is likely that they only started coming down from the overpopulated Tor Abdin mountains after Abbas' permanent presence had become a safeguard against raids by other tribes, especially the Shammar. Moreover, there were apparently some non-tribal Kurdish peasants as well as members of other tribes who, for some reason or other, established themselves as Abbas' dependants. It seems that at that time, none of the Duriki themselves had started cultivating, for this was an activity that most nomads deemed below their dignity.<sup>93</sup> Those of the Duriki whom I met, who were peasants, had all come to the area or started cultivating more recently. When Abbas died, his eldest son Muhammad succeeded him. By then the family had adopted some of the ways of the Arab tribesmen and Muhammad established a great name among the Arab chieftains — more immediate rivals for power and prestige than other Kurds at that time — by organizing the most lavish feasts the land had seen for many years. Hundreds of lambs were slaughtered in a single day, their blood running in veritable rivulets at those parties, to which all great men of the Jazira were invited. Among Kurds and Arabs alike prestige is won by military prowess or conspicuous generosity; the latter was

Muhammad's forte. Until the present day his descendants need only mention his name and every Arab chieftain stands up for them and shows them the greatest respect.

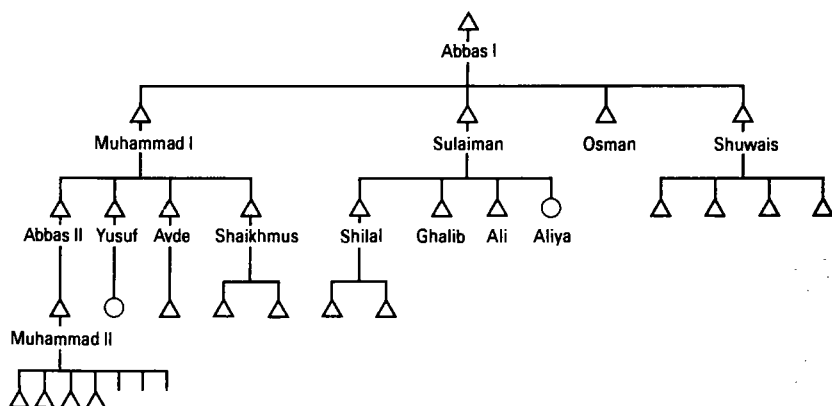


Fig. 3 Partial family tree of the Duriki aghas (mala Abbas).

Muhammad had other appetites as well; he married no fewer than forty women, but respectably, as a good Muslim. He never had more than four wives at a time. Before marrying a new bride he divorced one of his wives. He died young, before his sons were old enough to succeed him. His brother Sulayman became the new agha. Sulayman was more moderate and married only fourteen women (but, unlike his brother, he kept the ten women he divorced in his house). The other branches of the family were rather prolific too, so that the family increased rapidly in numbers. None, however, except the family head, had any private income worth mentioning. Peasants were free to cultivate where they wished (land was abundant), on condition that they surrendered 10% of the yield to their agha, the head of the chiefly family. The family head then redistributed this among the family members, who received a sort of pocket money and thus remained economically completely dependent on their kinsman.<sup>94</sup> Understandably, not everyone was content with this arrangement, and the family members were looking for ways of securing themselves a private income without having to touch the plough themselves.

As the number of peasants increased, the family spread over the villages of their territory. Dugir, the village where Aboas had settled, became the 'capital' where the family head resided; the other family members lived in small clusters elsewhere, supervising the peasants. They did not yet want to risk a feud with Sulayman, or later his sons Shilal and Ghalib who succeeded him, and did not try to keep the revenue for themselves. The villagers normally paid the tithe to the

village elders (*ri spi, mukhtar*), who handed it over to the agha. It seems that there were also a number of villages not fully under control. The *ri spi* there collected the tithe, but did not surrender it, and kept it for a local guesthouse instead. Only in the case of a conflict with another tribe (or later with the French) would such villages support the Duriki family financially.

The family members who lived in villages other than Dugir did not keep the tithe for themselves. In the time that Shilal was the family head, however, some started to make themselves less dependent on him in another way. They turned to the poor peasants, who did not own a plough and the animals to draw it, and entered a new kind of arrangement with them. They provided them with a mule, a plough and seed; in exchange they took half the yield. It is not clear from the accounts I heard whether these peasants paid the tithe to the paramount agha as well. Even if that were so, these peasants were bound directly to the aghas who gave them their means of production, rather than to the paramount chieftain. The latter was, understandably, not very happy with this new development, which resulted in many conflicts. These cannot be understood as conflicts over land, for land was without recognized value, it was as abundant as the air. Nor were they primarily about sovereignty: the head of the chiefly family was not challenged in this field yet. One important aspect was the wish of family members to make themselves independent of the family head: the solidarity among the aghas was seen to break down. It was the new mode of production that made this possible. The conflicts in the family had, to a certain extent, also the character of conflicts over the scarce asset of that time: labour. A new class of peasantry was born (or was first perceived);<sup>95</sup> many wanted to be its master.

The interesting thing is that the family's rebels did not try to change the existing political and economical relationships (they did not try to usurp the tithe, and did not challenge Sulayman's position as the family head), but that they entered entirely new arrangements. Thus they initiated socio-political change, instead of merely practising traditional politics.

An event that occurred in the late 1920s shows that the political authority of the head of the family was still recognized then, and that he still had ultimate control over the tribe's land. It involved the village where Avde (see figure 3) lived. The inhabitants of that village were all Christians (Jacobites, or Suryani). Among the Durikan and the other Heverkan the Christians were less oppressed economically and politically than in most parts of Kurdistan. They were even, in a way, considered members of the tribe. Nevertheless, relations between Christians and Muslims were not always the most cordial. Many conflicts occurred especially after the French had established their administration. The Christians then felt protected and no longer silently resigned themselves to exploitation and humiliations.



Some of the villages in Durikan territory were entirely inhabited by Christians. The French expropriated one of them without compensation and gave it to the inhabitants. Probably in order to prevent further expropriation, Shilal, who was then the paramount agha, ordered Avde, who lived in the other Christian village, to sell it immediately to the inhabitants. Avde obeyed and sold the entire village, which he then had to leave, handing over all the proceeds to Shilal. Apparently land was then considered fully alienable (saleable) property, but not yet fully private property.<sup>96</sup> It was no longer collective tribal land, but was still the chiefly family's communal estate, administered by the paramount agha.

The nature of leadership had changed considerably in the past fifty years however. As long as the Duriki were nomadic the agha had not been much more than *primus inter pares*, whose authority was based on his military capabilities, justice and wisdom; such at least are their present perceptions. Although all his fellow tribesmen gave him gifts of sheep annually, his economic position was not much better than theirs. Quite often the agha was not the richest man of the tribe, for a good agha has to slaughter many of his animals. But here in the Jazira, as agriculture increased in importance while animal husbandry relatively and absolutely decreased, the agha's position evolved into a predominantly economic one. This development was speeded up after the French had introduced their administration and courts of justice, which diminished the agha's political powers, although not entirely abolishing them. It is interesting, therefore, to note which criteria determined succession. If primogeniture were decisive (as in nomad ideology, though not practice), Sulayman should have been succeeded by Abbas II, who was the most senior. But when I asked why Shilal succeeded instead, no one even mentioned the principle of primogeniture. They gave me other reasons why Abbas might have succeeded: he (and his brother Shaykhmus as well) was much more of a man (*mer*), more courageous and combative than Shilal. But the latter had other qualities, he was much more generous (*merd*) and wiser. His brother Ghalib, who became the agha after him, shared these qualities and moreover, knew well how to deal with government officials, which had gradually become the first quality any good chieftain needed.

That it is not just any generosity that qualifies a man as a good leader is suggested by the way Ghalib's generosity was described: 'he gives his daughters to his nephews (*brazi* = [classificatory] brother's son) without demanding a brideprice': an ideal way, of course, to placate those corners whence rivalries and challenges might originate.<sup>97</sup>

We shall follow the further developments from the perspective of Muhammad II, whose guest I was for some time. Muhammad grew up in the house of his uncle Shaykhmus, because his father had been killed in a fight against the French when they first entered the district in 1922. He soon came into serious conflict with Shaykhmus, who had some

peasants working for him under the arrangement described before, in which Muhammad wanted to participate. Muhammad left his uncle and went to Dugir, the capital where Shilal had resided since becoming chief. When Muhammad gave a mule and a plough to a poor peasant under Shilal's very eyes, he predictably got into trouble. Leaving Dugir, he established himself at one hour's walking distance, but his relatives at Dugir did everything they could to evict him.

Poor and hungry he managed to survive this difficult period only through the support (financial and otherwise) that his first father-in-law (a classificatory *maternal* uncle) gave him. Even his house was built for him by his uncle's men. It was not long before his uncle Shaykhmus came and built a house nearby — too close for comfort. Muhammad was thus surrounded by inimical paternal uncles. There was a short lull when a truce was agreed to, and Muhammad married Sulayman's daughter Eliya (i.e. Shilal's sister). Soon after, however, new conflicts arose. Muhammad was an angry young man, challenging established authority, and a tough fighter; never giving up and never giving in, he won his independence. A village slowly grew around his house; and not only poor peasants, whom he had to provide with implements and animals, but also other, independent peasants settled in his village. From them he collected the tithe — no longer for Dugir, but for himself. Similar developments had taken place, or were beginning, in other villages, so that in the end Ghalib drew an income only from Dugir itself and one or two other villages. In the years 1952–54 there was a new land registration, and the newly won independence received legal confirmation. All the lands around Muhammad's village were registered in his children's names.

In these days, as a result of mechanization (the tractor in the early fifties, later in that decade the harvester) Muhammad's relations with his tenants are changing. He can hire machinery with skilled operators. But the villagers are 'his men', he cannot simply send them away; so he now cultivates half of his possessions directly, hiring the necessary equipment, while the other half is more or less equally distributed among the other villagers, who hire the same machinery to cultivate their plots, and give Muhammad ten per cent of the proceeds. But he is already talking of how he will decently dispense with them. His lands, when divided up among his many children, are below the ceiling for land reform; he expects his peasants to obtain land elsewhere under the land reform law. This change is reflected in other things as well. The *diwankhane* (a large building, separate from his house) has been closed, and most of the villagers no longer visit his house very frequently. Only the oldest villagers (in terms of residence), those who once were his retainers, and who assisted him in conflicts and in minor raids, still visit him at home.

The gradual decentralization of authority evident among the Duriki was a general tendency among the tribes of this area that had had a

strong central leadership for some time, and among whom centrifugal tendencies were strengthened by external administration and the rapid growth of the leading family. But no trend is irreversible. In 1926 a strong personality came from Turkey to Syria and managed to concentrate much power into his hands by a combination of traditional and modern methods. This was Hajo, the last great chieftain of the Heverkan. The recent history of this tribe, and especially Hajo's career, are the last case to be described here.

### **The Heverkan confederation and Hajo**

The Heverkan are a large confederation of (reputedly) twenty-four tribes; some of these tribes are Muslim, others Yezidi, while there are also a number of Christians permanently associated with the tribe. The Heverkan belonged to the emirate of Botan. When that still existed, it is said, order reigned, there were no inter-tribal fights and certainly no intra-tribal ones. The Heverkan had a common chief who was a vassal of the mir of Botan. When the latter was defeated by the Ottomans and exiled (1847), the emirate fell apart, as did many of the tribes, rent by struggles for leadership. The first dynasty that ruled the Heverkan confederation was the Mala Shaikha, of which not much more than the name is remembered. It was soon replaced by the Mala Eli Remo; Eli Remo was the head of the Erebiyan subtribe, who by his '*merani*' (manliness, prowess) brought the other subtribes one by one under his control. His descendants gradually lost authority to another family, the Mala Osman, of the Elikan subtribe (see figure 4). Osman himself had been dead for some time when the family started to play a role beyond its own subtribe; Hesen was the first to extend his rule over some of the neighbouring sections. For a long time there was no paramount ruler of the Heverkan as a whole. The authority was divided among the Mala Eli Remo and the Mala Osman. The latter never completely lost the odium of being parvenus, even when they had obtained full control of the entire confederation: the Mala Eli Remo continues to enjoy more universal respect. It is significant that members of the Mala Osman stand up for the Mala Eli Remo, and not vice versa.<sup>98</sup> In conflicts between the two branches of the Mala Osman, the Mala Eli Remo would sometimes mediate.

Hesen's son Hajo extended his rule further, but not as yet over all of the Heverkan. His strategy included war with the neighbouring tribe Dekshuri, strangers who had never belonged to the Botan emirate. It helped him to unite a significant number of the Heverkan behind him, but it also brought him into conflict with the Ottoman government with which the Dekshuri were in league. From that time on the Heverkan had the reputation of being a rebel tribe — and they lived up to it.

In 1896 Hajo II was murdered at the instigation of the Dekshuri chieftain, Jimo. Leadership then passed to Elike Bette and Chelebi, of the younger branch of the family. In perpetual conflict with each other,

they brought all subtribes under the control of their family. Elik, brave and charismatic, the legendary hero of the tribe, continued a guerrilla campaign against the government for over twenty years. Taking revenge for his cousin, he killed Jimo with his own hands. In the tumultuous days following Ottoman defeat in the First World War, he seized the town of Midyat and tried to establish an independent government there. By then he dominated not only the vast majority of the Heverkan but other, neighbouring tribes as well. The Christians, persecuted by Turks and other Kurdish tribes, looked upon him as their protector; fierce Christian fighters contributed to his rise to power.<sup>99</sup> In 1919 Elik was murdered under mysterious circumstances, and the unity of the tribe collapsed. Chelebi and Serhan II, who had meanwhile built up a retinue of over a hundred men (an enormous size for a retinue), now brought part of the Heverkan under their rule. Some sections remained independent under their own leaders, others recognized Hajo III, the hero of this story, as their chief.

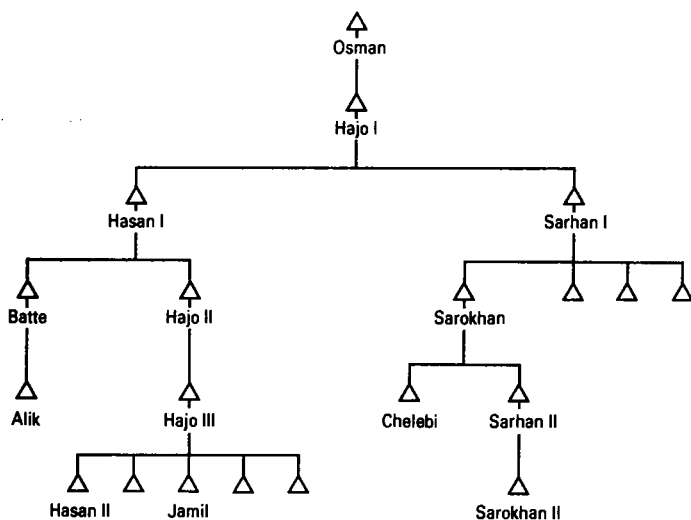


Fig. 4 Partial family tree of the Heverkan aghas (mala Osman).

Hajo was still very young then, but had the qualities that go to making a great chieftain. He was full of daring and had a clear idea of what he wanted, and no scruples in obtaining it; he was an expert at raiding and a good military tactician. With a handful of loyal men he started harassing followers of Chelebi, while managing to avoid major confrontations with the man himself. At first he did not aim at the core but at the less committed of Chelebi's following. A village that supported Chelebi for instance, but that was sufficiently removed from

his main centres of power, would be attacked with superior strength. Hajo would only attack if he were 100% sure that his men were much stronger than the village's. A wise man does not take unnecessary risks, and a climber cannot permit himself any defeats. Frequently, too, he and a party of well-armed followers would ride into a village and lead away all the animals they could find. (At first this seemed to me hardly the way for a chief to gain supremacy over his *own* tribe, so I asked Hajo's son Jemil, 'Do you mean that they *stole* the flocks?' Jemil, aware that Europeans classify these things differently, answered that Hajo did in fact appropriate them, but that this was not theft, but *talán* ('plunder'), which belongs to a quite different category: a thief comes in the night and takes things away secretly; real men take openly, thus challenging everyone and showing themselves the strongest, the masters). Hajo was a good raider, and Chelebi could not effectively protect all villagers, so that for very pragmatic reasons many became Hajo's followers. In many villages, a part of the population were for Hajo, part for Chelebi. In such villages nightly shoot-outs often took place between the two factions. These were usually villages that had been divided before, and where the power struggle between Hajo and Chelebi intensified existing conflicts.<sup>100</sup>

Gradually but steadily the numbers of those who recognized Hajo as the paramount Heverkan chieftain increased; by 1925 the majority supported him. Contrary to what one might expect from the segmentary appearance of tribes, Hajo did not at first establish authority in his own lineage and then in successively larger units, but was active in all subtribes simultaneously. In each there were some small sections that joined him, later to be followed by more. Minor feuds in groups still beyond his grip could be used to bring one of the parties into alignment with him; and long before he had control over the whole confederation — he never got that far — Hajo was involved in politics of a much wider scope. He attempted to form a Kurdish national alliance — under his own leadership, of course.

In 1925 a Kurdish nationalist revolt, led by Shaikh Said, had broken out (see chapter 5). Its participants belonged mainly to the tribes northeast of Diyarbakir. The Turkish government tried the old stratagem of sending other tribes against the insurgents. Among those that received orders to march to Diyarbakir against the rebels were the Heverkan, who had been formally conquered in 1921, a year and a half after Elik's death, and were now a 'loyal' tribe. Not willing to risk a confrontation with government yet, Hajo and his men obediently went in the direction of Diyarbakir but made sure that they stayed far away from the rebels. Later that year, after the main body of insurgents had been routed by the Turkish army, they could return home without the odium of having become traitors to the Kurdish cause. Hajo had an alternative, of course: he could have joined the revolt of which he probably had previous knowledge (he may even have been invited).

However, the revolt had been planned and was led by others, and he could at best have played a secondary role; I suppose that is why he decided to wait.

His time came a year later: in mid-March 1926, his men seized police and frontier posts, drove away all government officials, and demanded immediate assistance from all important chieftains in the neighbourhood, including those in what had become Syria and Iraq. The revolt was badly planned, and in retrospect it is not clear what exactly may have precipitated it. Maybe the Turkish reprisals against the Kurds were also affecting the region. Possibly there was some premeditated but imperfectly executed plan, for in other parts of central Kurdistan there were almost simultaneous minor revolts. Responses to Hajo's appeals to Kurdish nationalism were not forthcoming, except from some neighbouring tribes already under his control, and from a number of individuals from other tribes. Among the latter was Shaikh Said's brother Mehdi, who had first sought refuge in Iraq. Most tribal chieftains were afraid to commit themselves. Hajo kept the entire area under his sole control for about ten days, and then the Turkish army forced him to retreat into Syria. French control of the extreme northeast of Syria was incomplete as yet, and both Hajo and his persecutors could easily enter and leave again. The Arab Tay tribe gave Hajo asylum. He remained rebellious for some time, raiding into Turkey with small guerrilla bands (*chete*) and attacking Turkish patrols, until the French stopped him.

As a great chieftain, Hajo was generally treated courteously by the French; he was less welcome among the Kurdish aghas because he was too powerful, and too dangerous a rival. His diplomatic abilities soon made him France's favourite spokesman for the Kurdish tribes. On the other hand, his influence with the latter now supplemented the old methods that he continued to use in order to bring new groups under his control. He never took up agriculture like the other aghas; he was not a farmer but a warrior and a politician. He built a town for himself, in collaboration with the French: Tirbe Spi. At the time of his arrival in the Jazira he had no possessions there; he received the land on which he built Tirbe Spi from the Duriki aghas. None of the villages had ever paid the tithe to him, but soon after his arrival some started doing so, though hardly voluntarily. The mukhtars thought it wiser to pay a fixed amount regularly than to suffer unpredictable, but probably higher, losses in the raids Hajo's companions continued to make. The quarrelling Duriki aghas joined hands and forgot their conflicts, for fear that otherwise Hajo might soon be the lord and master of the entire province and there might not be much left for them to quarrel about. They still accuse Hajo of dishonest behaviour and of theft (or plunder) on an extraordinary scale, but it seems that they were mainly worried about his influence with the French. For instance, when the French needed workers they always requested them from Hajo, to whom also the salaries were paid; many commoners therefore gravitated towards Hajo.

Besides the usual ways of political advance (feuding and raiding; good relations with the state) Hajo had a third way to increase his influence: as a Kurdish nationalist. He became one of the foremost members of the Kurdish league Khoybun, which did much of the planning of the Ararat rebellion in 1929–30. When the Turkish armies threatened the Kurdish insurgents in the Ararat region, he made raids into southeastern Turkey in an attempt to divert them.

Hajo thus became by far the most powerful and influential Kurdish chieftain within a vast area. He died before economic and political developments could undermine his position, thus remaining in people's memories as the last great chieftain.

The political organization of the Heverkan is interesting, because it had clearly not yet stabilized. There was no institutionalized central leadership, with the consequence that authority moved from one subtribe to the other (or rather, from one family to the other). In the end, however, the sole two claimants to central authority belonged to the same family. If developments could have continued uninterrupted, the Mala Osman might have become a Begzade lineage such as the Jaf have. Interesting too, is the position of the Mala Eli Remo, which, in spite of the absence of real political authority (except, in a way, over their own subtribe the *Erebiya*), is more respected than the Mala Osman.

### Subject 'non-tribal' peasantry and their relations with tribal Kurds

Earlier in this chapter mention was made of non-tribal groups, Kurds as well as others, living in 'feudal' subservience to Kurdish tribesmen. Non-tribal Kurds generally do not own land, they are share-croppers or landless agricultural labourers. As the term 'non-tribal' suggests, they are not tribally organized: they have no kinship-based organization beyond shallow lineages without much political significance. There is no noticeable tendency towards lineage endogamy. This is, however, not what tribesmen refer to when they make a distinction between tribal and non-tribal Kurds. For them, these are two castes: masters and servants, rulers and ruled (see above the discussion of the term '*ashiret*'). Tribesmen are warriors and do not toil, non-tribals are deemed unfit to fight and it is thought only natural that their lords exploit their labour. They are a productive asset, not unlike a flock of sheep. 'Flock' indeed is the primary meaning of the term '*rayat*' (Ar. *ra'iya*) that is widely used in Kurdistan as well as in other parts of the Middle East to denote such groups. Many Europeans who visited Kurdistan in the nineteenth century commented on this distinction. In their descriptions, the division was very strict, and much sharper than I found it. It is likely that these descriptions were somewhat exaggerated, since the informants were generally tribesmen who boasted of their own superiority. But

certainly it is also true that the social and economic changes of the past half century have softened the differences between the two categories. Typically, the tribesmen were nomadic shepherds or semi-nomadic shepherds-cum-cultivators, while the non-tribal peasants and craftsmen were economically and politically dominated by them. Since most tribesmen have by now fully settled and have taken up agriculture, and since class contradictions are developing within both the tribal and non-tribal segments, the distinction is not as clear-cut now as it used to be. For a discussion I shall therefore lean heavily on written reports from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### **Economic exploitation of peasantry by tribesmen**

The nature of the relationship between the tribal and non-tribal segments, or rather, the degree of exploitation of the latter by the former, varies from time to time and from place to place. In the districts of Pervari and of Hakkari (Turkish Kurdistan) I found that the only obligations the non-tribal peasantry have nowadays is to mow grass as winter fodder for a tribal agha's flocks; no other dues are levied. In the Shataq and Norduz districts (immediately north of Hakkari), non-tribal peasants constitute the vast majority of the local population. They are not considered the owners of their land, and have to hand over a high proportion of the produce to the aghas of the Giravai tribe, their overlords.<sup>101</sup>

In southern Kurdistan Barth found that the tribal Hamawand took only 10–20% of their non-tribal peasants' cereal crop and a third of the irrigated crop — which is not more than aghas elsewhere take from their cultivating fellow-tribesmen. There is a difference, however. Among the Hamawand and especially the Dizayi the *miskén* (as the non-tribal subjects are called here) were *tied to the land*. They were owned by the tribal agha and could not simply leave one agha for another.<sup>102</sup> Even now, in spite of the anti-landlord measures taken in Iraq, the Dizayi aghas can still restrict their *miskén*'s freedom of movement. In the past, the non-tribal peasantry were usually just serfs. Taylor, in the 1860s, found that the (Christian) peasantry of the Botan district (called *zerkiri*, 'bought with gold') were bought and sold together with the land on which they worked (Taylor 1865: 51). Forty-five years earlier his compatriot Rich, visiting the Sulaymaniyah district (at the invitation of the Baban prince ruling there) wrote in his diary: 'a tribesman once confessed to me that the clans conceived the peasants to be merely created for their use; and wretched indeed is the condition of the Koordish cultivators ...' (Rich 1836, I: 89). Rich went on to compare them with the black slaves in the West Indies, and found little difference. Another agha told Rich: 'I take from them my due, which is the zakat, or tenth of the whole, and as much more as I can squeeze out of them by any means, and any pretext.' (Rich 1836, I: 96).



### Ethnic differences

In some cases the subject, non-tribal peasantry are ethnically different from their tribal overlords. This is most obvious in the case of Christian peasants, who generally speak a different language and have a different material culture. Not all Christian groups in Kurdistan, incidentally, lived in subjection to Kurdish tribesmen. There were autonomous communities, and some Nestorians of central Kurdistan even dominated Kurdish peasants. Most of the Christians, however, were politically dominated and economically exploited by Kurdish tribal aghas. The precise origins of these Christian groups and of their relations with the Kurds are rather obscure in many cases. The assumption, so common among the European visitors of the nineteenth century, that the Christians represent the original population of the area, while the Kurds belong to a more recent, conquering stock, may be true in some cases; it does not do justice to the complexity of the historical relations between both ethnic groups.

One case that fits this assumption well, but is rather exceptional, is the Kurdish-Armenian plateau.<sup>103</sup> Originally the plateau was inhabited almost exclusively by Armenians, mainly agriculturalists. After the battle of Chaldiran (1514), a number of pastoral nomadic Kurdish tribes were sent to this plateau, to act as wardens of the Persian frontier. An interesting symbiosis of Armenian peasants and Kurdish nomads developed. In winter the plateau is extremely cold (temperatures of  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  are normal) and the local Armenians had developed a house-type, half or completely subterranean, that is adapted to these circumstances. The Kurds of course did not possess such winter-quarters — they were tent-dwellers — and their duties as frontier guards forbade them to go to the warm lowlands in the south and southwest. So in winter they went to live with the Armenians in their houses, and had stables built in the same village to accommodate their flocks. Food and fodder were provided by the Armenians. The Kurds paid them back in kind (animal produce), but not more than they, as the more powerful partner, saw fit. During the nineteenth century, Kurdish-Armenian relations deteriorated under the influence of the Russian-Turkish wars, and the oppression of the Armenians by the Kurds increased. The formation and arming of para-military units out of the Kurdish tribes by Sultan Abdulhamid gave them licence to rob, steal and even kill at will (see chapter 3). Many Armenians emigrated to the Caucasus, many more were killed in successive waves of massacres. Their lands and houses were taken by Kurds, who then settled.

But we not only have Kurds dominating Christians; in many parts of Kurdistan there was a sort of two-caste system among the Kurds themselves. The non-tribal, subjected peasants are known by different names. In southern Kurdistan the term '*miskén*' is widely used (for instance among the Hamawand, Dizayi, and Jaf); in the past the name '*guran*' was more common here, as it still is in most of Persian

Kurdistan. In northern Kurdistan they are usually called *kurmanj*. The term '*rayat*' was in use as a synonym throughout Kurdistan. This was also the term (usually in its plural form, *reaya*) that was applied by the Ottoman administration.

Not all non-tribal Kurds lived in subjection to tribes or tribal aghas. In fertile and accessible areas, such as the Diyarbakir and Erbil plains, where the provincial government could exert its authority relatively easily, the land, together with the peasants on it, was controlled by military or bureaucratic officials or urban traders.

Two hypotheses concerning the origins of these non-tribal Kurds immediately present themselves:

A. They are simply de-tribalized Kurds. Their ancestors may have settled down to agriculture, gradually lost their tribal organization and the military skills of nomadic pastoralists and later have been subjected by another tribe; they may also have been conquered first and then forced to start cultivating for the victors. One might even imagine them as originally being members of the same tribe that now dominates them, who settled because of impoverishment.<sup>104</sup>

B. They belong to a different ethnic stock than the tribesmen and represent an older, sedentary, population. Present Kurdish culture, in spite of its relatively high degree of homogeneity, would then be the result of the cross-fertilization of (at least) two originally different cultures.

Although at first sight the former hypothesis might seem to be the more reasonable, it is the second one that is repeatedly proposed by travellers and researchers, by Rudolph (1959). I think there is enough evidence that in some cases a variant of hypothesis A is true, while in other cases B is more correct, although it might need reformulation. The fact that at some places the non-tribal peasants can be shown to have different ethnic origins from the tribesmen there does not imply that the same should be the case elsewhere. Rudolph used such reasoning by analogy in a case where I believe him to be wrong. His expedition to central Kurdistan found there differences in material culture between the semi-nomads and the completely settled peasants. He attempts to explain these differences by referring to southern Kurdistan, where the *ashiret* and *guran* can be shown to have different origins, and formulates then for central Kurdistan an '*Überschichtungstheorie*' identical with hypothesis B above — although the cultural differences could easily be attributed to ecological factors and/or influence of the other ethnic groups (Armenian and Nestorian Christians) that had lived or still live in the area. This objection was also raised by Hütteroth (1961: 40–41).

There are several well-attested cases of conquest and violent subjection of peasant communities by nomads. The, somewhat anomalous, case of the Armenian plateau has already been mentioned;

a more straightforward case is that of the Hamawand. This tribe came to its present territory, between Sulamaniyah and Kirkuk, around the time that Europeans began frequenting these parts. Barth recorded in 1950 very vivid memories of how they conquered peasant villages (Barth 1953: 53–55). The Hamawand were a somewhat atypical tribe, however: they made their livelihood primarily as raiders, not as shepherds.<sup>106</sup>

Another instance of conquest is furnished by the Pizhdar (see Chapter 2). It should be noted that among the vanquished, there were tribal as well as non-tribal Kurds. A third instance forms an interesting parallel to the Kurdish-Armenian ‘symbiosis’ referred to above. Firat (1975) relates how his tribe, the Khormek (settled cultivators in the Varto district, south of Erzurum) were subjected by the nomadic Jibran tribe, who since that time have spent the winters in the Khormek villages and forced the Khormek to build stables for their flocks. The Khormek are called a tribe, but their position *vis-à-vis* the Jibran resembles that of non-tribal peasants. It is pertinent to note that the Khormek are Alevis, and the Jibran Sunni Muslims. In the Ottoman Empire the Alevis were always suspected of Persian sympathies, and their oppression therefore found easy justification.

The question is then raised: in cases where the non-tribal peasantry was subjected by conquest by its present tribal overlords, were these two groups ethnically different originally? Present cultural differences between the two strata are insufficient evidence, since these may well have other causes. Independent evidence is needed on the original ethnic difference (which would, in general, have to imply linguistic difference). In at least one case, that of the *guran* of southern Kurdistan, such evidence does exist, and, moreover, it connects these non-tribal peasants with a partly tribal group of the same name, the Guran confederation. I shall discuss this case extensively in the following section, because it nicely illustrates the complexity of nomad–peasant relations and the fluidity of ethnic boundaries, as well as the process by which different ethnic groups gradually merge. I shall not attempt to give a balanced account of everything known about the *guran* and the tribal confederacy of the same name — such surveys have been made by others<sup>106</sup> — but shall restrict myself to what is relevant in the present context.

## The *guran* and the Guran

Rich was, to my knowledge, the first European to draw attention to the fact that the peasants of the Sulaymaniyah district were, as he put it, ‘a totally different race from the tribes, who seldom if ever cultivate the soil, while, on the other hand, the peasants are never soldiers’ (Rich 1836, I: 88). These peasants were known as *guran*, and they were

'distinguishable by their physiognomy, and by their dialect of Koordish' (ibid., 81). This last observation invites comments. At present the non-tribal peasants of the same district, still known as *guran* or, more commonly, *miskén*, speak more or less the same dialect as the tribes there. Not far to the southeast of Sulaymaniyah, however, in the mountainous Dalehu district, is the habitat of a tribal confederation bearing the same name of Guran and known to speak a language different from Kurdish proper. This language, Gurani, seems to belong to the northwestern branch of Iranian languages, like the Zaza (or Dimili) dialects of northern Kurdistan, but unlike Kurdish proper, which is southwestern Iranian language.<sup>107</sup> European experts have repeatedly warned that the non-tribal peasants and the confederation of the same name should not be confused (herein distinguished by capitalization and romanization of the latter's name). Rich's remark on the peasants' language suggests that he had fallen victim to precisely this confusion, or extrapolated what he knew about the language of the Guran to the *guran*, assuming that their identical names meant original linguistic identity. Rich was a good linguist, however, who knew Persian and learned Kurdish during his stay in Sulaymaniyah. When he later visited Sanandaj (Sine) in Persian Kurdistan, which was then the residence of the ruler (*wali*) of the Kurdish emirate of Ardlan, he observed that the local notables spoke among themselves not common Kurdish but a Gurani dialect. As we know from later visitors, the polite and literary language of the Ardlan court was Haurami, which is in fact a Gurani dialect.<sup>108</sup> This correct observation is reason to take Rich's remark on the different language of the peasants around Sulaymaniyah seriously. In a list of the dialects of Gurani given by Soane (1912: 382), a Shahrazuri is mentioned. Shahrazuri is the name of the district directly south of Sulaymaniyah; the Ottoman administration gave this name to a much wider area, including the Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah districts. There must in the past, therefore, have been speakers of some form of Gurani in the Sulaymaniyah district, and it seems reasonable to identify these with some of the *guran*. It is not unique to the *guran* that they have lost this original language; in Sanandaj, Haurami has entirely disappeared and even among the Guran there are but few groups left that still speak Gurani; most have adopted a form of ordinary Kermanshahi Kurdish. The southern Kurdish dialects, on the other hand, seem to be heavily influenced by Gurani. MacKenzie (1961b) attributes the considerable difference between the northern and southern dialects primarily to this influence.

Rich appeared to be uncertain as to whether he should consider these *guran* as Kurds or as a different ethnic group. Sometimes he called them Kurds, and their language a Kurdish dialect (which is probably in accord with usage among the Kurds in his time as well as in ours), at other times he called the nomads the 'proper Kurds', and the *guran* the 'peasant race'. Just as the term '*guran*/Guran' denotes different groups which

cannot *a priori* be identified with each other, the term 'Kurd' is also applied in different ways. Europeans have generally used it as a purely ethnic or linguistic name, and assumed that orientals themselves did so unambiguously too — an incorrect assumption. Mediaeval Arab geographers used the term 'Kurd' (in its Arabic plural form '*Akrad*') to denote all nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes that were neither Arab nor Turkish. This included tribes that even the most extreme of Kurdish nationalists would nowadays not count in. Occasionally even Arabic-speaking nomads were called '*Akrad*' (e.g. tribes of Khuzistan).<sup>109</sup> This usage has persisted and may have been the reason for Rich's statement that the nomads are the real Kurds.

I found the name 'Kurd' thus opposed to 'Guran' in a religious song from the Ahl-e Haqq that I recorded in Dalehu.<sup>110</sup> The old man from whom I heard this song, a Guran himself, explained the meaning of these names in their context as follows: 'a Kurd lives in a tent and is nomadic, a Guran is sedentary and lives in a village'. In other contexts, the same informant used the name 'Kurd' more inclusively, as an ethnic (or linguistic) label, and then included the Guran among the Kurds.

Sometimes the term 'Kurd' is used in a purely linguistic sense, without implying other aspects of ethnicity, and without the implicit idea that people so called form somehow a unity.<sup>111</sup> Under the influence of the Kurdish national movements of the past decades, this usage is disappearing and most Kurds now understand the name as an ethnic or national label. There is a strong tendency to project this present meaning also into the past.

The inhabitants of Hauraman, who still speak a Gurani dialect, at the beginning of the century still considered themselves to be a different people from the Kurds. They had a tradition of having come from the area southwest of the Caspian Sea.<sup>112</sup> Gradually (and still very incompletely) the Haurami are beginning to consider themselves as Kurds. Their intercourse with the Kurds is intensifying; there are frequent intermarriages, and many Haurami have participated in the Kurdish nationalist revolts. Cultural differences are still very clear however. Compared with the Kurdish tribes Haurami society is still quite closed, and although Barzani's nationalist movement had regional headquarters in Hauraman in recent years (1974–75) it never managed to be entirely accepted by the local people.

Ambiguity in the usage of the terms '*kurd*' and '*guran*' thus makes it difficult to reconstruct the processes of domination, assimilation and amalgamation that took place. It is not that there is little historical evidence — in fact, there is an impressive amount of documentation — but rather that every simple hypothesis appears to be contradicted by at least some of the evidence.

For Rich matters were still simple: in the Sulaymaniyah district the tribesmen were a minority (the *guran* outnumbered them by four or five times<sup>113</sup>), whereas further north the tribesmen made up an increasingly larger proportion of the population, and further north still, in the Rowanduz area, none of the peasant race were to be found. Rich combined these observations with information that the princely family of Sulaymaniyah, the Baban, hailed from the more northerly region of Pizhdar, to conclude that mountainous central Kurdistan is the original homeland of the real Kurds, who are all tribesmen (although they may have settled), and that from there the Kurds have come south and conquered the lands of the non-tribal, sedentary *guran* population. The Kurdish principality of Baban, Rich believed, owed its existence to such conquest. The conquered territory was given in usufruct to relatives of the prince, who in turn had as their vassals the tribal chieftains. A kind of feudal organization came into being, in which the subjected *guran* became serfs.

Rich was right in assuming that the social constellation as he observed it in southern Kurdistan had arisen out of the interaction of at least two different ethnic groups. When, however, he suggested that one of these consisted of nomads and the other of peasants, he made an unjustifiable oversimplification. The linguistic evidence, as well as early written sources, seems to establish beyond doubt that the Gurani language was brought there by a people that had originally lived south of the Caspian Sea and that had relations with, or were a sub-group of, the Dailamites.<sup>115</sup> From the fourteenth century on, geographers mention a people called Guran living in what is now southern Kurdistan; much evidence connects the present Gurani speakers with the Dailamites and the Caspian. But it does not follow that *all* those who spoke or speak Gurani are descendants of those immigrants (from now on to be called Guran), or that the social stratification into two caste-like groups is simply the result of subjection of these Guran by Kurdish tribes. The assumption that these Guran were not tribally organized is again an independent one, and is not borne out by the evidence.

For Rich, the term 'Guran' implied subject position, non-tribality, and being a peasant (also in the sense of 'boorishness'). The tribal Kurds at Sulaymaniyah gladly confirmed this opinion. They laughed approvingly when Rich, trying to flatter the Baban prince, told that he had heard that the prince of neighbouring Ardalan (an emirate in Persian Kurdistan, in extent roughly corresponding with the present province of Kordestan) was 'but a Guran'. That is correct, his hosts confirmed, although, they said, the prince belongs to a very old and venerable family, and it is wrong to mock him. The princes of Ardalan (whom one could hardly call 'subjected peasants') were Guran too, as Rich noticed later (I, 201). Many Kurdish tribes were tributary to these Guran princes. The soldiers whom Rich saw at Sanandaj were not Kurdish (as in Sulaymaniyah, where the Guran were said to be unfit to

fight) but fierce looking Haurami, unmistakably belonging to the 'peasant race'. Clearly, the Guran of Ardalan were not socially inferior to the Kurdish tribesmen, as they were in the Baban territory. The illustrious history of their rulers (who were of foreign origins, as were those of many Kurdish tribes and emirates) is written in praising terms, also by others than themselves.<sup>116</sup> In Rich's time the Baban seemed to look down upon the Ardalan family, but in the sixteenth century the Baban district had been tributary to this dynasty.<sup>117</sup> Many of the Guran in Ardalan were, of course, peasants, but there was also a Gurani-speaking military element, the Haurami and possibly others as well.

Another interesting case is the Guran confederation. Its leaders, who wielded actual political power until early in this century, belonged to the sedentary stratum, while at least some of the nomadic member tribes were definitely Kurdish. The latter distinguished themselves both in language and in religion from the main body of the confederation, who were Gurani speaking Ahl-e-Haqq.

A third pertinent example concerns the small emirate Bradost of central Kurdistan. The family ruling the Kurdish tribes there in the sixteenth century was, according to the *Sharafname*, of Guran descent.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, in several cases Kurdish tribes were the subjects of Guran rulers, a situation unlikely to arise if all Guran had been merely peasants. There is in fact some evidence that the Guran had in the past a two-layered social organization as found later in southern Kurdistan: a tribally organized, military caste, and a subject peasantry, probably not tribally organized:

a. Such an organization still exists in Hauraman, according to the Haurami chiefly families whom I interviewed. In *Hauramani Takht* they mentioned three tribes called Hesensoltani, Mistefasoltani and Behrambegi, reputedly descended from three eponymous ancestors who were brothers. The members of these tribes are all '*khavanin*' (pseudo-Arabic plural of *khan*, 'ruler'), they own small plots of land and dominate a landless peasantry (which is not called *guran*, but *rayat*). The Haurami are undoubtedly Guran: language, physiognomy and material culture<sup>119</sup> set them apart from the Kurds and associate them with the Guran. The Haurami have among the Kurds a reputation for toughness and bravery, which contrasts with the low opinion Kurds have of the *guran* peasantry of Shahrazur.

b. The Egyptian scholar Shihab ad-Din al-'Umari, writing in 1343 about the Kurds, first mentioned the Guran: 'In the mountains of Hamadan and Shahrazur one finds a Kurdish [sic!] nation called Guran (*al-Kuran*) who are powerful, bellicose and who consist of soldiers and peasants (*jund wa ra'aya*)'.<sup>120</sup> The latter remark suggests the two-caste organization referred to.

c. The Sharafname is not very clear about the Guran; it does not devote much attention to them and there are a few ambiguities, probably due to the usual confusion of tribes with dynasties. But whenever the Guran are mentioned they are called a tribe or tribes ('*tayfe*' and '*ashirei*' are the terms used). In the introduction Sharaf Khan wrote that the Kurdish tribes are divided into four groups: the Kurmanj, Lor, Kalhor, and Guran,<sup>121</sup> which, if conceived as a linguistic observation, is correct. The interesting thing is that the Guran are counted among the tribes and are put on a level with the other three groups that is largely tribal.

d. The Guran confederation remains the most mysterious group. The settled population here is not subjected to the nomadic tribes of the confederation. As aforementioned, the former rulers of the confederation belonged to the sedentary stratum themselves. Some member groups of the confederation were definitely Kurdish, such as the two Jaf sections that had, in the nineteenth century, broken away from the main body of their tribe and placed themselves under Guran protection.<sup>122</sup> These are still Muslim, while the other tribes as well as the non-tribal elements adhere to the Ahl-e Haqq religion. One of the largest member tribes, the nomadic Qalkhani, and the settled non-tribal Guran have exchanged Gurani for a Kurdish dialect resembling that of Kermanshah.

The origins of the nomadic Guran are unclear. They may have been a Kurdish tribe that, in order to get access to the rich mountain pastures in the Guran territory, subjected themselves to the Guran (as later the Jaf did) and have gradually been assimilated linguistically and religiously. Or they may be 'real' Guran — which would be another indication that some of the original Guran were tribally organized.

The fact that the Qalkhani are only superficially Ahl-e Haqq<sup>123</sup> may suggest the former possibility — but it should be noted that Muslim nomads are also only superficially islamized and do not participate in religious rites. The Qalkhani have a very distinct style of singing, resembling that of the Haurami and quite unlike those of the Kurdish tribes. This cultural trait then seems to connect them with the original Guran rather than with the Kurds.

At the beginning of this century the nomadic sections of the Guran confederation were more numerous than now, being about equal in numbers to the settled part.<sup>124</sup> In the past, the proportion of nomads was therefore probably even higher, and this demographic superiority of the nomads makes it hard to believe that these were guranicized Kurds. This is another indication, it seems to me, that the original Guran comprised a tribal and nomadic component.<sup>125</sup>

### **The relation of Guran and *guran***

The above considerations, along with earlier published studies, give us a historical sketch of the Guran. Since at least the fourteenth century there lived a people in southern Kurdistan who had come from



north-central Iran, spoke a northwestern Iranian language and were known as Guran. Linguistically, culturally and also in physiognomy they differed from the Kurds, but like these they had a tribal component that formed the leading and military stratum, and a more amorphous peasant component. It is not clear whether among the tribal component there were any nomadic pastoralists. Being mountaineers, the Guran had apparently so much in common with the Kurds that not only the Kurd Sharaf Khan Bidlisi but also the Egyptian al-Umari classed them among the Kurds. Towards the end of the Mongol period a man from outside, Ardal Baba,<sup>126</sup> established his rule among them, at first in Shahrazur only. His descendants later brought more Guran as well as Kurds under their control. In later times, Kurdish tribes coming from elsewhere<sup>127</sup> gradually replaced the ruling stratum of the Guran; where this happened the name '*guran*' came to mean 'peasant'.

This happened in large areas; as far north as the Iranian Herki territory (west of Rezaye) the peasantry were called '*guran*' in the 19th century,<sup>128</sup> which suggests that the Guran once had a wide dispersion (or that the term came to be used by extension for other subject groups). The fact that a Gurani-speaking enclave is to be found at Kandule (a valley thirty-five miles north-by-northeast of Kermanshah; the dialect was studied by Mann) suggests a spread rather far eastward — as already mentioned by al-Umari, who located the Guran in Shahrazur and Hamadan. In Hauraman the original Guran were never subjected by Kurds. The Guran confederation (presently in decay) may have developed out of a principality of the original Guran with some Kurds attached.

### **Nomads and peasants: one or two peoples?**

That the *guran* peasantry of the Sulaymaniyah district and their tribal Kurdish overlords have different ethnic origins is beyond doubt, although this should not be taken to imply that all *guran* are descended from the original Guran and all tribesmen from the 'original' Kurds. It may even be possible to demonstrate something similar for non-tribal Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan. But it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that all original Kurds were nomads, who conquered the territories of previously present, not tribally organized, sedentary populations. To assume that contemporary peasantry and tribesmen still represent these two different stocks would be a further misjudgement.

In the first place it is hard to imagine a people that consists solely of pastoral nomads. Only under the most severe circumstances will people live on a strictly animal diet. Nomads typically have frequent trading and/or raiding contacts with sedentary cultivators to provide for their need of cereals and many other less essential items. The Medes, who were perhaps the major single group from which the present Kurds

descend,<sup>129</sup> are known to have comprised both nomadic and settled elements. The former provided the warriors — their way of life was quite compatible with that role and left them time for it — while the latter, as peasants, had the essential task of feeding the armies.

Tribal, nomadic warriors and the non-tribal, dependent peasantry are sometimes presented as hermetically closed castes, not least by their members themselves. Numerous studies have, in the past few decades, shown that ethnic and caste barriers in many parts of the world are not so impermeable. It may therefore well be that in Kurdistan too the 'caste' barrier has never been as rigid as is sometimes supposed. There is not much direct evidence, but the following observations provide enough indirect evidence to conclude that crossings of the tribal-non-tribal gap have been quite common, in both directions.

1. Impoverished nomads have frequently been forced by physical necessity to settle and start practising agriculture. Below a certain minimal number of animals it is not possible to live by animal husbandry alone (this number is variously estimated at 80 to 200 sheep). In 1820 Rich estimated that the Jaf, with all attached clans and lineages, numbered 10,000 tents of nomads, beside which there were 3,000 families who had settled (Rich 1836, I: 177). In 1920 the proportion that had settled was much higher but, as Edmonds observed, settlement was not definitive. Many of the sedentary families took up a nomadic existence again when they could afford it, or when this seemed more profitable (Edmonds 1957: 139–56). *Within* the tribe there was thus a permanent flow from the nomadic to the sedentary segment and vice versa. Some other tribes settled completely; Rich mentioned a few of these in his list of tribes of the Sulaymaniyah district (Rich 1836, I: 280–81). Such sedentary tribes may gradually loosen their tribal organization, especially after conquest by another tribe (in which case the lineages largely lose their political functions). The position of the tribes that were later subdued by the Pizhdar was very similar to that of the subjected *misken*; they were kept in a similar, nearly feudal dependence.

2. On the other hand, non-tribal peasants may, individually or in groups, join a tribe that is in the ascendancy. The new tribes that suddenly emerged and rapidly increased in numbers must have taken their new members from somewhere. When a tribal agha needed men to fight for him he could not afford to be too selective as to the pedigree of his recruits. On the Siwel, one of the tribes in his list, Rich remarked: 'The pure origin of these may be questioned, but *they are at all events now a tribe*, and do not mix with the peasants' (Rich 1836, I: 280; my emphasis).

In fact, whereas in 1820 there were four to five times as many *guran* as there were tribesmen in Shahrazur (Rich 1836, I: 1977). Edmonds wrote that in 1920 three quarters of the population of the Halabja district (the

central part of Shahrazur) were Jaf tribesmen. It is true that during the political disturbances around 1830, and especially during the plague that swept the district in the early 1830s, many peasants had left for safer horizons (attested by Fraser, who visited the district in 1834).<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the change in the number of tribesmen as a proportion of the total population is so considerable that one is led to believe that some peasants may have become tribesmen during the turbulent events of the past century.

3. It has been remarked before that many tribes have leaders of foreign origin. This may also be formulated differently: many tribal leaders have followers of other origins. The following a leader gathers around him may originally be tribal as well as non-tribal; it gradually develops into a real tribe. An example has been described earlier in this chapter: the formation of a tribe-like unit around the Duriki aghas who settled in the northern Jazira. The case is atypical in that the new followers were primarily peasants, not warriors. Among these peasants, however, the original Duriki did not seem to hold more favourable positions. Until ten years ago the aghas still had a retinue and would not ride out without their retainers. The retinues did not consist solely of original Duriki; the presence of Christians among them was conspicuous.

4. It is certainly not true that all *tribes* in Kurdistan have a common origin. During more than eight centuries of contact between Turkish and Kurdish (and Arab) tribes, there have been Kurdish tribes that turkicized and Turkish tribes that gradually became Kurdish. More remarkable is the fact that even between the Kurdish tribes and the Christian minorities of Kurdistan there seems to have been a certain exchange of personnel.

The Armenian and Aramaic-speaking Christians who until the First World War lived throughout Kurdistan (after massacres, deportations and flight, only a few small communities remain) were usually considered as the last representatives of the region's original population, forcefully subdued by the Kurdish and Turkish tribesmen arriving later. These minorities distinguished themselves from the Kurds by religion, language and a superior technology, but not very clearly in physiology. Several travellers have observed that at any one place in Kurdistan the local Armenians and Kurds resembled one another more than they did the Armenians and Kurds of other regions.<sup>131</sup> These physical similarities may in part be due to the not uncommon practice among the Kurdish tribesmen of abducting Christian women, but there are several observations of large numbers of Christians in the process of kurdicizing, while in the past the reverse may also have taken place. Molyneux-Seel (1914) observed that large numbers of Armenians in Dersim had recently become Kurdish Alevis. I encountered in 1976 in the province of Siirt, in Turkish Kurdistan, small communities of former Armenians who had recently crossed the ethnic boundary. They spoke Kurdish and Turkish only, and had become Muslims. Some young

members of the communities were then active Kurdish nationalists. They had, however, not yet become so Kurdish that they would refrain from telling me (usually within the first five minutes) that they had Armenian origins.

Until recently there were, moreover, tribally organized Christian communities in Kurdistan, that differed in little but language and religion from the Kurdish tribes. The most redoubtable of these were the Nestorian Assyrians of Hakkari in central Kurdistan, who were militarily the equals of any Kurdish tribe and who, like many Kurdish tribes, dominated a non-tribal peasantry consisting of both Nestorians and Kurdish-speaking Muslims. Both the dominant tribal and the subjected non-tribal stratum in Hakkari thus consisted of Kurds as well as Assyrians.<sup>132</sup> A similar community was the hardy Suryani (Jacobite) Christians of the Tor Abdin, who used to live among the Heverkan and provided these with some of their best fighting men (see above).

Some of the Christians of central Kurdistan were even pastoral nomads, such as the Ermeni-Varto, an Armenian tribe first noticed by Frödin (1944). In the late 1950s they were a rather diminutive group that migrated together with the Kurdish Teyyan, with which tribe they were gradually merging. They then no longer spoke Armenian but Kurdish, and had only a very rudimentary knowledge of Christianity.<sup>133</sup>

If these Christian groups could be organized into tribes and be militarily on a par with the Kurdish tribes, there is no reason why non-tribal Kurds could not. In the case of the Christians, language and religion continued to distinguish them from the Kurds so that their different origins remained clear. It is probably impossible to distinguish originally tribal from tribalized Kurds.

5. It is extremely unlikely that all non-tribal, dependent Kurdish peasants were originally from another ethnic stock and have gradually been kurdicized by conquering tribesmen, for the simple reason that not all of them have been in close contact with Kurdish tribesmen. There were, for instance, the Kurdish peasants in Hakkari, who were dominated by Assyrian tribesmen; and elsewhere, in the Diyarbakir and Erbil plains, there were Kurdish peasants whose lords were Ottoman military or bureaucratic officials. Explaining how these peasants may have become kurdicized would demand rather convoluted historical hypotheses for which there is no evidence at all. It seems much more likely that there have been Kurdish peasants as well as nomads for as long as one can speak of Kurds at all.

6. Moreover, not all Kurdish speakers who are subjected to Kurdish tribesmen are non-tribal peasants. In several of the larger tribes, with more complicated political organization, there are clans of different social status, and some of these tribes dominate *client tribes*, whose position is intermediate between that of an independent tribe and non-tribal peasantry. This phenomenon was described above for the case of the Pizhdar (see chapter 2). Among the Jaf there are similarly

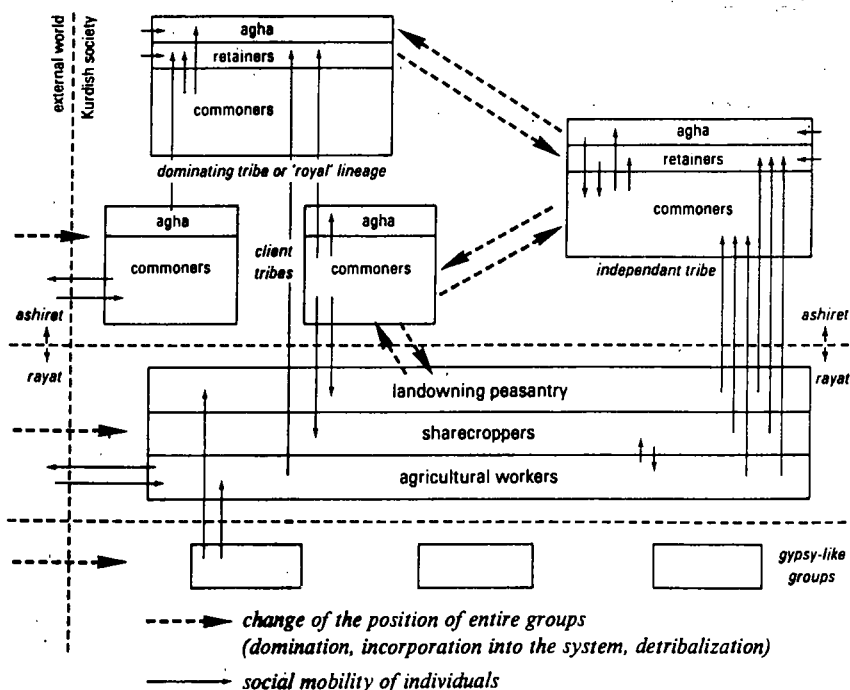
'real Jaf' as well as client lineages. An interesting, somewhat different, case is that of the Khormek (see also chapter 2): These were (in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, the period on which Firat gives apparently reliable information) a tribe with some degree of independent political organization. They were peasants and had been settled for a long time (although some Khormek owned animals and went to mountain pastures in summer), and were easily subdued by the militant nomadic Jibran. Their position was not much different from that of non-tribal peasant groups. However, they were still distinguished from other similar peasant groups in the same area (*Lolan*, *Ebdalan*, etc.), and had their own, recognized chiefly families. During the First World War, they were mobilized into militias, and for the first time the Ottomans gave them arms to carry (they had previously been denied this right because they were Alevis). A process of retribalization took place, and they started claiming their independence *vis-à-vis* the dominant Jibran.<sup>134</sup> This process was of some relevance in the emerging Kurdish movement of the 1920s, as will be shown in chapter 5.

7. Another kind of 'client lineages' that should be mentioned is a number of gypsy-like groups. These have an extremely low status, even the lowliest landless peasant looks down upon them. Many of these people are nomadic, they travel in groups of two to five households. They do repair work, make sieves, brooms, etc., and are musicians (playing outdoor instruments).<sup>135</sup> Kurds emphatically deny that any intermarriage between these outcasts and themselves takes place. In the Jazira, the musicians (*motirb*) form a separate caste within the outcast group, and do not intermarry with the others (*qarachi*, 'gypsy'). Musicians, though socially undesirable, are well-paid. In Kermanshah, on the other hand, there are no distinctions within the gypsy caste (called here *qarachi* or *dom*). There, the same household performs all tasks that are elsewhere associated with specific sections.

Social mobility is extremely difficult for these people, since their features and dark skin betray their origins. Even so, the boundary line between them and the Kurds proper is not completely closed. Some of them have bought land and have settled to a peasant life. There is even one family of Kurdish aghas, in Shirnak, that is said to have originally been *motirb*, and by a clever political game to have succeeded in imposing their domination on a large body of peasantry. Even if this is not true, the story proves that such social mobility is perceived as a possibility. Many more *motirb* and *qarachi* have moved to towns and found jobs in public works or construction. They are still discriminated against, but the work they do is not inferior to that of Kurdish migrants to towns, and ultimately they will be assimilated — as is their wish.

8. When Rich asked the name of the tribe to which the Baban princes originally belonged he was given inconsistent answers. One of them was Kurmanj. This term appears to be applied to *some* of the tribes of southern Kurdistan, not as a synonym for *ashiret* but as an ethnic label.

Fig. 5 Social stratification of Kurdish society.



Soane wrote that the Kurmanj are 'of the purest Kurdish blood'; the other tribes are simply called *Kord*.<sup>136</sup> In northern Kurdistan too, the same name, Kurmanj, is frequently employed, but in two different ways:

a) It is an *ethnic* label, applied to all Kurds who speak the northern (*Kurmanji*) dialect. Zaza-speakers are usually excluded, although they are considered as Kurds.

b) In a more narrow sense it is used to denote the Kurdish subject peasantry. The non-tribal peasants of Shataq, who are dominated by the Giravi are called *kurmanj*; the Giravi are in this context called *ashiret* or *agha*. Similarly, in Shirnak and the surrounding villages the non-tribal (detribalized?) peasants are called *kurmanj*, while the four lineages that dominate them economically and politically are called *agha*. When I visited Shirnak for the first time and asked which tribes lived there, someone, after long reflexion, answered 'Agha and Kurmanj'. There is a strong conflict of interests between these two (class-like) groups.

That the same term '*kurmanj*' is used in the south for tribal conquerors (even specifically for the 'purest' Kurds) and in the north for subjected non-tribal Kurds suggests a more complex relation between tribal and non-tribal segments of Kurdish society than any simple '*Überschichtungstheorie*' permits.

A Kurdish friend with whom I had discussed the terms '*miskén*', '*guran*' and '*kurmanj*' later talked this over with an acquaintance who belonged to the ruling family of the Dizayi. This acquaintance said that in the Dizayi territory (north of the former lands of the Guran, on the edge of foothills and plateau, in the periphery of Kurdistan proper) these three terms refer to different groups. The *miskén* are landless peasants tied to the land, dependent on a landlord; the term implies serfdom. The *guran* are (landless) agricultural workers who travel around, working as day-labourers whenever and wherever they may find employ. The *kurmanj* are usually independent small-holders. This fits in nicely with what was said before. Around 1830 many *guran* peasants from the Sulaymaniyah district left for the north; in the Erbil district there was already a subject peasantry but they were not related to the Guran, so that the name '*guran*' here came to be attached to immigrant agricultural workers, landless but not dependent on a landlord. This does not imply that all those now called *guran* are immigrants from the south or their descendants; the term may have acquired an extension of meaning. The *kurmanj* here are probably tribal (or formerly tribal) Kurds who have settled in this area on land they succeeded in appropriating.

9. Several times already I have had occasion to point to the role of neighbouring powerful states in determining the organization of the tribes, especially as regards leadership. The relation of tribes and non-tribal groups is apparently also influenced by the state. Rich remarked that the tribesmen in Sulaymaniyah were called *sipah* and the peasants *rayat* (Rich 1836, I: 88); further north, among the Herki, Sandreczki (1857: II, 263) noticed the same. Now these two terms (*sipah* and *rayat*) denote the chief two classes recognized in Middle Eastern states, the military (who paid no taxes) and the tax-payers (mainly peasants). In the Ottoman Empire the *sipahi* was a man rewarded for his military services with the grant of a *timar* ('fief'), an area of land with the peasants working on it. By way of salary he levied a tax from his peasants (for a more complete description of the *timar* system, see the next chapter). Ottoman law-books contained frequent warnings against the practice of allowing *rayat* to assume *sipahi* status and take possession of a *timar*. This suggests that it was not an uncommon practice in at least some parts of the empire. It would therefore not be an anomaly if similar crossings of the caste barrier took place in Kurdistan.

## Conclusion

The Kurds are undoubtedly of heterogeneous origins. Many people lived in what is now Kurdistan during the past millennia, and almost all of them have disappeared as ethnic or linguistic groups. They must have their descendants among the present Kurds. But it is wrong, I believe, to see the tribal and the non-tribal Kurds as representing two of these different stocks that went into the making of the Kurds. The observations above strongly suggest that there has always been mobility between the different ethnic and caste groups in the area. The direction and intensity of this mobility must have been highly dependent on the political and economic situation of the moment.

Figure 5 gives a schematic representation of the social stratification of Kurdistan, and summarizes the trajectories of social mobility, both of individuals and entire groups. There are three major strata, tribal, non-tribal and the 'gypsy' groups. Within each stratum there is a further hierarchical ordering, which among the peasants is mainly based on access to land and among the nomadic tribes most clearly on military superiority and political dominance. Some tribes are dominated by others; within the tribes the degree of hierarchization varies widely.

There is horizontal mobility (geographical, from one tribe to another, or from one landlord to another) as well as vertical. Nomads have settled and become peasants, peasants have become nomads. Peoples rallied around successful leaders and thus formed new tribes. Some tribes subjected other tribes as well as peasant groups. Individual men, tribesmen as well as non-tribal, were recruited into an agha's retinue. Retainers or commoners at times successfully challenged their tribe agha and replaced him or broke away with a section of the tribe.

Lineage organization is the 'natural' form of social organization among nomads and, to a lesser extent, warriors. In relatively young tribes these lineages are shallow, and the tribes frequently consist of no more than factions (of non-relatives), organized around one or a few leading lineages. If the tribe has existed long enough, the practice of endogamy will increase the proportion of blood ties among its members, and its sections will come to resemble real lineages; the conformity with the tribal ideology thus increases. Among tribes who have settled and who have not gone to war for some time, the lineage organization weakens, especially when they have been subjected by another tribe, in which case their own lineages lose their political functions. Being tribal or non-tribal are not absolutes, but matters of degree, and there are continually shifts within and between these statuses.



## Notes

1. Leach 1940, Barth 1953, 1960; Rudolph 1967. Other relevant works are the writings of Rondot 1937 and Hütteroth 1959, 1961.

2. Rondot 1937: 16–22.

3. M. Sahlins uses similar diagrams in his textbook *Tribesmen* (1966); he identifies one of the levels with the village. The reader should be warned that these five levels are distinguished here only for the purpose of the discussion and do *not* necessarily correspond with the units actually found among the Kurds.

4. It is of course not accidental that these two conceptually quite different things can be identically represented. The relationships between the elements have been reduced here to the *structurally identical* ones of filiation and of segmentation; and both systems contain *only one type of element*, individuals and segmentary groups, respectively.

5. Barth 1953: 25. I made my survey of household composition in the Balik area when, in January–February 1975, I accompanied a medical team that was inoculating all villagers. Out of 133 households in 4 villages, only 4 consisted of proper extended families, while in another 15, one or more patrilineal relatives lived with a nuclear family. The vast majority of households, 96 cases, consisted of nuclear families only.

6. Adequate statistics do not exist. The 'Village Inventory Studies' (Ministry of Village Affairs, Ankara, 1964/65) give *some* indication: in the (Kurdish/Arabic) province of Urfa in Turkey (reputed to be the province with the strongest concentration of landholding), out of the 644 villages: 48 belong entirely to one person (i.e. *all* agricultural land is fully owned by one person); 29 belong entirely to one family; and 28 belong entirely to one lineage. These figures do not give full credit to the degree of concentration of land and ownership by lineages: some lineages own more than one village, others own *parts* of several villages and are therefore not included above. In the face of the threat of land reform the lineage is quick to distribute its land among its individual members, infants included. Even if the law does not permit this there is a whole array of methods to persuade the officials executing the law to adopt a more favourable interpretation (I have witnessed this in Syria, Iran and Iraq; in Turkey land reform has been a farce until now).

7. Some tribes are unambiguously called after an area, instead of the other way round, e.g. the Pizhdar. 'Pizhdar' means 'beyond the crevice'. The name was first given as a general label to all small tribes of this specific region by their western neighbours; when they were united under a powerful leadership they adopted the name themselves, and even people living not exactly 'beyond the crevice' are now called Pizhdar.

8. I use the term 'shooting' rather than 'fighting' because it is more descriptive of what actually happens in these tribal confrontations. The primary intention is apparently not so much to kill many people (which would start interminable, vehement blood-feuds) as to impress and scare the enemy. This seems to be true for tribal warfare in general, except when these tribal fights are imbedded in some larger war. In recent times, since arms and ammunition have become illegal and very expensive, tribal battles have become a form of *conspicuous consumption*. Of this particular battle (which took place when I was in Batman) I was told 'The Bekiran fired continuously for 24 hours. They have many guns, they are a powerful tribe'. No one was killed however. Of another battle (between the nomadic Teyyan and Jirkan, June 1975) proud participants told me they had shot 'one million cartridges', without even wounding anyone. This contrasts with older reports. Ross, a doctor who visited the mir of Rowanduz in 1833 wrote: 'The element of the Koord ... is war ... I have seen boys of 12 and 15 suffering under the most severe wounds, received in recent fights. I understand their battles are very sanguinary ...' (in Fraser 1840, I: 73/4).

9. Barth 1953: 38.

10. According to Turkish law, mountainous lands, including pastures, cannot be privately owned. They are state lands; but like state lands in the plains they are frequently usurped by locally powerful people who treat them as their private property. Hütteroth (1953: 150–52) claims that this is due to the introduction of a new administrative division (made in the mid-thirties) in which the whole land was neatly cut up and divided into

provinces, sub-provinces, regions, municipalities and villages. The head of the municipality (elected, generally the most powerful man) tended to consider the land administratively included in his 'territory' as his property, and started to demand rent from the nomads. If nomads refused to pay he would simply forbid them entrance into his territory. This may have happened in a few cases, but I doubt whether it is valid as a general description. Hütteroth underestimates the element of naked power and manipulation in these relations. It is not just any head of a municipality who can demand rent from nomads (in fact, the inhabitants of the village of Kal in the same area pay rent to the nomadic Teyyan who consider the village lands theirs and have sufficient power to back up this claim). Since the municipality head's claim to rent is not in accord with the law, he cannot automatically count on state (i.e. gendarmerie) support. Only those who have their own armed men or have *personal* relations with powerful officials can think of exacting rent. The Giravi clearly have such relations: the one-time (1977) minister of defence and deputy for the province of Van, Ferit Melen, is closely allied with the Giravi (some people even claim he is a Giravi himself).

11. In 1975, this rent was said to amount to TL 70,000 (c. US \$5,000) for maybe a hundred Teyyan households who stayed on the pastures for some three or four months only.

12. Although there is no certain evidence, there are some indications that collective rights in agricultural land were formerly vested in the village community. It is doubtful, however, whether *musha* tenure as described by Weulersse for Syria (where land was owned communally but farmed individually per household and periodically redistributed equally among all male adults) ever existed in Kurdistan proper. In the mountain villages of central Kurdistan every villager, *qua* villager, had a right to cultivate a parcel of the village land, a right that is still claimed. A distinction between ownership and possession, between share-cropper and smallholder was still unclear.

13. To say that all men of the village are present and take part in the rites mentioned would be a serious exaggeration. The piety varies considerably from one village to the next, depending on both the personality of the headman (or headmen) and on socio-economic factors. Rarely more than half of the adult men were present at the Friday prayers that I saw (in winter more than in summer, because then there is nothing else to do). In the sole rain-prayer I witnessed only the young boys of the village and some elderly men participated; the latter probably because during the ceremony they were to eat food specially prepared by the women of the village. The adolescents of the village watched the proceedings from a distance, somewhat mockingly.

14. Rondot 1937: 22-26.

15. Rich 1836, I: 280n. Rich claims that sections of *all* tribes of Lorestan and Persian Kurdistan lived under Jaf protection. The Jaf could thus mobilize an army of 300 mounted men and over 1,000 infantry.

16. Edmonds 1957: 146.

17. The best description of the hierarchical organization of the Jaf is given by Barth 1953: 34-44.

18. Millingen 1870: 283.

19. *Ibid.*, 284.

20. Taylor (1865: 55) gave the contemporary strength of the Milan as 600 tents. Jaba (1870) quoted older figures (pre-1850) and ascribed 4,000 tents. Fragmentary data on later developments in Sykes (1908: 469ff); Rondot (1937: 34-38), and in the official paper 'Notes on Kurdish tribes ...' (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1919). Ibrahim's success was enhanced by his appointment as a commander of the irregular Hamidiye troops. His career is described more extensively in that connection in chapter 3.

21. For instance, there is a tribe called Elikan in the Heverkan confederation, while further east there is another small group called Elikan. Since Elik is a not uncommon personal name, these two groups may be independently called after different Eliks. But among the Khelijan southwest of the Tor Abdin mountains I encountered a clan called *Hesinan*, while 150 km to the east there is a large tribe of the same name. 'Hesin' means 'iron' (this is also the popular etymology among both groups); the name is one much less

likely to have been adopted independently by two unrelated groups.

22. See the important enumerations of tribes in the *Sharafname* (1596), Blau (1858, 1862), Jaba (1870), Sykes (1908), Gokalp (1975) and a number of official publications by the British occupying authorities in Iraq (1918–1920).

23. Leach 1940: 13–14.

24. Barth 1953: 36–37.

25. Rudolph 1967: 23, 27.

26. E.g. Barth 1953: 35; Edmonds 1957: 145–148.

27. On the *Ahl-e Haqq* religion see Minorsky's article 'Ahl-i Hakk' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the literature quoted there. In Kurdistan the religion is confessed in three separate areas: near Kirkuk, west of Kermanshah (in the mountains north of the Baghdad-Kermanshah road), and between Kermanshah and Hamadan; the last-mentioned two regions formerly formed one vast *Ahl-e-Haqq* area, but have been separated by the advancing state religion (Shi'i Islam). The second of these groups, comprising the Guran confederation (some groups excepted) and sections of the Sanjabi and Kalhor tribes, are sometimes called the *Ahl-e Haqq* of Dalehu, after the Dalehu mountains where their main places of pilgrimage are located. For all *Ahl-e Haqq* this area is what Mecca is for the Muslims. The local *Ahl-e Haqq* are heterodox, even by the standards of their sect.

28. Rudolph 1967: 27.

29. Ali Razm-ara, *Joghrafiya-ye nezami-ye Iran* ('Military Geography of Iran'), volumes *Posht-e Kuh*, *Kermanshahan*, *Kordestan*, and *Azarbajan-e Bakhtiari*, (Tehran A.H. 1320/A.D. 1941).

30. The Bilbas for example, who in the nineteenth century were a strong confederation of semi-nomadic tribes living east of Kirkuk, are also called an *ashiret*. I never came across a term generally used in the meaning of 'confederation'. It should be noted that European observers called many tribes 'confederations' because of the looseness of ties between the constituent clans and, I suppose, because of preconceived notions that a tribe should be a tight, corporate unit. A clear criterion to distinguish tribe and confederation does not exist, so these labels retain a certain degree of arbitrariness.

31. 'Guran' (or 'goran') is the name given, in eastern and southern Kurdistan, to the non-tribal, subjected peasantry. It should not be confused with the tribal name of Guran. See the discussion in chapter 2.

32. Sandreczki 1857, II: 263.

33. Rudolph 1967: 28–29.

34. Hay 1921: 65.

35. Rudolph 1967: 28 emphatically denies that it is ever used with that connotation. I do not think, however, that the term '*il*' is a proper synonym of '*ashiret*' in its primary meaning, as Rudolph does. The term is of Turkish origin, and denoted large tribal confederations as well as the territories associated with these. According to Lambton ('*Ilal*', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*) the term was used in Persia in Ilkhanid times, and then denoted nomadic (or semi-nomadic) tribes. In this meaning it was still used by nineteenth century travellers.

36. See e.g. Garthwaite 1977 on the Bakhtiari.

37. Hay 1921: 65.

38. Rondot 1937: 4, 15.

39. *Qur'an* 5: 45; 2: 178 (Mr Dawood's translation, Penguin Books).

40. Barth 1953: 72–77.

41. One widely publicized case was an attempt on the life of Mehmet Celal Bucak, a powerful agha in the Siverek district, who also was a member of the Turkish parliament, by a group of young people belonging to the so-called Workers Party of Kurdistan. This organization, better known as the Apocus, was the most radical of the Kurdish organizations to emerge in Turkey during the 1970s, and most uncompromising in its denunciation of those aghas who worked together with the Turkish state. It combined its consequent separatism with a crude variety of Marxism, and appealed especially to the uprooted village and small-town youth that were frustrated in their hopes of social

mobility: semi-educated young people of 'lower middle class' backgrounds. It was such young men who, in 1979, tried to kill Mehmet Celal Bucak. The attempt failed but brought Apocus into the limelight. It was later followed by other cases of what they called 'revolutionary justice'. See also Bruinessen 1982: 213–6; 1988.

42. Taylor 1865: 51.

43. *Qur'an* 2: 179, immediately following the previous quotation.

44. I was often told that in the past the elders of the tribe (*ri spi*) came together when there was a conflict, and tried to resolve it. All important decisions were said to have been taken by such a council, both in the *ashiret* and at lower levels. I have never, however, heard of a concrete case where this actually happened.

45. Quoted by Rondot 1937: 34n.

46. Father's brother's daughter marriage among Middle Eastern tribesmen has been the subject of a well-known discussion in the anthropological literature. Most of the discussion is about aspects that are marginal to the present context, so that I pass it here in silence. Those interested are referred to Fortes (1953), Barth (1954), Murphy and Kasdan (1959, 1967), Patai (1965), Cole (1984).

47. Out of the 21 marriages of tribal Hamawand which Barth traced, 9 were with father's brother's daughter, another 6 with other relatives. Among the non-tribal peasantry, the tendency to father's brother's daughter marriage is much less marked: out of 53 marriages 6 were with father's brother's daughter, 12 with other relatives (Barth 1953: 68). These latter numbers are not much higher than might be expected if partners were assigned by chance, dependent only on physical proximity.

48. Thus seemed to be the case in the anthropologists' favourite prototype of a segmentary society, the Beduin. In the words of Evans-Pritchard, the Bedu (of Cyrenaica) is 'loyal to his bait against other biyut, to his 'aila against other 'ailat, and to his qabila against other qabil. Nevertheless he has a strong feeling of communion with all the Bedouin of his country, regardless of their tribal affiliations, in common opposition to the town', while townsman and nomad, as Arabs, feel one against the Turks, and the Italian invasion brought Arab and Turk together, as Muslims opposing the unbelievers.' (Evans-Pritchard 1949: 103).

49. Badger, 1: xii, 183, 265. According to another account (Fraser 1840, I: 68–9) the emirate was already rent by many feuds at the time of conquest.

50. I heard very fragmentary versions of the legend in Turkish Kurdistan; Sykes mentions it (1908: 470) and notices a general confusion of the legendary Milan with their present namesakes. Several informants mentioned not two, but three original tribes. From the third, the Baba Kurdi, derived the southern tribes (as well as many that moved into central Kurdistan). Firat (a Kurdish author) gives names of tribes belonging to each of the three groups (Firat 1946: 10–23, 144–149).

51. Rondot 1937: 25.

52. An notorious instance is that of the Pizhdar (mentioned before in this chapter), one of whose chieftains, Babakr Agha, was a favourite of the British officials. Edmonds, one of the political officers who had dealings with this man, writes in retrospect that, in the tribe, being pro-Babakr or anti-Babakr became synonymous with being pro- or anti-government (Edmonds 1957: 230).

53. One is tempted to call quarrelling the 'traditional' road to power, and recourse to outside support (usually the state) the 'modern' one. But this latter road, generally more secure and often more profitable, has been available for many centuries; the Kurds have always lived on the frontiers of empires. If the word 'traditional' is applied to tribal society, it should certainly *not* be thought to imply that this 'traditional society' was isolated from outside influences and that its social organization was autonomous. See chapter 3.

54. For these political officers' perceptions, see Hay 1921, Lees 1928, Edmonds 1957.

55. Described (for the Jaf) by Barth 1953: 34–44. On the Herki there is no recent reliable material. Effective closure of the borders has split the tribe into three separate groups (in Turkey, Iran and Iraq). The Begzade have lost much of their traditional authority, and now live among the Iranian Herki as a separate tribe.

56. The Jaf Begzade are divided into three branches; two of these have a common ancestor seven generations removed (in Barth's time), the third is also related but somewhat further removed. 'The political head may be drawn from any of these [branches]' (Barth 1953: 41).

57. A son of the agha of the Khelican, who has seen all his judiciary powers taken away from him by the Turkish administration, told me 'the agha of today is no longer a real agha, but more of a *maqul*: he does not rule anymore (*hukm na ke*).

58. The title of agha thus means something else in Kurdish than in Turkish (*aga*). The Turkish *aga* is the rich man of the village, the owner of the land, who does not necessarily exercise political power: the Kurdish agha is the man who rules, but may be quite poor.

59. 'It is on his guesthouse that a chief's reputation largely depends. The more lavish his hospitality, the greater his claim to be called a "piao" or "man" (Hay 1921: 47). In northern Kurdish there are two forms that correspond to the Persian word for 'man' ('*mard*'): '*merd*' and '*mer*'. The first means 'generous', the second 'man', but with strong overtones of 'courageous'. An agha must be both *mer* and *merd*.

60. A recurrent theme in Kurdish folk-tales is that of the tragic lover whose beloved has disappeared, and who then builds a tea-house at a crossing of roads, as the surest way to get information on the beloved's whereabouts. During the Kurdish war in Iraq the guest-house was where couriers and fighters coming back from the front slept when passing by; this provided the villagers with their main information on the state of the war, more concrete than the propaganda broadcast by radio.

61. 'In reality the guest-house in most places is more of a village club than the private property of the headman'. (Hay 1921: 52).

62. Leach 1940: 28.

63. The same pattern of rising or remaining seated for a person who enters a room or passes by is still universally observed. There are even gradations in the respect shown by rising: one may simply make a gesture as if one is going to rise without actually doing so; or get up, but not further than a squatting position and immediately sit back again; stand up straight; or stand up with head bent as a sign of the highest reverence.

64. The disruptive effect of seasonal labour migration on relations between the common villagers should not be over-estimated, however. Usually they go as a group. In Turkey, recruiters for cotton or fruit plantations in the west visit these villages in winter, and have the villagers sign a contract. These recruiters use the traditional network of family and tribal relations, and make one or two elderly men of the village responsible for the others. In the west the migrants have hardly any contact with others than their co-villages.

65. Barth (1953): 104.

66. Edmonds (1957: 224) and Bois (1965: 36-37) write that the term *zakat* is used strictly for the tithe of cereals; they give a long list of other 'feudal' dues or taxes, but unfortunately do not tell us which ones were general, and where the other ones were exacted, nor whether they were exacted equally from tribesmen and non-tribal subjects, so that their contribution to our understanding of the nature and dynamics of Kurdish feudalism is limited. That *zakat*, as exacted by the aghas, is a usurpation of the alms-tax seems not unreasonable in the case of the village agha who uses it to maintain his guest-house; feeding hungry travellers is included in the prescriptions concerning alms (e.g. *Qur'an* 92: 17-18; 70: 22ff), so that there is a certain correspondence between the uses of *zakat* in Islamic theory and in tribal practice. On the place of *zakat* in Islamic law, and the precise legal specifications see Juynboll (1930): 80ff.

67. When I visited the Shekir section of the Balik in 1975 (this section was not visited by Leach) they denied this, and said they had never given the agha such a large share of the crop as Leach mentions (50%) — Leach never actually observed how much was given and seems to doubt his own data, which contradict Hay's (Hay mentions the ubiquitous 10%). The Shekir never paid more than 10%, according to their own claims. They added that occasionally *begar*, unpaid labour dues, had to be delivered. But their memories of these things were clearly not very sharp, and I would regard them as tenuous evidence.

68. Leach 1940: 15.

69. On *tapu* registration, see chapter 3.

70. Leach 1940: 17.

71. Leach 1940: 68.

72. Hay 1921: 68.

73. This was common practice among the aghas of southern Kurdistan during the first half of this century. See: Edmonds 1957: 224-5.

74. Both the Mangur and the Mamash once formed part of a large confederation, Bilbas, which in the 1830s was reduced by the mir of Rowanduz Miri Kor. Part of the confederation (the majority of the Mamash and Mangur) thereafter migrated to Persian Kurdistan. The confederation does not exist any more, even its name is rarely mentioned, but among the original component tribes a sense of belonging together still persists.

75. The quotation is from Anderson 1974: 108n. Thought-provoking remarks on the rise of such retinue systems in several tribal societies (in most, the retainers were recruited from *outside* the tribe!) in Lattimore 1957, esp. p. 52.

76. E.A. Thompson, *The Early Germans* (Oxford, 1965), paraphrased by Anderson (1974): 107/8.

77. Edmonds 1957: 217. I wonder whether the Mirawdeli would understand Edmonds' distinction between the (apparent) legality of their rule over the Nureddini and the illegality of their subjection of other groups.

78. Babakr was called 'the wisest and greatest of the many tribal chiefs I have met', and 'the biggest chief in Kurdistan, and incidentally the most loyal' (Hay 1921); 'a fine man, strongly in favour of law and order.' ('Notes on the tribes of southern Kurdistan'. Baghdad, Government Press 1919, 16).

79. Edmonds 1957: 217.

80. 'Notes on the tribes of southern Kurdistan': 11.

81. Information on the events of the past thirty years from interviews with a few Pizhdar subjects and one agha, February-March 1975.

82. Described by Barth 1953: 53-55.

83. Barth 1953: 56.

84. Barth 1953: 59.

85. Naval Intelligence Division, *Iraq and Persian Gulf* (1944): 375.

86. 'Notes on the tribes of southern Kurdistan': 10.

87. Hay 1921: 165.

88. Quoted in Wilson 1931: 112.

89. This point is made, among others, in Anderson 1974: 151n. There was a native peasantry in the crusader state, which was to form the serf class, but all its former overlords had been removed, and with them, the political organization and specific mode of production.

90. E.g. Rich 1836, II: 108-110; Forbes 1839: 409-411; von Moltke 1882: 46; Sykes 1908: passim; Lehmann-Haupt 1926, II/1: 240.

91. Diary of Major E. Noel on special duty (Baghdad, Government Press 1919). Entry of 17-IV-1919.

92. Montagne 1932: 58.

93. The proud Miran tribe, who were the most respected nomads of central Kurdistan, had to give up their migrations because of the closure of the Turkish-Syrian border, after which they remained in Syria. Until 1945 they continued to live under the tent, and refused to start cultivating; even now many still refuse to touch the plough. Mechanization solved this problem: now they can hire machinery with the operators so that they can cultivate without lowering themselves to the level of a common peasant!

94. This was so even though both Osman and Muhammad's sons also had legal title to a part of the land. The fact that the tithe of the produce of their lands was nevertheless delivered to Sulayman shows that this was a tax paid to the political leader rather than a rent due to the landowner. I have not discovered whether Abbas' flocks were divided among his descendants or also held collectively and administered by the paramount agha. Elsewhere, however, I invariably found that flocks were distributed among heirs and held as private property. Therefore it is likely that among the Duriki too all family members

had at least some private income from their flocks. But animals do not provide much of a cash income, except where there are nearby urban markets. The number of sheep the family could keep was, moreover, necessarily limited when the migration to mountain pastures in summer became impossible in the 1920s. Agriculture far surpassed animal husbandry as a source of income, and this was monopolized by the agha.

95. My informants claimed that this arrangements was new at the time — which seems hardly credible. The particular situation of the Jazira, however, caused a proliferation of arrangements of this type, so that it may not be a serious exaggeration to speak of a 'new class'.

96. I do not know which of the branches of the family held this particular village in *tapu*; my informants said that did not matter, only the paramount chief could sell it.

97. Traditional wisdom perceives father's brothers and brother's sons as rivals, whereas maternal uncles and nephews are thought to assist each other (because there are no economic conflicts of interest between them): 'maternal uncles help their nephews up, paternal uncles put their nephews down.' These inherent conflicts may be the reason why father's brother's daughter-marriage is preferential: it provides a way of reconciling two possibly contradictory interests (cf. a related argument in Barth 1954). A maternal uncle may give a daughter to a nephew simply to help him, but parallel cousin marriages have a more political content. Ghalib's generosity towards his nephews was not a cheap gesture, since the bride-price for daughters of chiefly families is normally at least LS 6,000 = \$1,500 (if the claimant is related; for a stranger the price is double that amount or even more).

98. On the significance of standing up for a person, see chapter 2 and note 63 above.

99. On Elik, his revolts and protection of the Christians, there are also some observations to be found in the British Foreign Office files (F.O. 371), numbers 1919: 44A/107502/149523/163688/3050. Elik's brother-in-arms, the Christian Sem'un Hanna, is the subject of many heroic tales told by the Christians of Tor Abdin.

100. This is the same phenomenon found at election time in Turkish Kurdistan. Local factions of feuding tribal sections ally themselves with opposing political parties. Every four years, when elections are approaching, old conflicts flare up again, often more violently than before.

101. According to a Giravi informant, out of 60 families in his village 20 are Giravi, in a neighbouring village 10 out of 50 families. All the land is owned by Giravi. I could not discover how high is the share of the crop exacted, but gathered it is well over 50%.

102. There are some examples of a mass exodus of the *misken*, however. In the early 1830s, when the authority of the Baban princes was weakened by intestine struggles and when the plague ravaged the country (1831/2), peasants left their lands in droves and went north to the areas under the control of the powerful and severe but just Muhammad Miri Kor, the mir of Soran at Rowanduz (Fraser 1840, I: 177).

103. Described by Lynch 1901, II: 421–423; Christoff 1935: 24ff; Frödin 1944: 18–19.

104. Below a certain minimal number of ewes (variously estimated at 80–200) nomadic husbandry is unprofitable, and even impossible. As among other nomads (see e.g. Barth 1962: 350, and his description of the Basseri case in *Nomads of South Persia*) it is the poorest and the very rich who are the first to settle, for quite different reasons. The rich settle in towns mainly to improve their trading connections and to be near the sources of political power. The kind of settlement that interests us here, however, is that of the poor.

105. The turbulent history of this tribe is rather well documented. The first Europeans who passed through their territory did not as yet give much information. Rich merely mentioned them (I: 281); Fraser (who passed in 1834) called them the terror of the many times more numerous Jaf (1840: I, 167), and Ainsworth (1888) found them in open rebellion against Turkish authority.

106. Karl Hadank, 'Einleitung', in Mann and Hadank 1930; Minorsky 1928; 1943; MacKenzie 1961; 'Senna' and 'Kurden' in *E.I.*<sup>1</sup> (both by Minorsky); 'Guran' in *E.I.*<sup>2</sup> (by MacKenzie).

107. MacKenzie 1961b, 1966. Locally, the Gurani dialects are commonly called *mashu* after the word for 'he says' which these dialects have in common and which distinguishes

them from the Kurdish dialects. The local people do not seem to have another name for the entire dialect group as a whole (it is European linguists that have called the whole group Gurani); they only name the sub-dialects: Haurami, Pawei, Omrani, etc. The first linguist to stress that these dialects belong to a language other than Kurdish was Oskar Mann (*Kurdish-Persische Forschungen, Abt 1* (1909), S. XXIII Anm. 1). Mann's Gurani materials were posthumously edited and published by Karl Hadank (Mann and Hadank 1930). The Danish linguist Benedictsen collected some material on the dialects of Hauraman and Pawe in 1901. His notes too were published posthumously. The third serious study, unfortunately based solely on one single native informant met in England, is MacKenzie (1966).

108. Soane 1921; Fuad 1970: XVII, XXI–XXIII.

109. 'Ilat', in *E.I.* (by A.K.S. Lambton); 'Kurden' in *E.I.* (by Minorsky); Minorsky 1943: 75.

110. This song dealt with the conversation of the Muslim Kurd (i.e., nomad) Abdin to the Ahl-e Haqq religion by its founder Soltan Sohak, who is named a Guran (or *guran*). According to the Ahl-e Haqq tradition, Soltan Sohak was the son of a seyyid from Hamadan, Shaikh Isi, who had established himself near Hauraman. Soltan Sohak supposedly spoke Haurami, and all his deeds and miracles are set in Hauraman.

111. When I asked people in ethnically mixed districts whether they were Kurds or Turks or Persians I several times received the answer that they were Kurds as well as Turks and Persians, obviously referring to their fluency in all three languages. And even when I insisted and asked what they were originally — I was then too eager to put people into my own pigeonholes, I am sorry to say — several answered simply that their fathers spoke these three languages too.

112. Soane 1912: 377 ff.

113. Rich 1836, I: 1777.

114. Rich 1836, I: 101. It is not true that there were no non-tribal, subjected peasants in these northern regions, but Rich was right in that these peasants have never been called *guran*.

115. See the literature mentioned in note 106 above. The related Zaza dialects of northern Kurdistan seem also to have a Dailami connection. Most Zaza speakers refer to themselves as 'Dimili', and there seems to be a consensus among scholars that this name is derived from 'Dailami' by metathesis (Minorsky 1928: 91, 105; Mann and Hadank 1930: 18–19; idem 1932: 4–6). The Dailamites were an Iranian people originally living south of the Caspian Sea. They are known to have expanded westward.

116. Chronicles on the house of Ardlan include the *Sharafname* (Bidlisi; pp. 82–89 of the Persian text); the local chronicle by Ali Akbar Khan, summarized by Nikitine 1922; a chronicle by the poetess Mastura, *Tarikh-e Ardlan*, (ed. by Nasr Azadpur. Sanandaj, n.d.); and that by Khusraw ibn Muhammad Bani Ardlan, *Tarikh (Khronika)*, ed. by E.I. Vasileva. Moscow 1984). See also Röhrborn 1966: 79–80 and the sources quoted there. An important early document was recently found and published by I. Parmaksizoglu (1973). It is the memoirs of Me'mun Beg, a prince of the Ardlan family who ruled Shahrazur for a short period in the late 1530s, precisely when the Ottomans were first establishing their rule there. These memoirs show very clearly how the emirate of Ardlan was split up as a result of the struggle between the Persian and Ottoman Empires, who both had their agents within the Ardlan family.

117. Parmaksizoglu (1973), fol. IIa of the facsimile.

118. 'It is not a secret that the rulers of the Bradost originate from the Guran tribe/community' Bidlisi, p. 296 of the Persian edition.

119. One such item was the extraordinarily shaped hat which Rich saw the Haurami soldiers wearing. Hadank discusses this extensively as a cultural item formerly common to all Guran, and setting them apart from the Kurds. This hat is no longer in use, but the Bilbas tribes still call their subjected non-tribal peasants *kelawspi*, which means 'white-cap' and seems to be a reminder of the same headgear. Another cultural attribute for which the Haurami are renowned among the surrounding Kurds is their great skill as craftsmen, capable of making almost anything out of wood.



120. Minorsky 1943: 83–84 (after Quatremère's translation).

121. Bidlisi, p. 13 of the Persian edition.

122. These are the Jafi Teysi and the Jafi Murid Weysi. They joined the Guran around 1850. Minorsky, 'Senna' *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>. See also: Rabino 1920: 22; Nikitine 1922: 79, n2.

123. The Qalkhani participate rarely in the rituals of the Ahl-e Haqq, and show little interest in the sect's basic tenets. The only religious activity I have seen them take part in was pilgrimages to shrines and to religious leaders.

124. Rabino 1920: 22.

125. Opinions differ on the origins of the Guran confederation and its exact relations with the Guran mentioned by Shihab ad-Din al-Umari and Sharaf Khan Bidlisi. Minorsky apparently considered the present confederation (minus the Kurds that recently attached themselves to it) as descendants of these original Guran. Rabino believed that the Guran confederation was formed through conquest of the original (Gurani-speaking) sedentary population by Kurdish tribes, notably the Kalhor and Zangana (Rabino 1920: 8–9). The rulers of the Guran confederation, however, were *not* Kalhor, although they intermarried with the Kalhor leaders (personal information). What did happen is that the Kalhor chieftains in the 18th/19th centuries pushed back the influence of the Guran rulers, which was once more considerable than around 1900. (This may lie at the root of Mann's and Rabino's opinions). Around 1808, when the Persian prince Mohammed Ali Mirza incorporated the district of Zohab (which includes the Guran territories, and had formerly nominally belonged to the Ottoman Empire) into Persia, he appointed the rulers of the Guran to its governorship (Rabino 1920: 15–16; Soane 1912: 382).

126. Thus the Sharafname and the chronicles of Ardalán, see note 116.

127. Not necessarily from the north, as Rich supposed: the Jaf, for example, had come from the east, from Persian Kurdistan, where still some sections of the tribe remain. They had been tributary to the Ardalán princes there. Many tribes of southern Kurdistan, however, have a tradition of having come from further north (see e.g. Minorsky's article 'Lak' in *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>, where he notes this for the Kalhor and other Leki-speaking (Kurdish) tribes.

128. Thus Sandreczki 1857, II: 263.

129. The greatest authority on early Kurdish history, the late Minorsky, considered the Medes the ancestors of the Kurds, on the basis of the historical and linguistic evidence he collated (Minorsky 1940). He believed a common Median basis to be the main reason for the unity of Kurdish culture, especially language. The able linguist MacKenzie, however, using other linguistic evidence and arranging it differently, gathers that Kurdish is not a northwestern Iranian language (as are Median and Parthian), but a southwestern one. The people who spoke these dialects had, however, a social structure similar to that of the Medes.

130. Fraser 1840, I: 146, 148, 177.

131. Thus e.g. Lehmann-Haupt 1926, II/1: 438 on the inhabitants of Sasun. Similar observations in Minorsky's article 'Kurden', in *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>.

132. Lehmann-Haupt (1910, I: 289–290) mentioned the existence of Kurdish and Nestorian subjected peasantry. Rich related the adventures of the first Turkish messenger who crossed the territories of the Nestorian tribes. The man was more frightened by them than by the fiercest Kurdish tribesmen. To his horror he discovered that they did not even know of the existence of the Sultan (Rich 1836, I: 275–280).

133. Hütteroth 1959: 57.

134. Firat 1970: 165–187.

135. As elsewhere, it is the outdoor instruments, especially the *zurna* (*shawm*) and the *daf* or *dahol* (big drum) on which a taboo rests. It is extremely shameful for a Kurd to play such an instrument. The same prejudice rests on the *kemenche* (fiddle) in some areas. The *tambur* (a long-necked lute), however, may be played by Kurds without inviting contempt. 'Even aghas may play it', people said, to indicate how acceptable it is.

136. Soane (1912: 406–407) listed twenty important tribes, of which nine call themselves Kurmanj. Of the southern tribes these are: Pizhdar, Bilbas, Shiwan and Baban. The others ('Kord') include (southern tribes only): Mariwan, Bane, Jaf,

Hamawand, Sharafbayani, Bajilan, Haurami, Guran, Kalhor, Sanjabi. I do not understand what the basis for this distinction is; it is certainly *not* linguistic. The second group is quite heterogeneous linguistically, and the dialects of the Jaf and Baban (second and first group, respectively), on the other hand, differ little.

### 3. Tribes and the State

#### Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I sketched the structure of Kurdish tribes of various degrees of complexity. While in most places the tribespeople distinguish themselves, almost as a separate caste, from the subjected non-tribal population, the internal organization of the tribes varies from the egalitarian, with the chieftain only a *primus inter pares*, through the more hierarchical to the highly stratified, with a chiefly lineage not related to the rest of the tribe. These various types of tribes are reminiscent of different stages in the evolutionary sequence from acephalous band to full-blown state, that has often been postulated by theoretical anthropologists. Tribes like the Pizhdar, Hamawand and Jaf may seem further evolved (or in more neutral terms, more developed) than the Mangur, which in turn may seem ahead of the Balik. Even more complex forms of political organization, with many of the trappings of the state, existed in Kurdistan until the mid-nineteenth century. These emirates consisted of a number of tribes (often two loose tribal confederacies) held in check and balanced against each other by a ruling family (dynasty) with its own military and bureaucratic apparatus. They seem to represent a stage between the chiefdom and the full-blown state; in fact, the Ottoman Empire grew out of a similar emirate.

Little reflection is needed to realize that a simple evolutionary perspective is quite inadequate for understanding the social and political developments of Kurdish society. The most 'advanced' forms of autochthonous political organization, the emirates, no longer exist; the largest and most complex tribes also have fallen apart or, at least, do not function as corporate units any more (if they ever did). From the perspective of the tribes, the trend of the past century and a half has not been in the direction of greater, but rather of decreasing complexity. This is complemented by another perspective, that of the states into which the emirates and tribes were incorporated and whose administration became increasingly sophisticated. The last emirates were deliberately, by military force, destroyed by the Ottoman state, in the course of its process of administrative reform.

The Kurdish tribes, then, do not exist in a vacuum that would allow them to evolve independently. Their functioning and internal organization, as is clear from the preceding chapter, is very much influenced by external factors. These factors include other tribes and non-tribal populations as well as, most significantly, states. The impact of the state on the tribes is, in fact, much more varied and penetrating than has become clear so far; the said destruction of the emirates, punitive campaigns against unruly tribes, forced settlement and the levying of taxes are only a part of the entire spectrum. We have seen that would-be chieftains of a tribe often depend on outside support, alliances with other tribal chiefs or, more usefully, a powerful state. At times, tribes were armed and given military duties by states, which could not but affect the internal organization. In a certain sense, the tribes as described in the preceding chapter, may, I think, even be seen as *creations of the state*.

The conception of the tribe as a creation of the state, rather than as a social and political formation preceding it, gradually imposed itself on me in the course of my fieldwork, and more forcefully during my subsequent reading of historical sources. Certain tribal confederacies that I came across seemed to owe their very existence to deliberate interventions by one of the large states. The Kurds of Khorasan have a tradition (corroborated by written sources) that their ancestors, who originated from various parts of Kurdistan but had Iranian sympathies, were made into a new tribal confederation, Chemishgezek, by Shah Abbas, around 1600. Under a paramount chieftain (*ilkhani*) appointed by the Shah, they were sent to Khorasan to protect the northeastern frontier against Uzbek incursions. Due to another government intervention, this confederation later split into two, each with its *ilkhani* dynasty. In spite of these artificial origins, the confederations remained stable political entities well into the twentieth century. This is perhaps an extreme case, and the legend of origin may exaggerate the role of the sovereign. The (Turkic) Shah-Savan confederation of Azerbaijan have a similar tradition of being created by Shah Abbas I. In this case, Richard Tapper has thrown serious doubt on the historicity of the legend, and attempted to prove that the present Shah-Savan only became a tribal unit in the late seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> Even if this is true, it is quite meaningful that the tribe itself adopted such a legend, making the state part of its own definition of its identity.

In most other cases, though, the impact of the state on the tribes was less direct, though not necessarily less pervasive. Kurdistan's political history of the past five centuries (to be sketched in this chapter) shows how the important developments among the tribes were always in response to developments at the state level. Such a situation is not unique to Kurdistan, and is perhaps more common than anthropologists have, until recently, been aware of. Some time ago, the historian E.A. Thompson made the important observation that the political

organization of the Germanic tribes as described by Tacitus was not the result of an autonomous evolution, but had undergone significant modifications under the influence of the Roman Empire, with which they had been in contact for some time.<sup>2</sup> The anthropologist, P. Brown, observed in New Guinea aspects of the same process, for which she coined the term 'colonial satrapy': 'giving native officials unprecedented power or allowing them free reign and supporting them with the force of the colonial administration'.<sup>3</sup> The history of the Kurdish tribes, as we shall see, abounds in such satrapies. The political anthropologist Morton Fried was perhaps the first to formulate in more general terms that

... most tribes seem to be secondary phenomena in a very specific sense: they may well be the product of processes stimulated by the appearance of relatively highly organized societies amidst other societies which are organized more simply. If this can be demonstrated, tribalism can be viewed as a reaction to the formation of complex political structures rather than a necessary preliminary step in evolution. (Fried 1968: 15)

The material in this chapter will show how correct Fried was, at least for the case of Kurdish tribes.

Kurdish and other Middle Eastern tribes have, for millennia, lived in the periphery of, and had various dealings with, well-developed strong states. They were influenced by, but in turn also had significant influences on, these states. At times of political weakness, it could even happen that the states were conquered by tribal coalitions. Many Middle Eastern states were ruled by dynasties of tribal origins. It was especially Turkish tribesmen who became the military élites of several states, but we also find Kurdish tribesmen play such roles. The best known of them, perhaps, was Salahaddin Ayyubi (the Saladin of European lore). Salahaddin was a tribal Kurd, though not a chieftain by origin, who earned fame as a military commander leading Turkish and Kurdish warriors against the Crusaders. He overthrew the (Shiite) Fatimid caliphate in Egypt and set himself up as the Sunni sultan there in 1171. His descendants ruled Egypt until 1249 and Syria until 1260; the later rulers of the emirate of Hasankeyf (see below) descended from these Ayyubids and, in fact, considered their emirate as the last remnant of the Ayyubid state.

Most Kurdish tribes always remained in the periphery of the large states, thereby maintaining a degree of political independence. For most of its history, mountainous Kurdistan was in fact a buffer between two or more neighbouring states, which gave the Kurdish tribesmen more leverage, since they could in theory choose between several sovereigns. Centre-periphery relations here show a pendulum movement correlative with the consecutive weakening and strengthening of central state

authority. Strong states could effectively incorporate many tribes and intervene in their internal affairs, demanding military service, levying taxes, backing up the authority of chieftains considered as reliable, etc. At times of weakening central state authority, the tribal chieftains would continue to profess their allegiance but gradually empty this allegiance of its contents. They would stop paying taxes, refrain from lending the military assistance demanded, and in the end might openly proclaim their independence. If the centre's weakening was only temporary, these vassals would soon reaffirm their loyalties. Where central authority was not soon restored, however, one would see the emergence in the periphery of semi-independent chiefdoms or mini-states. It was not always the former vassals who set themselves up as independent rulers; the turmoil following decline of central power, and the intense rivalry between chieftains in the periphery often threw up new leaders. When then a new strong central authority arose (a new dynasty or even a new state, or a modernized state apparatus), the independence of the chieftains in the periphery would be reduced again.

Since once-independent chieftains are not likely to become the most reliable vassals, the new central authority was often inclined to replace them with persons likely to be more loyal: either a local rival or a military governor with no local roots at all. It is probably to forestall this prospect that so many chieftains in the periphery were very quick to offer their submission whenever a new strong sultan or shah turned towards Kurdistan. The Ottoman Empire distinguished itself from other contemporary states in initially leaving the semi-independent Kurdish rulers in control of their emirates, in exchange for political loyalty against the Iranians. Later, administrative reforms made an end to this policy and attempted to replace these rulers with centrally appointed bureaucrats, resulting in a break-up of the emirates and the emergence of another type of chieftain as the most powerful local authority. New policies resulted in other types of tribal organization as the dominant mode.

### **The incorporation of Kurdistan into the Ottoman Empire<sup>4</sup>**

The Turkish and Mongol invasions in the Middle East (11th-14th centuries) caused great instability and frequent political changes. The geographical spread of the Kurds was also significantly affected in that, by moving north and west, they penetrated into Greater and Lesser Armenia.<sup>5</sup> A new stabilization took place in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the emergence of two strong multi-ethnic states, the Ottoman and Persian Empires. The major confrontations of these two states took place in Kurdistan; Kurdish tribes and chieftains played, naturally, an important role therein. In the first half of the sixteenth century Ottoman military success and diplomatic wisdom secured the

incorporation of the greater part of Kurdistan by winning the loyalty of local Kurdish rulers (*mir*). The border line between the empires thus determined was to undergo only minor modifications in later centuries.

### Prelude: Qaraqoyunlu and Aqqoyunlu

After Tamburlaine's (Timur Lang's) death (1404) his empire, which had stretched from the Syr Darya to western Anatolia, rapidly fell apart. In the far west the Ottomans, rulers of a small Turkish principality, started anew to add other similar principalities to their dominions. In Azerbaijan and Kurdistan two confederations of Turkish tribes gained independence and became the ruling stratum of territorial states: the Qaraqoyunlu and the Aqqoyunlu. The former had their centre originally in the area northeast of Lake Van; shortly after Timur's death their leader, Qara Yusuf, conquered most of Azerbaijan. The Aqqoyunlu confederation had Amid (Diyarbakir, in western Kurdistan) as its capital. Its territory was, at that time, still small and its boundaries extremely fuzzy. Around 1450 most Kurdish emirates (principalities) were under Qaraqoyunlu sovereignty, although towards the west (Bitlis, Siirt, Hasankeyf) the Kurdish mirs' vassalage to the Qaraqoyunlu rulers was nominal at best.<sup>6</sup> Qara Yusuf, who previously had had to flee from Timur, on his return gave his daughter in marriage to Mir Shamsuddin of Bitlis, who in turn gave him part of his territories as a gift, and helped him to defeat a Timurid descendant.<sup>7</sup> The Kurdish mir seemed more an ally than a vassal. Further west, around Mardin, Amid, Harput and Erzincan, the Kurds were subject to Aqqoyunlu rulers. The Kurds do not seem to have played any role of importance in the armed confrontations between the two ruling dynasties. Most battles took place in Mesopotamia, southwest of Kurdistan proper.<sup>8</sup> After 1460, however, the strong and able Aqqoyunlu ruler, Uzun Hasan, started pushing eastward; his Turkish troops took Hasankeyf and Siirt. The Qaraqoyunlu could not but feel threatened at this eastward push, for they considered these occupied territories their own sphere of influence. Jihanshah, the Qaraqoyunlu ruler, marched with an army against Uzun Hasan. In 1467 the army was defeated, and Jihanshah was killed in flight. In the following years the Aqqoyunlu subjected most of Kurdistan. The Jazira district was taken in 1470; the fortresses of Bitlis and Cholemerik (capital of the Hakkari Kurds) followed in the same or the next year.<sup>9</sup> All of Kurdistan now fell to Uzun Hasan, who, according to the *Sharafname*, 'took it upon him to exterminate the leading families of Kurdistan, especially those who had shown themselves devoted to or subjects of the Qaraqoyunlu sultans'.<sup>10</sup> After defeating a descendant of Timur in Iran, Uzun Hasan became the master of Azerbaijan and most of Iran as well. He made Tabriz his new capital.

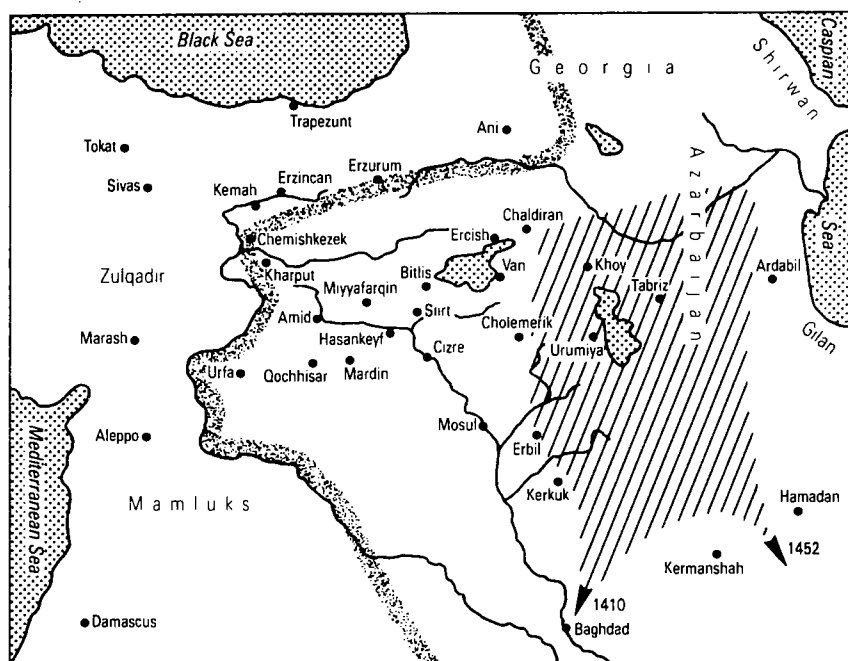
Meanwhile, in the west, the Ottoman Empire was also expanding. Sultan Muhammad II ('the Conqueror', who ruled in 1444, and 1451-1481) made conquests in Europe and Anatolia, the latter at the

expense of other Turkish petty states. The Venetians, who saw their commercial interests threatened by this Ottoman expansion, proposed a military alliance to Uzun Hasan. And the (Turkish) beylik of Qaraman asked the Aqqoyunlu's military support against the approaching Ottomans. The troops that Uzun Hasan sent were, after initial successes at Toqat and Sivas, severely beaten near Angora (1473/74). Venetian assistance, though promised, never materialized.<sup>11</sup> The Mamluks, rulers of Syria and Egypt, with whom Uzun Hasan previously had cordial relations (he sent them tokens of subjection, e.g. keys of towns taken and heads of Qaraqoyunlu leaders killed<sup>12</sup>) preferred to remain neutral in the conflict. As long as the two new big powers were occupied with each other, they could not make encroachments on Mamluk territory. Their confrontation may, therefore, not have been unwelcome. In 1478 Uzun Hasan died. His sons proved weak, the empire disintegrated. Kurdish chieftains who had survived Uzun Hasan were among the first of his former subjects to reassert their independence. Soon a new leader was to take over control of the Aqqoyunlu territories, including Kurdistan, and to become Shah of Iran: Ismail, the scion of the shaikhly dynasty of the Safavids.

### **The Safavids**

This dynasty was named after its ancestor Safi ad-Din (1252–1334), a much respected Sunni mystic and saint living at Ardabil.<sup>13</sup> He made many followers, also among nomadic Turks and Mongols; many Mongols were in fact converted to Islam through his efforts. Although Safi does not seem to have spread any special teaching, a Sufi order grew up around him, the adepts of which felt a strong personal loyalty towards Safi and his descendants. Ardabil became a centre for the spread of a pious, devotional Sufism. A sudden change in the nature of the order's Sufism occurred with the accession of Junaid as its head (1447). This adventurous and militant shaikh travelled widely, after having been expelled from Ardabil by Jihanshah, the Qaraqoyunlu ruler. He established quite friendly relations with Uzun Hasan (who gave him a sister in marriage) and attempted, not without success, to build up a following among the nomadic Turkish tribes of central and southwestern Anatolia. These tribes were only superficially islamized, and were inclined to rather heterodox beliefs. Earlier extremist Shiite movements had found an enthusiastic following among them. This may have been one of the reasons why Shaikh Junaid, and after him his son Haidar and grandson Ismail (the later shah) adopted similar heterodox teachings. Extreme veneration for Ali was only one aspect thereof; to their followers, the shaikhs themselves came to be seen as incarnations of God.<sup>14</sup> Their khalifas (deputies) spread their religious propaganda all over Anatolia. It took root especially among the nomadic Turkish tribes and the poorer sections of the sedentary rural population (settled Turks or the islamized descendants of the original inhabitants). The





Map 6. The Qaraqoyunlu and Safavid empires.

/////// territory of the *Qaraqoyunlu*, 1406-1469

..... western boundary of *Shah Ismail's* empire around 1512

followers of these Safavid shaiikhs came to be known as *qizilbash* ('redheads'), because of the red headgear some of the converted Turkish tribes wore. With the most militant of these disciples the shaiikhs also indulged in 'holy warfare' against the non-Muslim kingdoms in the north: the last Byzantine stronghold of Trebizond (Trabzon) which was to fall to the Ottomans in 1461, Georgia, and the other Caucasian states, especially Shirwan. When Ismail was still very young, his father fell in a campaign against Shirwan. The young boy had to take refuge in Shiite Gilan, because the Sunni Aqqoyunlu, the sovereigns of Ardabil, feared the power of the Safavid order and wanted to kill him. In 1499, when internal dissension had considerably weakened Aqqoyunlu power, Ismail left his hideout and came to Ardabil. The next spring he went into Anatolia (to Erzincan, according to tradition) in order to collect loyal troops around him. In a short time he had an army of 7,000 devoted disciples from diverse parts of Anatolia, mainly Turkish nomads and turkicized peasantry.<sup>15</sup> Possibly there were also a few Kurdish groups among them, although they are not explicitly mentioned among Ismail's troops on this occasion. A few

years later two tribes from northern Kurdistan are repeatedly mentioned among the Qizilbash tribes: the Chemishkezek and the Khinuslu.<sup>16</sup> Ismail did not immediately turn against the Aqqoyunlu, but led his followers first in a campaign against Shirwan — maybe an act of revenge, for both his father and grandfather had been killed in similar campaigns. After his conquest of Shirwan, however, the last Aqqoyunlu ruler of Azerbaijan, Alwand, attacked him. Ismail routed Alwand's army, and thus Azerbaijan fell into his hands like a ripe fruit. He had himself crowned shah, and proclaimed Twelver Shiism the state religion (middle of 1501).<sup>17</sup> In subsequent years he eliminated the other petty rulers who had appropriated parts of the Aqqoyunlu's empire.<sup>18</sup>

Kurdistan did not fall into his hands as easily as Azerbaijan. Several Kurdish mirs had been virtually independent for the past few decades, and Amir Beg Mawsillu, a Turk who, under the Aqqoyunlu, had been the governor of the province of Diyarbakir, had also asserted independence. A greater danger was represented by the Turkish beylik of Zulqadir (Elbistan), the last remaining independent state between the Ottoman Empire and the former Aqqoyunlu dominions.<sup>19</sup> Its ruler Ala ad-Dawla, attempting to expand his sovereignty over these former Aqqoyunlu lands, took some fortifications in Diyarbakir. Shah Ismail marched with a strong army (20,000 men) against this rival and defeated his army. Amir Beg Mawsillu of Diyarbakir then tendered his submission to the shah. For this Ismail rewarded him richly; but instead of leaving him in his old function he sent him to Herat, as a governor of Khorasan, far from Kurdistan where his personal influence was too great. As the governor of Diyarbakir the shah now appointed his own brother-in-law Muhammad Beg Ustajlu.<sup>20</sup>

The central town of Amid, however, still stood under the command of Amir Beg's brother Qaytmas Beg, who refused to give it up to Muhammad Beg Ustajlu and incited the Sunni Kurds to harass the Ustajlu's Shiite Turkish troops. He also asked for assistance from fresh Zulqadir armies after the shah and the main body of his army had left. Muhammad Beg Ustajlu, however, slaughtered many Kurds, and defeated the troops from Zulqadir. In a most bloody way he similarly asserted his authority over Mardin, Cizre and Mosul, 'killing and plundering the Kurds'.<sup>21</sup>

Shah Ismail's policy towards the Kurds resembled Uzun Hasan's. Both eliminated many Kurdish chieftains and appointed their own men as governors. Alternatively, when they left local authority with local people, it was not the old, noble families, but rivals of lesser status whom they recognized.<sup>22</sup> Rebellions of Kurdish chieftains who resisted this policy and tried to remain or become independent were brutally suppressed. A delegation of sixteen Kurdish chieftains, who had agreed to offer their submission to the shah and pay him homage in the hope of a more lenient attitude, were taken prisoner when they visited the shah in his winter residence at Khoy (in or around 1510).<sup>23</sup> The shah then

sent trusted leaders of his Qizilbash tribes to these mirs' territories, in order to subject them.

The religious factor played a role, too, although this may easily be overestimated. Most Kurds were Sunni Muslims, while Ismail had made Twelver Shiism his state religion, and many of his troops were fanatical extremist Shiites. This could only exacerbate the antagonism between the Kurds and their Turkish overlords.

### **The events as seen from below**

Most of the contemporary sources on this period have the perspective of the ruling classes (or the ruling strata). History is presented as an adventurous struggle between Turkish and Kurdish military and political leaders; of the common people and their role we learn next to nothing. Exceptions are a few chronicles written by Christian subjects in the Aramaic language. One of these<sup>24</sup> relates the occupation of Cizre by Muhammed Beg Ustajlu and the subsequent events. It is a concise account of disaster upon disaster that befell the peasantry and townspeople: Qizilbash, locusts, Kurds, etc., in a seemingly never-ending sequence.

'Ismail Shah, who viewed himself as God and who had conquered the entire East, sent as governor to Armenia a mean, cunning and hard-hearted man called Muhammad Beg. He ordered him to kill any king who would disobey him, and to destroy every town that would rebel against him'. Mir Sharaf, the king of Cizre, refused to submit and to send presents to Muhammad Beg, who then sent his troops and defeated him. 'He pillaged the entire country; he took away the animals; he killed a large number of the inhabitants; he slaughtered priests, deacons, children, peasants, artisans, young people and old; he burnt villages; he destroyed the monasteries and the churches and he took as slaves many young men and women. King Sharaf was then obliged to make peace with him, and give him one of his nieces as a wife.'

The next year it was only the locust that made life miserable; a year later, Mir Sharaf revolted. Muhammad Beg immediately sent troops into Botan, the region of Mir Sharaf's Kurdish subjects. Many Muslims and Christians were massacred. To prevent Muhammad Beg's taking the town of Cizre, Mir Sharaf ordered all its inhabitants (mainly Christians) out, and had his Kurds set it on fire. Then he and his Kurds retreated to his mountain fortress at Shakh. When the Qizilbash came they met with no resistance upon entering the ruins; they forced the inhabitants to return and rebuild the town.

No sooner was it rebuilt than new misery befell. Hearing the rumour that Shah Ismail had been attacked and defeated by 'a courageous people who cover their heads with felt', Kurdish tribes everywhere united. They came down from the mountains to which they had withdrawn, and attacked the Qizilbash. The local governor at Cizre was

defeated. Muhammad Beg then sent reinforcements, which were welcomed by the inhabitants, who hoped to be delivered from the Kurds. Instead, however, these troops pillaged the town and butchered its inhabitants. At first the notables, Christians and Muslims alike, were tortured, the women and girls raped. Then a general massacre ensued; the newly arrived troops killed without discrimination, Christian and Muslim, man and animal, 'they even raped each other's wives ...'. 'The town was burnt down. Muslims, Syrians [Jacobites] and Jews who had escaped the bloodshed were taken into captivity. On the way all who, for fatigue, could not continue their forced voyage, were killed. All these unfortunate prisoners were sold on the islands and in far-away countries'.

### **Ottoman-Safavid confrontation**

Considering Ismail's policy it is not surprising that the Kurds — or rather, those traditional Kurdish rulers who survived — were looking for help to the one big power that might liberate them from Safavid domination, the (Sunni) Ottoman Empire. As long as Sultan Bayezid had been in power (1481–1512), Ismail's relations with his neighbour had been friendly. Bayezid, however, became weak in his old age; during his lifetime a struggle for the succession already ensued between his sons. Around the same time (1511) a social and religious revolt broke out and spread from its original centre Teke (in southwestern Anatolia) over large areas of the empire. The evidence<sup>25</sup> suggests that it was a Qizilbash revolt, although Ismail seems not to have been directly involved. Only at a later stage, when the eastern provinces were also in revolt, did Ismail intervene. He sent Nur Ali Khalife Rumlu, his representative in Erzincan, to the Ottoman Empire to support the revolting Qizilbash (and, indirectly, Bayezid's grandson Murad, one of the pretenders to the sultanate).

Nur Ali, aided by the local Qizilbash, defeated several armies that were sent against him by provincial governors and by Selim I, who had meanwhile mounted the Sultan's throne. Selim (nicknamed 'Yavuz', 'the grim') was the army's favourite; he was also a sworn enemy of Shah Ismail. He had previously been the governor of Trebizond (an Ottoman possession since 1461), and his incursions into Safavid territory at that time had greatly annoyed Ismail. One of Selim's first actions as sultan was the execution and imprisonment of large numbers of Qizilbash subjects (forty thousand, according to some sources).<sup>26</sup> Both monarchs now had their *casus belli*. To make things worse, Muhammad Khan Ustajlu<sup>27</sup> (a governor only!) challenged Selim to arms in most insulting terms. In the winter of 1513–14 Selim prepared for war, and in spring he marched east with an army of over 100,000. On his approach Muhammad Khan Ustajlu evacuated his dominions. He forced all inhabitants of the Armenian plateau to go to Azerbaijan, and burnt all that was edible, trying thus to put an impassible barrier between the

Ottoman and Safavid lands. Thanks to 60,000 camels carrying provisions, the sultan nevertheless managed to pass. In August 1514 the two empires' armies met near Chaldiran (northeast of Lake Van); Ismail suffered a crushing defeat, Selim occupied Tabriz.<sup>28</sup> However, logistical problems necessitated the Ottoman army's return before winter set in. Ismail reoccupied Tabriz and sent back his governors to his western provinces. Muhammad Khan Ustajlu had been killed at Chaldiran, and the shah appointed in his place Muhammad's brother Qara Beg, with the title of khan. Two other brothers, Iwaz Beg and Ulash Beg, became the governors of Bitlis and Cizre, respectively. When Qara Khan arrived in Diyarbakir he found the Kurdish mirs in open revolt. They had recognized Selim as their sovereign, and had solicited his help to get rid of the Safavids.

### Ottoman policy *vis-à-vis* the Kurds

According to the *Sharafname*,<sup>29</sup> some twenty Kurdish mirs had already sent declarations of submission to Selim before his campaign against the Safavids. The man behind this was a Kurd born in Bitlis, Idris Bitlisi. He had formerly been a secretary to the Aqqoyunlu ruler Yaqub (the son of Uzun Hasan), was an important historian and an accomplished diplomat. From Ottoman sources<sup>30</sup> it appears that he was already in Selim's service — where his intimate knowledge of Kurdish affairs was appreciated — and had been despatched to secure Kurdish support. It was Idris — whom the *Sharafname* praises in the most florid language — who counselled the Kurdish mirs to bet on Selim, and who returned to the capital with their promises of allegiance ('sincere attachment and devotion', in the words of the *Sharafname*). When the Ottoman armies approached in 1514, the inhabitants of Amid opened the city gates for them. Elsewhere, in the mountainous districts, the Kurds began expelling the last Qizilbash troops still remaining there as occupation forces. Several of the Kurdish mirs thus succeeded in reconquering their former strongholds that the Qizilbash had taken from them.<sup>31</sup> But, as related above, the sultan retired to western Anatolia before the winter set in, together with the bulk of his army. Shah Ismail then again sent troops into Kurdistan to reassert his sovereignty. The Kurdish mirs closed their ranks and jointly opposed these Qizilbash troops. They received assistance from the one general Selim had left behind as the governor and military commander of the eastern frontier, Biyikli Muhammad Pasha. The account of his appointment in the *Sharafname* merits attention. Even if it did not happen this way, this, apparently, is how it ought to have happened:

When the sultan left Tabriz for the west, the Kurdish mirs sent Idris to him with the demand of *recognition of their hereditary rights over their respective territories*, and with the request to *appoint one from their midst as the beglerbegi* so that they could, under an unambiguous

leadership, march together against Qara Khan and expel him from Kurdistan. (It should be noted that *beglerbegi* was the title of the military and civil commander of an *eyalet* (large province) in the Ottoman Empire; these posts were given to the sultan's sons and the highest generals only).<sup>32</sup> The sultan then asked Idris which of the mirs was most worthy of this paramount leadership. The wise Idris advised: '*They are all more or less equal, and none of them will bow his head before any other.*' For an effective and united struggle against the Qizilbash it will be necessary to put coordinating authority into the hands of a servant of the court, whom all mirs will obey.' Thus was done, and Biyikli Muhammad remained behind in the east as the *beglerbegi* of Kurdistan.<sup>33</sup>

Immediately upon his arrival, the Qizilbash commander, Qara Khan, laid siege to Amid, the most important town. He received reinforcements from the towns that were still in Qizilbash hands, Mardin, Hasankeyf, and Urfa. The siege lasted over a year and cost the inhabitants many casualties (50,000, according to von Hammer's source)<sup>34</sup>, but the Qizilbash never succeeded in taking it. During all that time Kurdistan was in a chaotic state of uncoordinated warfare, in which the mutual rivalries of Kurdish pretenders and the Sunni-Shiite or Ottoman-Safavid struggle were not easily distinguishable from each other. But finally a combination of Kurdish tribal troops, under their own mirs, and regular troops under Biyikli Muhammad and other generals despatched by Sultan Selim, inflicted a number of defeats on the Qizilbash. The latter received the final blow near Qochisar, at the hands of mainly Kurdish units. Many, maybe even the majority, were killed; the survivors fled to Iran.<sup>35</sup>

The larger part of Kurdistan from now on belonged to the Ottoman Empire: the entire province of Diyarbakir, most of what is now northern Iraq, and everything west of there. Selim's successor Sulayman was to push the frontier further southeast some twenty years later. A number of tribes and emirates were to remain within the Persian sphere of influence, while a few others were to switch their loyalties several times in the centuries to follow. The frontier may not yet have been fixed definitely; the administrative organization as it was introduced in 1515 was to remain in force, with only minor changes, for four centuries. It was the achievement of Idris, who had received plenipotentiary powers from the sultan. He appointed mirs who had cooperated against the Qizilbash as the hereditary governors of districts — an anomaly in the empire, where these positions were usually held by military appointees, and were (at least in theory) not inheritable. The administrative organization is treated in greater detail below. From the *Sharafname*, which gives the histories of most of the important leading families in Kurdistan, it becomes apparent that the mirs whom Idris appointed all belonged to old families that had for centuries exercised

near-regal powers, if with interruptions. The Aqqoyunlu and the Safavids had followed a policy of breaking these families' power. When they could, they replaced them with their own Turkish governors, otherwise with other, less aristocratic, Kurds. The Ottoman conquest, on the other hand, consolidated the position of the old aristocracy: no parvenu was allowed to share in the power to be derived from the Ottoman state. The following section illustrates these policies by retelling the same history from the narrower perspective of a few Kurdish emirates or, rather, of their ruling families.

## The political history of some Kurdish emirates

### The meliks of Hasankeyf

Hasankeyf is an old town with a fortress on the Tigris, between Amid and Cizre. Until very recently the town's population consisted mainly of Jacobite Christians (Aramaic or Arabic speaking Syrian Christians, or Suryani). The district surrounding it is still inhabited by Suryani, Muslim and Yezidi Kurds (tribal as well as non-tribal), and some Arabs. In the period under consideration the population may have been even more mixed, but the *Sharafname* only mentions Kurdish tribes and the Christian subject peasantry. The same family had been in power for centuries here, with only very few interruptions. It claimed descent from Salahaddin Ayyubi. The *Sharafname* mentions them as one of the five families that without ever founding an independent state, had at one time or another had money coined and the *khutba* read in their name.<sup>36</sup> They bore the title of *melik*, 'king'. Melik Ashraf was a contemporary of Tamburlaine (Timur Lang), to whom he submitted himself and pleaded absolute devotion (which undoubtedly found material expression). His rule was long and quiet. After his death (early fifteenth century) his son Melik Khalil '*with the unanimous consent of the large and small tribes*'<sup>37</sup> succeeded his father.

The Qaraqoyunlu never succeeded in extending their influence over Hasankeyf. Melik Khalil recognized Tamburlaine's son Shahrukh as his sovereign and, when the latter was in Van in a campaign against the Qaraqoyunlu chieftain Qara Yusuf who had made himself independent, Melik Khalil went to pay homage. His rule, too, was a period of peace and happiness: 'His soldiers and subjects were satisfied and content with his generosity'.<sup>38</sup>

Melik Khalil was succeeded by a brother's son, Melik Khalf, who had to fight several wars against the powerful Botan tribes of neighbouring Jazira. It was in his time that Uzun Hasan the Aqqoyunlu started his eastward expansion and had his troops lay siege to Hasankeyf. One of Melik Khalf's nephews treacherously killed him and opened the gates of the town to the Turks. He expected to be placed on his uncle's throne as Uzun Hasan's vassal, but such was not the policy of this monarch. He

gave the town and district as an hereditary fief to one of his Turkish chieftains.

Melik Khalil, a brother of the murdered Melik Khalf, had escaped and kept himself in hiding in Syria until Aqqoyunlu rule was weakened by internal disputes. He returned to his territory and, aided by Mir Shah Muhammad Shirwi — the chiefs of the Shirwi tribe always acted as viziers to the rulers of Hasankeyf — he called on his family's subjects to show their loyalties. Representatives of all the various tribes and communities gathered under his banner and marched first against Siirt, then again Hasankeyf, both of which towns they took from the Aqqoyunlu. From then on, Melik Khalil enjoyed full independence. 'None of the princes of Kurdistan equalled him in grandeur or power'; all he did was in regal style. He married a sister of the future Shah Ismail. His independence came to an end when, together with fifteen other Kurdish mirs (see above) he went to the Shah to pay homage and offer his submission. With the others, he was taken prisoner. The only privilege his brother-in-law granted him was to send for his wife and family. The Qizilbash took possession of Hasankeyf; they left the town in the custody of the (Kurdish) Bejnewi tribe, which bore a grudge against Melik Khalil, who had killed its chieftain. After the battle at Chaldiran Melik Khalil escaped and returned to Hasankeyf. He found the population there divided among itself on the selection of a paramount chieftain who could lead operations against the Qizilbash. A majority of the tribes supported Melik Khalil's son Sulayman, but others preferred one of his cousins. The Botan profited from this division and laid siege to Siirt, determined to take that town from the Qizilbash and keep it for themselves. Within a few days, however, Melik Khalil brought unity to his subjects. The Botan were forced to renounce Siirt, which Melik Khalil soon managed to retake. The Bejnewi, who held the town of Hasankeyf, also surrendered. Melik Khalil did not punish them, and conciliated them by granting their chieftain a village as a compensation for the killing of his father.

The exact status of Hasankeyf after its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire is not clear; but Melik Khalil continued to govern until his death. Between his four sons, however, there was nothing but rivalry. Husayn, who first succeeded him, threw two brothers in jail. The fourth, Sulayman, took refuge with the Ottoman governor, Husrev Pasha, at Amid. The latter then had Husayn killed and put Sulayman in his place. The rivalry of his brothers and anger of the tribes, who blamed him for Husayn's death, made it impossible for Sulayman to govern. He voluntarily resigned and submitted the keys of all fortifications to Husrev Pasha. This was the end of the family's rule as hereditary mirs. The sultan indemnified Sulayman by appointing him as governor of the town of Urfa, and later to other places, while his brothers each received a *zeamet* (large fief) that guaranteed them comfortable incomes.



### Hakkari and its mirs<sup>39</sup>

The history of this emirate is interesting because its territory remained much longer under Safavid influence; it was always to remain a frontier province desired by both empires. Although natural conditions gave it effective protection against foreign invasions, the mirs often needed much political skill to retain their independence. Among the population of the emirate was a large number of Assyrians (Aramaic-speaking Christians, following the Nestorian rite). Half of these were peasants subjected to the Kurdish tribes, as Christians elsewhere; the other half, however, were tribally organized and were redoubtable fighters.<sup>40</sup> We shall see that they also played quite an active role in the emirate's politics. The ruling family claimed descent from the Abbasid caliphs; at one time or another they had their own money minted and their names read in the *khutba*. In earlier times Kurds were mentioned in a more southerly direction,<sup>41</sup> but at the period under consideration they resided at Van and Cholemerik (the latter town is now called Hakkari). The mirs ruled over a territory consisting of the present Turkish provinces of Hakkari and Van, and stretching south into northern Iraq.

At the arrival of Tamburlaine (1387) Mir Izzeddin Sher ruled over these dominions and firmly resisted Tamburlaine's incursions. But seeing how he harassed the non-military population, Izzeddin Sher at last surrendered. A relative, Nasruddin, barricaded himself in the nearly impregnable fortress of Van and continued a desperate fight against Tamburlaine's troops; only with great difficulty could this resistance be broken, which is probably why Tamburlaine contented himself with making Hakkari a nominal vassal state. He gave Izzeddin Sher — who after all had recognized his sovereignty — his patrimonial dominions as a fief, and left administration and government fully in his hands, ensuring the family's loyalty to his successors as well. When Tamburlaine's son Shahrukh led a campaign against the rebellious Qara Yusuf (the founder of the Qaraqoyunlu dynasty — see above), Izzeddin's son Melik Muhammad went (together with the mir of Bitlis, Shamsuddin) to the former's camp to pay his respects and to receive a renewal of his investiture.

The *Sharafname* remains silent on the period of Qaraqoyunlu domination. It is highly probable that the family submitted itself to these new rulers, in spite of their profession of loyalty to the Timurids. The author, a great friend of the Hakkari family, may have preferred to leave this unmentioned.

The Aqqoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan sent his Turkish generals against Cholemerik, the capital. They managed to take it, due to the extreme negligence of its ruler, another Izzeddin Sher, who put up no defence in spite of entreaties by all his counsellors. The mir was killed (and with him, probably, many others who might have led future resistance against occupation), and the district was placed under the control of the Kurdish Dumbili tribe, a fierce lot, probably originating from Cizre.

The Dumbili used the good relations of their chieftain Shaikh Ahmad with Uzun Hasan to effect some conquests of their own, in the name of the Aqqoyunlu. The eastern subdistricts of Hakkari were placed under control of the Mahmudi. These were a confederation of Kurdish tribes of diverse origins, formed around a certain Shaikh Mahmud (from whom their name derived), who had entered the service of the Qaraqoyunlu. Qara Yusuf had granted him the districts Ashut and Khoshab, which had at times belonged to Hakkari.

Mahmud's son Mir Husayn Beg enjoyed the favour of Uzun Hasan and received official title to the same, or even larger, districts from him. Thus the Hakkari emirate had come under control of two 'foreign' Kurdish tribes that were vassals to the Aqqoyunlu. As it happened, some of the Assyrians of the subdistrict of Diz (one of the five *tribal* communities) were merchants and travelled frequently to Syria and Egypt. In the latter country lived a scion of the Hakkari family, Asaduddin, who had greatly distinguished himself as a warrior in the service of the Circassian sultans there. The Assyrian merchants heard of his reputation and met him; then they asked him to come with them and regain possession of his family's dominions! His return was prompt. One of the strongholds occupied by the *Dumbili* was the castle of Diz. Christian subjects here had the task of bringing firewood and provisions up to the castle. Dressed as Assyrians, Asaduddin and some valiant men of his tribe thus entered the castle, and, with arms hidden between the firewood, slew the *Dumbili*. In a short time Asaduddin purged much of the Hakkari dominions of occupying *Dumbili* tribesmen. We find the *Dumbili* in later times mentioned as living in Azarbaijan, around Khoy, as vassals of the Safavids.

The Mahmudi proved more redoubtable rivals. They continued to hold part of the former Hakkari territory and, aided by Turkish (Aqqoyunlu) troops, defeated Asaduddin's son several times. Only when the latter had recruited help from Bitlis could the Mahmudi be repelled.

Asaduddin's grandson Zahid Beg submitted himself to Shah Ismail, who apparently trusted him more than the other Kurdish rulers and invested him as a hereditary mir. After his death his dominions were apparently split up into at least two emirates, Vostan (at the southeastern corner of Lake Van) and Hakkari proper; his sons Sayd Muhammad and Melik Beg, respectively, became the rulers there. The events of this period are rather confusing, and the *Sharafname* leaves too much obscure; it is clear, however, that rivalries within the family were aggravated by Ottoman and Safavid competition for this frontier district. Since 1534 Hakkari had belonged nominally to the Ottoman Empire; *de facto* it was independent. One of Melik Beg's sons entered the service of Shah Tahmasb, Shah Ismail's son. Another left for Diyarbakir, where the Ottomans gave him a large fief; he participated in the Ottoman-Safavid battle for Childir (1578), was made a prisoner of

war, and was given into the hands of a nephew of his in the Safavid army, who had him killed.

Other sons governed sub-districts of Hakkari as representatives of their father, in the same way that Ottoman sultans and Persian shahs appointed their sons as provincial governors, with the dual aim of centralizing the administration within the family and of keeping their most dangerous rivals far away from the capital. Melik Beg's eldest son, Zeynel Beg, revolted against his father and, aided by notables of the tribe, defeated and imprisoned him. Melik Beg, however, escaped, first to his brother Sayd Muhammad at Vostan and from there to Bitlis, where he was received with a great show of honour. Sayd Muhammad enlisted the support of the large tribe (or confederation) Pinyanish to drive his nephew Zeynel away from Cholemerik and to unite all the family dominions under his rule.

Zeynel then went to Azarbaijan, in order to request Safavid support for his reconquest of Hakkari. When this proved hopeless because the Safavids favoured Sayd Muhammad, he went to Istanbul with the same intention. Sultan Sulayman's vizier Rustem Pasha was interested in the improvement of control over this virtually independent district but, knowing of Zeynel's flirtation with the Safavids, he demanded as a guarantee of Zeynel's future loyalty that he bring his wife, children and other close relatives into Ottoman territory. When Zeynel was back in Hakkari to take his family and belongings, he received the news that Rustem Pasha had been deposed. Not daring to return to Istanbul he went anew to Iran and tried to win Shah Tahmasb's favours. But the Safavids' relations with Sayd Muhammad were only improving, and they showed no interest in Zeynel. As soon as he heard that his protector Rustem Pasha was back in favour and had been re-appointed vizier, he left for Istanbul. But the vizier had apparently lost interest in Zeynel and gave him a fief in Bosnia instead of an appointment to Hakkari.

Meanwhile the Ottoman governor of Van, Iskander Pasha, to whom the mir of Hakkari was theoretically subordinated,<sup>42</sup> had conceived a strong dislike for Hakkari. This chieftain had consolidated his rule over Hakkari and was in contact with the Safavids,<sup>43</sup> probably more as a way of counterbalancing the Ottomans than because of real sympathies. With the assistance of the Mahmudi (who still held Khoshab) Iskander Pasha managed to capture Sayd Muhammad by deceit and had him put to death. He asked the court in Istanbul to send him Zeynel Beg to assist him in the pacification of Hakkari (in the function of adviser or political officer). Shortly after his arrival Zeynel Beg was sent on a reconnaissance mission to the border. There, he met by accident his brother, Bayendir Beg, who was in the Shah's service and on a similar mission. The brothers came to blows. Bayendir was killed, and Zeynel brought a few of his brother's companions to Iskander Pasha as prisoners of war. The reward for this proof of loyalty to the Ottomans was Zeynel's appointment over Hakkari.

The history of the family was to continue thus for a long time: perpetual intrigue, recourse to Ottoman and Safavid officials, to other ruling families of Kurdistan, and to the tribes of the Hakkari confederation. Only in the mid-nineteenth century was the last mir of Hakkari, a scion of the same family, deposed. But even today the politics of Hakkari resemble those of the old days.

#### **Chemishkezek<sup>44</sup>**

Nowadays, Chemishkezek is an underpopulated district of Dersim, (Tunceli, in Turkey), one of the least accessible and least explored parts of Kurdistan. The *Sharafname* describes its ruling family (which is probably of Seljuk descent)<sup>45</sup> as one of the most illustrious of Kurdistan, and its dominions are said to have been so extensive that they were often simply referred to as 'Kurdistan'. Many large and small tribes obeyed this family; they were the master of thirty-two fortifications. All these belongings remained in the family's hands during the turbulent periods when Jenghis Khan, Tamburlaine and Qara Yusuf the Qaraqoyunlu conquered these parts of the world. However, the family's rule ended abruptly with the emergence of Uzun Hasan.

The Aqqoyunlu ruler strove to eliminate all native Kurdish dynasties, especially those that were attached to the Qaraqoyunlu, if we can believe the *Sharafname*. He sent the Kharbandlu, one of the Aqqoyunlu tribes, to the emirate of Chemishkezek in order to subdue it. They did, in fact, conquer it, but the young mir Shaikh Hasan energetically organized an army from among his subjects and managed to expel the occupying Turks. He and his descendants then held these possessions until the time of Shah Ismail. The family's attitude towards this monarch was very friendly, probably because they had Qizilbash, or at least Shiite, leanings.<sup>46</sup> When Ismail sent Nur Ali Khalife Rumlu, the military commander and governor of Erzincan, against Chemishkezek, the mir, Haji Rustem Beg, gave up all his belongings without any resistance.

This contrasts with his deportment, 30 years previously, towards the Ottomans. In 1473/4 Sultan Mehmed had routed an Aqqoyunlu army, and the commander of the castle of Kemakh, in Chemishkezek's sphere of influence, wanted to submit himself to the sultan. Haji Rustem had forcefully opposed this, but then gave the same castle away to Shah Ismail. He moreover travelled personally to the shah, who received him in audience and made him the governor of a district in Iran in exchange for Chemishkezek. The population of Chemishkezek, meanwhile, was far from content: Nur Ali proved a most tyrannical and brutal governor, who had entire tribes exterminated. Soon the whole district was in armed revolt, which was undoubtedly further stimulated by the approach of Ottoman troops (Sultan Selim's campaign of 1514). They sent a messenger to Iran, asking Haji Rustem to return, but the latter had left his residence to join Ismail's army at Chaldiran; he was even a member of the general staff. After the defeat Haji Rustem wanted to go

over to the Ottomans' side; he found Sultan Selim, and 'received the honour of kissing his stirrups'. The sultan, however, had him executed that very day; his grandson and forty aghas (members of the mir's family and heads of vassal tribes) suffered the same fate. A son of Haji Rustem, Pir Husayn Beg, who still resided in Iran, decided upon hearing this news to go to Egypt and enter the service of the Circassian rulers there. Having received a wise man's counsel to go to Sultan Selim and offer his submission, he consented and visited the sultan in his winter encampment at Amasya. The sultan admired the young man's courage, and gave him the emirate of Chemishkezek under the same conditions as those under which his ancestors had held it.

The sultan sent orders to Biyikli Muhammad Pasha to expel the Qizilbash from Chemishkezek and install Pir Husayn there, but the latter impetuously gathered the tribes of the district around him and drove the occupying forces off all by himself. He reigned in peace for another thirty years.

The sixteen sons he left behind could not reach an agreement on the problem of succession. They therefore appealed to Sultan Sulayman, who divided the Chemishkezek dominions into three districts, of which one (Saghman) fell to the crown domains, while the other two (Mejengird and Pertek) were transformed into *sanjaqs* (governorates), the government of which was to remain within the ruling family. The poll-tax (*jizye*), levied from non-Muslim subjects, and also the tax on flocks, formerly the mir's, had from now on to be transmitted to the crown. The fourteen brothers who did not become governors each received a small or large fief (*timar* or *zeamet*). Not much later one of them, by a cleverly formulated appeal to the sultan, succeeded in receiving Saghman as his hereditary *sanjaq*.

In the above, the term 'fief' was mentioned and the subject of taxation was brought up. These subjects will be discussed more systematically in the next section dealing with the administrative organization of the Ottoman Empire and the way of inclusion of Kurdistan therein.

## Administrative organization of Ottoman Kurdistan in the sixteenth century

### Land regime and administrative organization of the Ottoman Empire (15th-16th century)<sup>47</sup>

The Ottoman Empire was heir to three traditions. Its founders and the ruling stratum in its early phases were Turkish tribesmen, whose Turkish traditions had been modified by their conversion to Islam. The Islamic prescriptions pervaded all spheres of public and private life. The entire empire had been conquered from other states (of which the Byzantine Empire was the most important). Institutions of these states and customs of the original inhabitants persisted in the Ottoman

Empire, in more or less modified forms, which caused rather wide divergences in land regime and taxation and, to a lesser extent, in administration between the different parts of the empire. There are, therefore, many local exceptions to the general statements that follow.

There were, in the empire, two coinciding administrative networks; offices in both were filled by the sultan's appointment. Every district was governed by a *beg*, a military commander, while judicial affairs were the responsibility of the *qadi*. The latter had to be an expert in the *sharia*, religious law, as well as in the practical juridical rulings of the sultans laid down in the *qanunnames* ('law books', that regulated criminal law, taxes, tolls, the duties and privileges of officials, etc.) There were legal experts, *mufti*, in every district, whose duty was to know the intricate system of koranic law with its later elaborations, and to apply and develop it in such new situations as might occur. Anyone could bring a juridical problem before the mufti and ask him the solution which Islamic law — applied according to the legal school to which he adhered — imposed. The mufti answered in a *fatwa*, an *ex cathedra* statement. The issuing of such *fatwas* provides the only way of legal innovation in Sunni Islam. Important *fatwas* could only be issued by the supreme mufti, the *shaikh al-islam*. Executive authority, finally, was vested in the *beg*. As a symbol of his dignity he received a standard (*sanjaq*) from the sultan; the district under his command was also called *sanjaq*, and he himself a *sanjaqbegi*.

A *beglerbegi* (later also called *vali* — wali) was placed above a number of *sanjaqbegis*; the unit, consisting of the *sanjaqs* under his authority, was called *beglerbegilik* or *eyalet*. The administrative division of the empire into *eyalets* and *sanjaqs* was modified several times, the units becoming smaller every time.

Originally, the core of the Ottoman army consisted of a tribal cavalry (*sipahi*), often called 'feudal' because, as a reward for military service, its members received grants of land. The 'feudatory' had the right to collect for himself revenue from the peasants on his 'fief', in accordance with rules that were laid down in detail in the lawbook of each province. His obligations were three. Firstly, he had administrative and simple judicial tasks (land disputes between peasants, etc.), as well as the duty to collect some taxes for the central treasury. Secondly, he had to ensure that the land remained under cultivation (which meant that he had to prevent the peasants from leaving en masse). Thirdly, he had to arm and maintain a number of cavalry men (*jebelu*) that had to be ready for mobilization (together with himself) at any moment. The number of *jebelu* he had to provide was in proportion to the revenue of his fief. This revenue varied widely; the merit or rank of a *sipahi* was indicated by the size of his fief (as expressed by the revenue in *aqche*, the basic monetary unit).<sup>48</sup> Law distinguished two, or rather, three kinds of fief. The *timar* (with a revenue of up to 20,000 *aqche* per year and a median value of c. 6,000 *aqche*) was granted to the meriting *sipahi* of ordinary

rank, while the *zeamet* (with revenues generally in the range of 20,000 to 100,000 *aqche*) was granted to *sipahi* officers or higher officials of the civil administration.<sup>49</sup> A somewhat different kind of fief was the *khass*, granted to *sanjaqbegis* and other functionaries of very high rank. Unlike *timar* and *zeamet*, the *khass* belonged to an office, not to its incumbent. It consisted of the revenue of certain villages as well as certain other taxes and dues, and ranged from 100,000 to 600,000 *aqches* (for *sanjaqbegis*) or up to a million *aqches* (for *beglerbegis*). This system of land grants 'mapped' the *sipahi* army and its hierarchical organization on to the territorial space of the empire.

In large villages, in which a number of *sipahis* held *timars*, these *sipahis* were organized by a subaltern officer, the *jeribashi*. The *timar*-holders of a certain district, with their *jebelus*, formed together a military unit under an officer, the *subashi* (who himself held a *zeamet* or a *khass*). The *subashis* of a *sanjaq*, with their men, formed that *sanjaq's* regiment, under the command of the *sanjaqbegi*. The *sanjaqbegis* of an *eyalet* were subordinate to the *beglerbegi*, the commander of the army consisting of the *sanjaqs's* regiments. It is estimated that in 1475 there were 22,000 *timar*-holding *sipahis* in the European, and 17,000 in the Asian part of the empire (which then did not yet include Kurdistan).<sup>50</sup> The registers of Sultan Sulayman I (mid-sixteenth century) record 50,000 *sipahis* in the European, and 20,000 in the Asian part of the Empire.<sup>51</sup>

The *timar* system differed in several respects from western European feudalism:

1. Theoretically at least, central control was stronger. The land belonged to the state; the fief-holder never owned it, but had the right to collect only a *stipulated* revenue from it. Over-exploitation of the peasantry by the *sipahi* could be a reason for revoking his fief. In theory, the *timar* was not inheritable, although in practice it happened often that *sipahis's* sons inherited their fathers' *timars*.
2. Whereas in feudal Europe the feudal lord was virtually the sole judge and administered justice according to customary law, the *sipahi*, *subashi* and *beg* had only very restricted jurisdictional powers. They were responsible for applying the Ottoman state's land laws in their fiefs, but other cases, civil as well as penal, were to be brought before the *qadi*.
3. Also the *sipahi's* rights over the peasantry were more narrowly circumscribed than in feudal Europe. The peasants, once registered, had *nearly inalienable, inheritable tenancy rights*, although they could not sell or otherwise transfer them. Only if a peasant left the land uncultivated for three consecutive years without sufficient reason, could the *sipahi* take it from him and give it to someone else. The peasants' main obligation was to cultivate the land. Therefore they were not allowed to leave, and the *sipahi* could force them to return if they did so.
4. The concept of fealty, so prominent in Europe, hardly existed. The

*sipahi* was a military man, subject to military discipline. Other vertical ties of loyalty (both up and down) might exist, but were not essential to the system.

These differences should not be overestimated, however. At times of weak central government in particular the system tended to transgress its written rules; *sipahis* and *begs* arrogated more privileges and the system remarkably approached its western European counterpart. As we shall see below, this was especially so in Kurdistan.

The classification of land-holding is not exhausted by the three types of fief enumerated above. Some state lands were never given out as fiefs, but belonged to the crown domains (*emlak* or *khass-i humayun*, the sultan's *khass*); their revenue was collected by salaried officials. Other state lands had been set apart by the sultan or a *beglerbegi* as pious endowments (*vaqf*, pl. *evqaf*). The revenue of these lands, or part of the revenue, was to be used for the upkeep of mosques, shrines, water-wells, etc. Another category of *vaqf* consisted of lands originally privately owned, of which part of the revenue had thus been endowed in order to prevent its appropriation by the state.

Only a small fraction of the land was not *de jure* state land but private property (*mulk*). Theoretically, this category was limited to land in towns and to agricultural land of a few areas only (in the Arabian peninsula and southern Iraq). In practice, however, many locally powerful people usurped state land and treated it as their privately owned property. Some sultans recognized this *de facto* ownership in exchange for the owner's obligation to pay 10% of the produce (the tithe, *ushr*) to the treasury. More powerful sultans reasserted state ownership of all land and expropriated *mulk*.

There was a sharp caste division between the *re'aya* (the tax-paying subjects, mainly peasants)<sup>52</sup> and the military class. The only persons eligible to receive a *timar* were the sons of *sipahis* and members of the military elite of the newly conquered territories (even those that were not Muslims), and the *qul* (pl. *qullar*, 'slaves') of the sultan or of the *begs*.<sup>53</sup> These *qullar* were the children of Christian peasants that had been taken away from their parents at a young age and given a Muslim education; they were considered members of the military class. They were 'owned' by the sultan or other notables, but that in no way implied low status. Some of them, it is true, performed menial jobs, but also most of the highest offices of the state were theirs. The *re'aya* had neither military duties nor privileges; they were not even allowed to carry arms.<sup>54</sup> The law books also made distinctions within the *re'aya* class, according to the amount of land they held. For administrative use the measure of land was the *chiftlik* (approximately 6 to 15 hectares [15–35 acres], depending on the quality of the land). A *reyet* could not generally hold more than one *chiftlik*. Laws prevented the splitting up of the *chiftlik* into too small units. *Re'aya* were classified as those holding



one *chiftlik*, those with half a *chiftlik*, those holding less, and the landless. The latter category included peasants who had fled the land, and peasants not registered for some reason or other: former nomads, sons of *re'aya* who had left their fathers' households, etc. If there were vacant lands on a *timar*, the *sipahi* could rent these to such landless peasants for a (fixed) sum per unit of surface. When they stayed for three consecutive years, however, they became that *sipahi's* *re'aya*, with hereditary rights to the occupancy of those fields. The peasantry were subjected to a number of taxes and dues;<sup>55</sup> some of these found their base in the *sharia*, others were customary or derived from Ottoman legislation. The latter taxes differed widely from province to province. In eastern Anatolia the tax system introduced by the Aqqoyunlu ruler, Uzun Hasan, continued to be applied for some time, and was later modified only slightly (see Hinz 1950). The most important taxes levied were:

1. A poll-tax (*jizye*, also called *kharaj*). It was levied from all adult male non-Muslim subjects, in three rates, according to their financial position. In a way, this tax compensated for their exemption from military service. As a rule, all *jizye* went into the central treasury.<sup>56</sup> Fief-holders collected this tax not for themselves but for the central treasury.
2. Certain lands were subject to two other *sharia* taxes: the *ushr* (tithe) was taken from freehold *mulk* owned by Muslims and consisted of 10% of the produce of the land, or even less. The *kharaj* (or *kharaj-i erziye*) was a tax of 20–33% of the crops from certain lands held by non-Muslims. When these lands were later owned by Muslims the same taxation continued to be imposed.
3. On *timars*, the tenants of a *chiftlik* paid a fixed annual sum, the *resm-i chift*, to the *timar*-holder. Who held only half a *chiftlik* paid half that sum, etc.<sup>57</sup>
4. In addition to the *resm-i chift*, the tenants usually had to pay a sum proportional to the size (in *dunums*, the unit of area)<sup>58</sup>: the *resm-i dunum*.
5. Sometimes the tax paid to the *sipahi* consisted of a share (usually 30%) of the crop, called *salaria*. This tax was originally a levy of food and fodder to feed the *jebelus* and their *hors*.
6. Both nomads and sedentary pastoralists paid an annual tax on animals, the *resm-i aghnam*.
7. Nomads and semi-nomads also had to pay dues to the *timar*-holder whose land they used as pasturage.

Beside these, there were a large number of minor taxes, dues, tolls, and fines: marriage taxes, market and road tolls, etc.

The *re'aya* also had *labour obligations* to the *sipahi*. Usually these were precisely specified: they could be forced to build a barn (but *not* a

house) for the *sipahi*; carry the tithe to the market (but only if this was not too far away), and work on his private farm for three person-days per household per year.<sup>59</sup> The *sipahi* was not allowed more than this at the risk of losing his *timar*. Obviously, this latter restriction was theoretical only. Quite a few *sipahis* did exploit their peasants more than was allowed.

Beginning in the middle of the sixteenth century, as the central treasury needed more income than was brought in by the taxes mentioned, new dues (subsumed under the term *avariz-i divaniye*) were imposed. These taxes became in the course of time higher than the older ones, and were often experienced as a heavy and unjust burden.<sup>60</sup> Which taxes were to be levied, and at what rate, was specified by the *qanunnames* (law books) that the sultans issued for each province.

These *qanunnames* respected local conditions and perpetuated a number of customary taxes and dues, but generally made taxation more equal and just. This is nicely illustrated by a number of Ottoman documents dating from 1516 and 1518 that were published by O.L. Barkan, and analysed by Hinz (1950). These describe taxation in eastern Anatolia as it was imposed by the Aqqoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan, and the much simpler tax legislation with which the Ottomans replaced it. Uzun Hasan's taxes varied widely from district to district (which suggests that they were based on customary taxes) and included a large number of special dues. They discriminated strongly against Christians, who had to pay higher taxes than Muslims, and had to perform twelve (instead of only one) days of unpaid labour services. The Ottomans made an end to this severe discrepancy, and temporarily abolished the special taxes.

The sources specify the following taxes as imposed on Muslims in four districts:

*resm-i chift*: 50 *aqche* per *chiftlik* (corresponding to 150 kg of wheat).  
 tax on agricultural produce: 20% of cereals, 14% from orchards, vineyards and gardens;  
 tax on honey: 10%;  
*resm-i aghnam*; half an *aqche* per animal.

Moreover nomads had to pay 640 grams of butter per household per year. Taxation of Christians was not much heavier: instead of the *resm-i chift* (per *chiftlik*), they paid a tax called *ispenje* of 25 *aqche* per man, and from orchards etc. they had to pay 20% instead of 14%.

From a later *qanunname* for Diyarbakir and Mardin (mid-sixteenth century)<sup>62</sup> a similar picture emerges. Both Christians and Muslims had to work three man-days per household per year for the *sipahi*; the nomads were explicitly exempted from these labour dues. Instead of performing these labour services one could pay the *sipahi* two *aqche* per man-day.

The practice of granting revenue as fiefs to *sipahis* and, later, to non-military officials, made tax-collecting less burdensome. Another reason for this practice was the lack of bullion (until, in the late sixteenth century, gold and silver from the Americas started to pour into the empire); the taxes were largely paid in kind. In 1523, 37% of total state revenue was distributed in the form of *timars*; previously this percentage had been even higher. The *jizye*, centrally collected, constituted another 8%. A large, maybe the largest, share of revenue came from the imperial *khass*, the crown domains. The remainder consisted of the smaller dues, tolls, and taxes.<sup>63</sup>

The revenues that were not granted as fiefs or endowed as *vaqf* were collected either by salaried officials (*emin*) or by tax-farmers (*multezim*). The latter were also centrally appointed; in later times the office was actually sold by the state. They paid a fixed annual sum to the treasury as the revenue of the land under their responsibility; their salary consisted of whatever more they could squeeze out of the peasantry. As the central state apparatus needed increasingly large amounts of cash income, the sultans began replacing the *timar* system with *iltizam*, the system of tax-farming.<sup>64</sup> It will be clear that this meant an increase of the peasants' burden. The modernization of the army, where infantry with fire-arms gradually replaced the *sipahi* cavalry as the central force, was both the main cause of the increased need for state income, and the reason why the state could afford to take land away from the *timar*-holding *sipahis*. This development, which started in the fifteenth century, was not exactly an uninterrupted process. It demanded strong central authority, which was often lacking. The last *timars* were not revoked until 1832.<sup>65</sup> In the sixteenth century already the *sipahi* army, which resisted the introduction of fire-arms, that were of little use to a mobile cavalry, had to yield first place to the modern infantry. This army was recruited from quite a different stratum than the *sipahis*: it consisted of slaves (*qul*) of the sultan (*qapuqulu*, pl. *qapuqullari*). The famous *Yenicheri* (Janissaries) were the infantry corps of the *qapuqulu* army; besides, there were also a *qapuqulu* artillery and cavalry. The *qapuqulu* armies were, in contrast with the *sipahis*, permanent standing armies; there were regiments of them in all regional centres of the empire. They were to become a state within the state, with a major influence in politics. In 1560 they numbered around 13,500, in 1687 they were already more than 70,000 (Werner 1972: 112).

### The application of Ottoman administrative organization in Kurdistan

The territories that were incorporated into the empire in the years 1514 to 1517 were divided into three new *eyalets*:<sup>66</sup> Diyarbakir (comprising most of northern Kurdistan west of Lake Van), Raqqa (which included the present Turkish province of Urfa and the Syrian one of Raqqa and was mainly inhabited by rather prosperous sedentary Syrian peasants, who were an inviting prey for raids by Kurdish, Turkish and Arab

nomad tribes, all of which partly settled here), and Mosul (approximately present-day northern Iraq). Of these, Diyarbakir was the first to be organized administratively.

Idris Bitlisi, who was charged with the task of establishing this administrative framework, gave the old ruling families of Kurdistan important positions in it, thus consolidating and reinforcing their political positions. Some districts, the most inaccessible ones generally, were left fully autonomous. Their rulers were given official diplomas of investiture (or rather, recognition), but the state undertook not to intervene in their succession. The position was hereditary, and the selection of the actual successor was left to the local population. These autonomous districts, called *Kurd hukumeti* ('Kurdish government'), owed neither tribute to the central treasury nor regular military service in the *sipahi* army; nothing of their land was made into *timars* or *zeamets*. The remainder of the province was divided into some twenty *sanjaqs*, some of which were to be governed by centrally appointed *sanjaqbegis*, while in others, called *ojaqliq*, *yuriltuq* or *Ekrad begligi* ('family estate' or 'Kurdish sanjaq') governorship was to remain within the Kurdish ruling family.<sup>67</sup> In these *sanjaqs* the central government (*in casu* the *beglerbegi*) had the right to intervene. Every incumbent was instated anew by the *beglerbegi*, but only members of the ruling family were eligible for office. Thus the state could, in the case of internal



Map 7. Location of the most important emirates.

family rivalries, impose a solution and appoint its favourite candidate, but it could not replace the entire family. It seems that until the nineteenth century, the Ottoman officials stuck largely to this arrangement – which may tell more about the independent-mindedness of the Kurds than about the Ottomans' respecting promises once made.

Thus, when in 1655 the mir of Bitlis,<sup>68</sup> Abdal Khan, revolted against central authority and refused to pay attention to serious admonitions from the *vali* of Van (to whom he was subordinated) the latter came with a strong army and put him to flight. The *vali* confiscated most of Abdal Khan's belongings and, in accord with the unanimous wish of the town's inhabitants, designated one of Abdal's sons, Ziyeddin, to succeed him.<sup>69</sup>

Otherwise, these Kurdish *sanjaqbegis* had the same obligations towards the state that the other *sanjaqbegis* had. They had to join military campaigns and had to obey the *beglerbegi* (who was not a Kurdish chieftain but an appointee of the sultan), and they had to transfer part of the revenue of the *sanjaqs* to the state treasury (some details on the distribution of revenue will be given for the case of Bitlis in the next section). When central authority was strong and the sultan's troops nearby, these Kurdish *sanjaqbegis* usually fulfilled their obligations. At other times they tended to go their own way and not to care about their military and financial obligations. This, incidentally, is what is usually meant when chroniclers mention a Kurdish vassal's 'rebellion': the simple refusal to pay tribute or to send military assistance when demanded.

The Kurdish *sanjaqs*, like ordinary *sanjaqs*, contained *timars* and *zeamets*, the holders of which had the same obligations as all *sipahis*. If they forsook their obligations the fief was taken from them but had to be given to a son or other relative; it could not be given to strangers.<sup>70</sup> So these fiefs were apparently given to local people only; their granting amounted to a fixation of the distribution of power and influence at the time of registration.

The *hukumets* did not have *zeamets* and *timars*, nor did they seem to supply regular regiments to the *beglerbegi*'s army. This, of course, did not preclude the possibility of occasional requests to their rulers of military participation in campaigns. As mentioned before, these rulers did not pay any revenue to the central treasury either.

According to the *qanunname* quoted by Evliya, the entire *eyalet* of Diyarbakir had (in the second half of the sixteenth century), 730 *sipahis* or, when the *jebelus* were also counted, 1,800 men; under Sultan Murad IV (1623–1640), who fought several wars with Iran, the province had provided 9,000 *sipahis*.<sup>71</sup>

Arrangements similar to the autonomous Kurdish *sanjaqs* of Diyarbakir, although on a smaller scale, were later made in several other parts of Kurdistan when these were incorporated into the empire. The situation of southern Kurdistan is much less well-documented than

that of Diyarbakir, and the sources are often contradictory. No *Ekrad begligi* or *Kurd hukumeti* as such is mentioned, but the emirates of Soran and Baban are known to have existed almost independently well into the nineteenth century. Autonomous districts without *sanjaq* status are recorded in Ottoman sources. Von Hammer mentions them in his account of the *eyalet* of Shahrazur, on the basis of seventeenth or eighteenth century materials. After mentioning the twenty ordinary *sanjaqs*, he continues: 'In these *sanjaqs* there are also some *Ashiret begi* or princes of tribes, who are not subordinate to any *sanjaqbegi* but have an independent existence, without standard or drum (the attributes of the *sanjaqbegi*). They go to war together with the *sanjaqbegis*, and after their death their dignity is inherited by their sons; only in the case that the family dies out is this granted to strangers by the government'.<sup>72</sup>

From the compilation of lists of *sanjaqs* in various periods made by Birken (1976) one gathers, moreover, that in later years several other districts of Diyarbakir also attained the status of *Ekrad begligi*.<sup>73</sup> This seems to point to a relative strengthening of the position of Kurdish chieftains *vis-à-vis* the provincial governor. Similar developments took place in other provinces in periods of weakened central control, but unfortunately they are not well-documented. The following example seems to be a particularly clear case.

The Armenian principality of Samtskhe, in the Caucasus (north of Kars), which was populated mainly by Armenian peasants but where also Kurdish nomadic tribes roamed, became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire in 1514, and was fully incorporated into the empire as the *eyalet* of Childir in 1578–9. Its rulers received the title and position of *beglerbegi*.

In the seventeenth century Childir consisted of fifteen *sanjaqs*, of which four were 'nomadic' or 'hereditary' — which can hardly mean anything but that they were governed by Kurdish tribal chieftains. Around 1800, twenty-two *sanjaqs* are mentioned, of which three ordinary ones, and nineteen Kurdish *sanjaqs* with hereditary *begs*.<sup>74</sup> Apparently the *beglerbegi* of this frontier province could not assert sufficiently strong authority, so that Kurdish petty chieftains made themselves independent. The administrative division was then adapted to the *de facto* power relations.

Beside the institution of the *Ekrad begligi* and the *Kurd hukumeti*, another policy is ascribed to Idris Bitlisi. The late-nineteenth-century traveller Lynch was told that Kurdish tribesmen had been moved after the battle of Chaldiran from their original habitation in Diyarbakir to the Armenian plateau, near the Georgian and Persian frontiers: 'It is said that they were granted a perpetual immunity from taxation on condition that they would act as a permanent militia upon the border which had been given them to guard' (Lynch 1901, vol. II: 421). Lynch supported this claim with a quotation from an earlier traveller, Consul Taylor (mid-nineteenth century), who noticed that the Kurds of the

Armenian plateau 'were originally immigrants from the vicinity of Diyarbakir; and there is only one tribe, the Mamekanlu — said to be descended from the Armenian Mamikoneans — who are natives of the soil' (ibid.). There is little reason to doubt that the Kurdish tribes of the plateau were brought there as frontier guards, but it is unlikely that Idris did this; the available evidence<sup>75</sup> suggests that this took place much later. The practice was quite general in the Middle Eastern empires, and there are many examples of Kurdish tribes in the role of frontier guards. An earlier example was the Germiyan, consisting of both Turks and Yezidi Kurdish tribesmen, who had been brought to western Anatolia by the Seljuks as militia guards against threatening Turkish tribesmen.<sup>76</sup>

Once the administrative incorporation of the Kurdish emirates into the Ottoman Empire was a fact, there were few important changes until the nineteenth century, when modernizers in the Ottoman administration attempted to establish effective central control and abolished these emirates.

### Internal organization of the Kurdish emirates

The recognition of local Kurdish rulers, and their appointment as *sanjaqbegis* or autonomous rulers inevitably affected the internal organization of their chiefdoms (emirates). Because of the hereditary rights given to the ruling families of the time, the distribution of power was, as it were, frozen. With the Ottoman court and the Ottoman state as foci of orientation, the local rulers imitated these. Possibly the chiefdoms became more state-like, in that some institutions of the Ottoman state were borrowed. That is, however, difficult to ascertain. Several of the state-like institutions present in the emirates in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have been present for centuries. State-like emirates, fully independent or vassal to one of the great Middle Eastern states, existed long before there was an Ottoman state. The meliks of Hasankeyf were descendants of the Ayyubids. Their emirate was, in fact, an Ayyubid successor state, of reduced size, but with most of the trappings of the Ayyubid state. However, as some Kurdish dynasties ruled virtually uninterruptedly for centuries as vassals of the Ottoman sultans, their rule progressively took on more features of the Ottoman state.

In this section I shall collate information about two emirates, in different periods of Ottoman domination: Bitlis in the sixteenth-seventeenth century, and Baban in the early nineteenth. About none of the emirates is sufficient information available to sketch their development over a long period of time. Comparison of these two emirates cannot, therefore, give more than an impression of progressive ottomanization. The Baban court of 1820 resembled the Ottoman court more than that of Bitlis did in 1650, but that may largely be due to the

special conditions of both emirates. Also the personalities on whose descriptions we have to rely had different interests and preoccupations. The following descriptions do not, therefore, have the pretension of being a basis for valid comparisons; I give them mainly to put some flesh on the skeleton drawn in the preceding section.

### Bitlis

This is the emirate on which we have the best and most useful accounts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of its mirs, Sharaf (or Sharafuddin) Khan, was the author of the *Sharafname* (1597), which contains a long section on the history of the emirate. In the 1650s the famous Turkish traveller Evliya Chelebi spent much time in and around Bitlis. He went there with his maternal uncle Melek Ahmed Pasha, who had been appointed *vali* of Van, to which *eyalet* Bitlis then administratively belonged. On their way to Van the new *vali*, his nephew, and the 3,000 soldiers accompanying them were hospitably entertained by the mir, Abdal Khan. Not long after, however, Abdal Khan raided neighbouring territories and in various other ways showed his contempt of the Pax Ottomanica. Melek Ahmed Pasha sent a punitive expedition against Bitlis, put Abdal Khan to flight, confiscated his belongings, and had the inhabitants of Bitlis elect one of Abdal Khan's sons as a new ruler. Evliya was there to witness it all. He spent a third period in Bitlis on his way back to Istanbul. Abdal Khan chose that time to return to Bitlis and take the reins of power into his own hands again. Evliya was forced to stay for some time as his involuntary guest.

A large part of the fourth and fifth volumes of his *Book of Travels* is devoted to these events.<sup>77</sup> Around the same time as Evliya, the French traveller Tavernier also was a guest at Bitlis. What little information he gave confirms Evliya's account.<sup>78</sup>

### History

In the period under discussion the emirate included the districts of Bitlis (centre), Akhlat, Mush and Khinus. A high proportion of the inhabitants (especially of the fertile plain of Mush) were Armenians. In fact, until quite late on the sole inhabitants of the plains and valleys were Armenians. They had been conquered by the Seljuk Turks, but these had never settled there in any considerable number. Seljuk settlement took place mainly on the northwestern shore of Lake Van, in Akhlat, and on a smaller scale in the city of Bitlis. If there were Kurds here at all in Seljuk times, they stayed in the mountains; the towns and plains remained Armenian. Apparently, Kurdish nomads took possession of the mountains of Bitlis in the twelfth century. Their contacts with the town still consisted mainly of raiding. The Mongol invasions (in 1231 and 1259) resulted in the partial depopulation of Bitlis; this invited new Kurdish invasions from the southeast. Several



tribes in Bitlis still retain memories of having come from the southeast; the *Sharafname* gives such traditions for the most important tribes. Around 1375 they at last took possession of the plains and towns<sup>79</sup> — which they had undoubtedly been raiding at intervals for quite some time. It seems that many Kurds settled early. Sharaf Khan wrote that the plain of Mush was spotted with numerous Armenian villages, but that the villages of the surrounding hills were inhabited by sedentary (or semi-nomadic) Muslims. These must either have been former nomads who had taken to agriculture here, or Kurdish cultivators who had migrated to Mush from less fertile lands. The fact that they, Muslims, lived in hill villages while the more fertile plain was left to the politically inferior Christians, suggests that they combined agriculture with animal husbandry.<sup>80</sup>

If Sharaf Khan may be believed in this respect, his ancestors ruled Bitlis from the beginning of the thirteenth century. According to legend, their leadership of a large tribal confederation even predated their appointment as governors of Bitlis by one of the Ayyubids (c. 1,200). This confederation is called Rojeki or Ruziki. As popular etymology has it, the confederation (Sharaf Khan calls it an *ashiret*) was constituted in a single day ('*rojek*' in Kurdish) when twenty-four sub-tribes (*qabile*) joined together and chose themselves a paramount leader. Thereupon they conquered all of Bitlis and of Hazo, further west. The conquered lands were partitioned. It was said that whoever did not receive a share of land at that time was not a true Rojeki (*Sharafname* II/1: 229). Thus, 'true Rojeki' were an élite even among the Kurds. The mirs did not belong to any of the Rojeki sub-tribes. The tradition is that, when the first paramount chieftain died without issue, the Rojeki sent for two brothers descended from the Sassanians (a former ruling dynasty of Persia) and with good credentials. They invited them to become their rulers; one of them, Izzeddin, was made the prince of Bitlis, his brother Ziyaeddin the ruler of Hazo (*Sharafname* II/1: 230).

### The tribes and the mirs

There was an implicit social contract between the tribes and their rulers. The Rojeki had the reputation of being more loyal to their mirs than any other tribe of Kurdistan, but when they were dissatisfied with any particular mir they deposed him and appointed one of his relatives in his stead. This had already happened to poor Izzeddin. The Rojeki of Bitlis decided, after some time, that they preferred his brother, so they took Zuyaeddin to Bitlis and sent Izzeddin to the much less attractive Hazo.

At times when there was no mir at Bitlis, as happened when they were imprisoned or sent into exile by such stern sovereigns as Uzun Hasan the Aqqoyunlu or Shah Ismail the Safavi, chaos and confusion reigned among the Rojeki. Aghas of the big tribes attempted to help members of the ruling family escape and to bring them back to Bitlis to restore unity among its tribes. Restoration and maintenance of peace and

harmony among the tribes was one of the main reasons why the tribes needed the mir. For obviously, within such a large confederation of tribes dominating so rich a province as Bitlis, there were perpetual rivalries. The mir could not always check the inter-tribal conflicts. For, not unnaturally, it could happen at times that there were two or more candidates for rulership, and that the big tribes, in rivalry, supported opposite candidates, allying these to their own narrow interests.

### **The tribes of Bitlis**

The name Rojeki is used ambivalently in the *Sharafname*. It gives a list of Rojeki tribes, but because legend demands their number to be exactly twenty-four,<sup>81</sup> some tribes are included that are in another context said to have been living in Bitlis even before its conquest by the Rojeki. The list consists of five tribes which were 'original inhabitants' (Qisani or Kisani, Bayigi, Modki, Zewqisi and Zeydani) and two conquering tribes, the Rojeki proper (Bilbasi and Qewalisi). The latter are sub-divided into nineteen sub-tribes.<sup>82</sup> In the historical narrative of the *Sharafname* the Qewalisi and Bilbasi appear as the 'king-making' tribes. In case of conflict, the other tribes usually allied themselves with either of these (see the illustrative example below). The sub-tribes of the Bilbasi and Qewalisi are rarely, if ever, mentioned separately in the *Sharafname*; only a few times does one of their aghas play a role in the events narrated. The paramount chieftains of the two tribes, however, were the mir's closest advisers. They are called So-and-so Agha Qewalisi or Bilbasi; they are never named after their own sub-tribe. This seems to suggest that these tribes had in the main lineages that did not belong to any of the sub-tribes (as the Begzade lineage among the Jaf, see chapter 2).

Evliya's narrative confirms that the Rojeki were an élite among the Kurds of Bitlis. The mir was the supreme lord of no fewer than seventy large and small tribes<sup>83</sup> (*ashiret* and *qabile*), of which the Rojeki alone numbered 40,000 (Evliya's figures are often inflated). The latter lived in towns, and lacked the courage so typical of other Kurds. They were very cultured people with religious and mystical inclinations (Evliya IV: 1162). The military might of Bitlis was constituted by the other tribes, among whom the Modki in particular stood out, who could muster 700 soldiers with rifles. Altogether these tribes could put a considerable number of soldiers in the field. Both Evliya and Tavernier estimated them at several tens of thousands.<sup>84</sup>

### **The mir's control of the tribes**

During Evliya's visit seventy tribal chieftains were present at the mir's court (ibid.: 1156). It seems probable that these had to remain there as guarantors of their tribes' obedience. The Persian shahs followed the same policy towards the large tribes/confederations of their empire. Old people in the Tor Abdin mountains — which had been incorporated into

the emirate of Botan — told me this had been common practice there too. Each tribal chieftain had to send one or more of his brothers or sons to the mir's residence, where they had to remain, '*khizmete mir*', 'in the service of the mir', as the expression was. These chieftains were, in fact, well-treated hostages. The fact that they were at the mercy of the mir gave him some control of their tribes.

The mir had yet another means of control: the exploitation of conflicts and rivalries among the tribes of the emirate. As pointed out in the preceding chapter, blood feuds and other conflicts between the tribes can only be terminated through the intervention of someone whose authority is recognized by both parties. For tribes that live close together and that have a community of interests it is thus of advantage to be able to call upon such an authority. This explains the story (whether true or symbolic) of how the Rojeki sent for Izzeddin and Ziyaeddin to become their rulers. It is possible that the mirs even wilfully maintained a certain rivalry and balance between two tribal coalitions, centred around the Qewalisi and Bilbasi, respectively. The mirs of Hakkari similarly divided the tribes of their emirate into those of the left and those of the right, as some local people still remember. This method of maintaining control is a precarious one, however. It may easily run out of hand, as indeed happened on a number of occasions. At periods when there were several candidates for the position of mir, each of the tribes or coalitions of tribes might choose its own candidate, with the result that the emirate weakened considerably through intestine strife.

This happened, for instance, after a period of exile of the mirs under the Aqqoyunlu. Several attempts by tribal chieftains to bring them back and help them reconquer Bitlis (from the Aqqoyunlu troops who held it occupied) had failed. At the end of three decades, only two scions survived: Shamsuddin, living as a refugee in neighbouring Botan, and his patrilineal cousin Shah Muhammad, in exile in Iran. An agha with a strong loyalty to the family first brought Shamsuddin back to Bitlis. A devoted army of Rojeki warriors was waiting for him there, ready to take the town and put him on his ancestral throne. However, he was killed in the ensuing fight with Turkish troops. His cousin Shah Muhammad was more fortunate. The tribes helped him regain Bitlis and he became the lord of town and province: he died not much later (1497). Both cousins had left young sons. Shah Muhammad's son Ibrahim succeeded his father, but since he was too young, the affairs of the state were handled by Abdurrahman Agha Qewalisi and other aghas of the same confederation. Shamsuddin's son Sharaf (grandfather of the author of the *Sharafname*) was made governor of Mush.

Apparently the Bilbasi did not like the fact that the politically important offices were all held by Qewalisi aghas: their chieftain Shaikh Emir Bilbasi went to Mush, with his large tribe, to pay homage to Sharaf, against the explicit wishes of Mir Ibrahim and Abdurrahman

Agha. The relations between the cousins rapidly deteriorated. Mir Ibrahim ordered Sharaf to come to Bitlis, intending to blind him; Sharaf, warned by a dissident Qewalisi notable, refused. Ibrahim then sent all the tribes that he could mobilize against Mush; Sharaf received the support of the Bilbasi and one or two sections of the Qewalisi, as well as part of the Pazuki, a neighbouring confederation or principality. Ibrahim's troops were in the majority, and he carried the day. However, several of the aghas in his alliance were in secret negotiation with Sharaf, whom they apparently preferred without daring to say so openly. The next day, they suddenly turned against Ibrahim. Now it was Sharaf who had the initiative: he pursued his cousin, and laid siege to Bitlis. Ibrahim negotiated a partial surrender: Sharaf could have Bitlis (centre) and Akhlat, and he would content himself with Khinus and Mush. The cousins agreed and made peace. But Shaikh Emir Bilbasi (who apparently had his private interests to defend) had Ibrahim incarcerated on the day of reconciliation. He was to stay in jail for seven years. Sharaf was the sole ruler of the emirate for some time. (*Sharafname*, II/1: 277–283).

One cannot help the impression that the rivalry between the members of the ruling family, to which Sharaf Khan gave full weight, were but an epiphenomenon of power struggle involving not only the tribes of Bitlis, but also other tribes (the Pazuki) and, almost certainly, other external powers. Unfortunately, our aristocratic author gives little information on tribal affairs, so that we can only guess what the backgrounds of the vicissitudes in the mirs' lot were. After the events described above, it took a long time before stabilization finally set in. Ottoman-Safavid rivalries (Bitlis was a frontier province) and internal contradictions and rivalries were inextricably intertwined during most of the sixteenth century. The mirs alternately proclaimed obedience to, and received titles from, sultan and shah. Some of them lived in Iran for a long time and occupied high offices there, until in 1578 Sharafuddin, the author of the *Sharafname*, was invited back to Bitlis by Sultan Murad III and reinstated as its ruler.

### Revenue and military obligations

Bitlis was a rich province: it possessed fertile agricultural lands, especially in the plain of Mush, and mountain pastures that are still famous all over Kurdistan. The town of Bitlis was an important centre of trade. It is strategically located: the main trade routes of the area have to pass through it. Some very important merchants lived in the town; most of them were Jacobites, Syrian Christians. Bitlis was also an important centre of craftsmanship. Evliya was especially impressed by the weaponsmiths, but he also mentioned tailors, weavers, dyers, and tanners producing extremely fine, expensive leather (Evliya IV: 1184). According to the *Sharafname* (II/1: 217), there were no fewer than 800 shops and workshops in the city. Evliya, half a century later, speaks of

1,200 shops (Evliya IV: 1164). These shops and workshops were owned by Armenians, Jacobites and Arabs.

Bitlis thus represented an important source of revenue. An indication of the degree of independence is the high share of revenue that the mir was allowed to keep for himself — much more than other *sanjaqbegis* had. To begin with, there was his *khass*, the sources of revenue set aside for him by way of a salary for his office of *sanjaqbegi*. According to the imperial edicts instating Sharaf in 1578<sup>85</sup> this consisted of the revenue of a number of villages and of the market taxes (*ihtisab*) of Bitlis itself, altogether amounting to over 500,000 *aqche* per year. Five years later, in 1583, the sultan added a part of Mush, with a revenue of 200,000 *aqche* to the mir's *khass* (*Sharafname* II/1:434). Furthermore, the mir kept half of the *jizye* levied from his 43,000 Christian subjects. The other half he remitted to the *vali* at Van, who used it for the upkeep of the troops there (Evliya, IV: 1162). As said before, ordinarily all *jizye* belonged to the central treasury. The *jizye* was no mean sum: according to the *Sharafname* (II/1: 224), the Christian subjects paid in 'jizye and *kharaj*' 70 *aqche* per head annually.<sup>86</sup>

Abdal Khan could take even more than his predecessors; as a young man he had pleased Sultan Murad IV (1623–1640) so much that this ruler granted him for life the *kharaj* of the entire district of Mush (Evliya, IV: 1161–2). This again was a considerable sum. We get an impression of its order of magnitude from a (not strictly comparable) figure in the *Sharafname*. A census made in the reign of Sultan Sulayman I (1520–1566) established the revenue of Mush at 1.5 million *aqche*. This figure included the *jizye* and *kharaj* of 4,000 Christian *re'aya* (at 70 *aqche*); excluded were those villages that were *vaqf* or belonged to the crown domains (*Sharafname*, II/1: 224). According to Evliya, the mir used the *kharaj* of Mush to pay the salary of the commander of the fortress and the 200 soldiers of its garrison (Evliya, IV: 1162). Finally, the mir also received the road tolls from caravans coming into town (Evliya, IV: 1161).

Besides, he took an annual tax from all flocks in Bitlis, as is only implicitly clear from Evliya's account. This was probably a traditional due of tribesmen to their agha, such as still exists. Apparently these dues were not always given voluntarily: the mir sent a body of armed men to collect them. Not infrequently these men trespassed beyond the mir's territories and plundered the subjects of other mirs as well. Neighbouring Kurdish mirs and chieftains complained regularly to the governors of Van and Erzurum about Abdal Khan, saying that 'he should have been killed forty years ago'. When 10,000(?) of his men trespassed into Melazgird and drove off 40,000 sheep, killing 300 men in the process, the mir flatly told the *vali* of Van that his men had been collecting the tax on flocks, and might have made a few mistakes (Evliya, IV: 1237–1242).

The mir was not the only local man to take revenue. According to

Evliya, there were 13 *zeamets* and 124 *timars* in Bitlis, held by tribal men. Some of these had the military ranks of *alaybegi*, *jeribashi* and *yuzbashi* in the *sipahi* army. According to the legal stipulations (see note 49), these fiefs should supply 3,000 *jebelus*. In case of war these were to join the army of the *vali* of Van, under the standard of their own mir (Evliya, IV: 1162). These 3,000 men that Bitlis supplied to the Ottoman army were but a fraction of the numbers the mir could bring together for his own purposes.

A third category of local revenue collectors was the pious institutions. The *Sharafname* suggests that an important number of villages were *vaqf*. Reading Evliya, one understands why. In the town alone, there were five large mosques and a great number of minor ones, four madrasas (religious training centres), no fewer than seventy primary schools (*mekteb*), and some twenty *tekye* (dervish 'lodges'). Altogether the town had 110 *mihrab* (prayer niches) (Evliya, IV: 1162–3). All these institutions were endowed; revenue of certain lands was set aside for their upkeep. The same was true of lesser public amenities such as the 70 fountains and 41 public wells. Possibly a part of the Kurdish population of Bitlis, the cultured and pious Rojeki, whom Evliya watched playing chess in the mosque, and who did not seem to do any productive work, were also indirectly supported by the *vaqf* lands.

The remaining revenue went into the state treasury. The *kharaj aghasi*, inspector/collector of the *kharaj*, was one of the only two officials who were *not* appointed by the mir himself but by the *vali*. Some lands (e.g. in the plain of Mush) belonged to the crown domains, and all revenue from these went into the state treasury; *kharaj* and some minor taxes were taken from the other lands. The *jizye*, as said before, was divided equally between the mir and the *vali* of Van.

### Other military troops

There was a Janissary regiment stationed at Bitlis. Its commander was the other official who was appointed by the *vali* instead of the mir. Furthermore Evliya mentioned 10,000 retainers<sup>87</sup> of the mir in town, armed with sword, shield and club, and dressed in colourful uniforms. In his description they resemble a private slave army (Evliya, IV: 1184). The number of 10,000 seems absurd, however. These permanent standing troops were in addition to the troops that the mir could levy from the tribes in time of need: 20,000 or more horsemen and at least as large a number of foot soldiers (compare note 84).

### Offices; jurisdiction

As mentioned before, only two officials were appointed by the *vali* of Van: the *kharaj aghasi* and the commander of the Janissaries. All others were appointed by the mir. Evliya enumerated the most important ones: a qadi, a mufti, a *naqib al-ashraf*,<sup>88</sup> the military commander of the castle, collectors of road and market tolls, and a number of minor officials.

Judicial authority was officially vested in the qadi. It seems unlikely, however, that for the punishment of disobedient subjects the mir ever had recourse to the qadi. The latter's role in Bitlis was probably limited to affairs of less direct concern to the mir. The qadi could hardly afford to act independently (as qadis in other *sanjaqs* did), since it was the mir, and not the central authorities, who appointed him — a highly anomalous situation. And, as Evliya subtly remarked, the qadi's already quite high salary<sup>89</sup> could increase considerably if he had a good understanding with the mir (ibid.: 1162). Thus, in the field of jurisdiction the mir was independent of Istanbul and had very strong control. This independence is also affirmed by the fact that the mufti, the legal expert, belonged to the Shafi'i rite (which most Kurds follow) and not to the Hanafi as elsewhere in the empire. Even in towns as Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, where the majority of the population were non-Hanafis, the muftis could follow the rulings of any of the three other rites only in a few cases; Bitlis is exceptional.<sup>90</sup> Executive and judicial powers were thus not strictly separated (to put it mildly), while in the interpretation of the sharia too, independence of the Ottoman state was asserted.

The emirate of Bitlis thus gives the impression of a vassal state rather than a province of the empire. A high degree of independence had been *granted* to the ruling family; when possible they *arrogated* even more. At the time of Tavernier's passing the mir recognized neither Ottoman nor Safavid sovereignty, and both empires found it necessary to entertain seemingly cordial relations with him, because of the strategically important location of Bitlis (Tavernier, I: 303). Melek Ahmed Pasha, freshly appointed vali of Van, tried with superior military power to show Abdal Khan the limitations of his independence. The effects of this campaign lasted but a short time, as Evliya experienced a year later.

### Social stratification

The emirate of Bitlis was a rather highly stratified society. Its stratification mirrored on a smaller scale, that of the Ottoman Empire.

1. On top we find the mir and his family;
2. Immediately below him the aghas of the tribes and other notables. Advisers were drawn from this class, as well as some of the higher officials. A number of the tribal élite held fiefs, which gave them independent incomes; many of these lived in town (Evliya, IV: 1185). Others probably had to live on their flocks (herded by shepherds) and on gifts from their tribesmen. Those staying at the court were probably supported financially by the mir.
3. A similar, but non-tribal élite consisted of high officials, men of arts and sciences (in the pay of the mir), and religious dignitaries: shaikhs, sayyids, mullas, etc.
4. Among the common tribesmen one might distinguish two strata,

although the distinction was probably a very fluid one, and mobility may have been high: those with horses and those without. The most excellent of these horsemen were selected as *jebelus* by the fief-holders. Together with the slave-soldiers (*noker*), the tribesmen constituted the military class. It is unclear how the *noker* were recruited.

5. A considerable number of Kurds lived in town; Evliya identified these with the Rojeki. They were not warriors like the other Kurds, but rather refined people. Their occupations are unclear.

6. There was a Kurdish peasantry (*re'aya*), living in the hills and mountains. We know no details about them and their relations with the tribes.

7. The motor of Bitlis' economy (beside the nomads' flocks) was formed by the Christian *re'aya* (mainly Armenians, also some Jacobite Syrians). The sedentary peasantry was largely Armenian; so was a large proportion of the town's population.<sup>91</sup> Politically they had a low status, but many of them may have been quite well-off: there were excellent craftsmen among them, and big merchants; others had laid out artificial orchards that yielded high incomes.

Statistics on the ethnic composition of the population of Bitlis in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are not readily available. Research in the Ottoman state archives will probably yield the same sort of detailed data on religious composition and economy that are available for other provinces. Lacking this at present, we may take the late nineteenth-century statistics collected by Cuinet as vague indications of the situation in our earlier period. Forty per cent of the population within the boundaries of the former emirate of Bitlis were Armenians. Of the Muslims (the vast majority of whom were Kurds), 15 to 20% were still nomadic.<sup>92</sup>

The political élite of the emirate included not only group (2) but also group (3). This became clear in the political crisis following Abdal Khan's expulsion by Melek Ahmed Pasha. A successor had to be chosen, and three sons of the deposed mir were the obvious candidates. A special assembly was called to elect the successor. Besides the tribal chieftains, scholars, clergymen, shaikhs, 'notables' (*a'yan*) and sayyids of Bitlis were present (Evliya IV: 1273-4). The Christian subjects had no say at all in political matters, and were never, not even in times of crisis, permitted to play a military role.<sup>93</sup> The *Sharafname* only mentions them as a source of revenue.

Only once, when a mir was faced with desertion by most of his tribes, and with the threat of attack by foreign (Ottoman) troops, one of the faithful aghas advised him to arm his Armenians and let them participate in the defence. Sharaf Khan, even in retrospect, considered this proposal sufficient proof of the agha's foolishness and ignorance (*hamaqat wa nadani*). The mir's other counsellors had similar opinions. As a consequence, the Kurds were honourably and totally defeated. For some time, the Armenians had to pay tribute to another lord (*Sharafname* II/1: 314-6).



## 2. Baban

The emirate of Baban played an important part in the history of what is now Iraq from c. 1550 to c. 1850.<sup>94</sup> Almost all that time it belonged nominally to the Ottoman Empire. It participated in several invasions of Persia — preferably at the expense of the twin emirate of Ardlan, which was usually pro-Persian. Its rulers always aspired to greater independence, and to this end they sometimes collaborated with Iran. Both the *vali* of Baghdad and the Persians intrigued and interfered with family quarrels of the mirs in order to increase their influence in Baban. From the early seventeenth century on, its mirs received the high Turkish title of *pasha* (which then but few of the *sanjaqbegis* carried; later that century it was granted to many more *sanjaqbegis*). They ruled over a large territory, with both tribal and 'non-tribal' population. The former were governed through their chieftains, the latter through governors appointed by the mir, who each had a district in *tasarruf* (usufruct).<sup>95</sup>

Sometimes the appointees were chieftains of nomadic tribes that used the district as their winter quarters, sometimes chieftains from elsewhere, sometimes relatives of the mir himself. All belonged, of course, to the military or tribal 'caste'. These districts changed hands rather frequently: when another branch of the ruling family succeeded to (or conquered) the throne, they appointed their own clients as governors. Each of these governors brought his own clientele with him (Rich: I, 90). British visitors to Baban in the early nineteenth century noted a few examples of such appointments. Rich related that his host Mahmud Pasha, the then ruler of Baban, conciliated an uncle (Abdullah) who had been scheming against him, by giving him some of the best (most productive) districts as an appanage (Rich: I, 149). In another case a chieftain of the Piran tribe (outside Baban territory), Selim Agha, had been invited to the district of Chwarta (an outlying Baban dependency), and 'was installed on a feudal basis as a warden of the marches'. In 1919 his descendants were still the uncontested squires of the non-tribal villages there (Edmonds 1957: 101).

The mir sometimes had troubles with his vassals similar to those of the sultan with his Kurdish vassals on the frontier. Yusuf Beg, who administered the Pizhdar district by appointment of the Baban, went to Tabriz and paid homage to its governor Abbas Mirza (the Persian crown prince), who was then in the ascendancy. He retained the governorate of Pizhdar — but now as a vassal to Abbas Mirza, who furthermore added Sardasht to Yusuf's dominions (Rich: I, 321/2).

This had happened a short time before Rich's arrival in 1820. Not long afterwards, Mahmud Pasha himself, who had managed to retain a large measure of independence by balancing Ottoman and Persian influences, but who nurtured more Persian than Turkish sympathies, offered his submission to Abbas Mirza as well, which precipitated a war between the two neighbouring empires.

Virtually the only source on the condition of the emirate in the early nineteenth century is Rich, who stayed a long time in its capital Sulaymaniya (in 1820). Fraser and Ainsworth, who passed through a decade and a half later, have little to add. Rich's observations on the court are pertinent. He met chieftains of most of the important tribes there, which suggests that the Baban pashas used the same methods as the Bitlis pashas to keep the tribes in check. More interesting, maybe, is the list of court officials that can be extracted from his text. The titles of these officials point at a deliberate imitation of the Ottoman court (or of the court of Baghdad, which itself was an imitation of that of Istanbul). Rich mentioned the following officials:

— 'prime minister'; a hereditary function (Rich: I, 115). The prime minister wielded much formal as well as informal influence; all persons of any rank were to be found in his *diwankhane*. One cannot help being reminded of the Koprulu family, of which many members held the office of Grand Vizier to the Ottoman sultans, and who were both the real makers and the executors of the sultans' policies.

— '*selikdar*, or sword-bearer' (probably: *silahdar*); this, too, was a hereditary function. In 1820 its incumbent was a young boy; until his adulthood someone else had assumed the position in his name (Rich: I, 115). In the Ottoman Empire one of the three highest officials of the inner palace service was the *silahdar* agha; he handled all communications to and from the sultan (Shaw 1976: 45).

— '*ishiq aghasi*, or master of ceremonies' (Rich: I, 168).

— '*hareem aghasi*, or guardian of the women's quarters'. Rich noticed to his astonishment that this man and his assistants were not eunuchs but 'stout bearded Kurds' (Rich: I, 284). In the Ottoman Empire, the chief eunuch was one of the most powerful men of the entire empire.<sup>96</sup>

— '*imrahor*, or master of the horse' (Rich: I, 366). The stablemaster, *emir-i akhor*, was one of the high officials of the sultan's outer service (Shaw 1976: 117).

— a non-administrative but nonetheless important official was the *munejjim bashi*, chief astrologer/astronomer (Rich: I, 136). At the Ottoman court also the *munejjim bashi* was one of the high clerical officials (Shaw 1976: 117).

The administrative organization of the emirate was not Rich's primary interest; he noted the above offices only in passing. His descriptions suggest that the Baban court was very elaborate indeed.

On economic matters, including the collection and distribution of revenue, Rich is unfortunately less informative. He noticed that the large, rich and powerful Jaf tribe (several thousands of families) paid an annual tribute of thirty purses, sometimes even less — very little compared to what other tribes paid (Rich: I, 281n). Clearly, it is difficult to levy much tribute from such a powerful tribe without getting into trouble. The governors appointed by the mirs squeezed as much out of

the peasantry as they could, since they were not sure of tenure of their office. Rivalries in the ruling family, combined with Ottoman and Persian intrigues, caused sudden changes; and as a new mir came to power, he brought new officials. This uncertainty of office resulted in over-exploitation, never moderated by patronage relations. It was one of the ugliest features that the emirate had in common with the empire at large. A tribe agha told Rich that this insecurity was the main reason why the tribes did not settle to agriculture (which might improve their lot): why should they sow if they did not know whether they could ever mow? Instead, the tribesmen aggravated the burden of the subject peasantry (*guran*), from which they took whatever they could, without regard for the legal stipulations (Rich: I, 89, 96).

After an invasion by the Persian governor of Kermanshah (Prince Muhammad Ali Mirza), the exploitation increased even more, because the Persians also demanded their share. Then at last, the peasantry left *en masse*, to places with but a single lord to exploit them (Fraser 1840: I, 177).

It is quite unclear how much revenue Baghdad's or the central treasury received from Baban. Certainly it was less than at the apex of Ottoman power. At that time, according to the *Sharafname*, the Baban lands belonged to the imperial domains, which means they were not given out as fiefs, but that revenue was collected by salaried state officials. Each of the tribal chieftains then paid four donkeyloads of gold annually to the treasury of the *eyalet* of Shahrazur (*Sharafname* II/1: 144). Baban had apparently become more independent of the central state apparatus. The exploitation of the peasantry, however, had only increased in the process.

### 3. Some comments

1. The emirates described had a number of institutions in common with the Ottoman Empire as a whole. For instance, Bitlis had a *timar* system and a 'retainer army' (the *noker*) which resembled the *qapuqulu* armies. This does not necessarily mean that the emirates borrowed these institutions from the Ottoman Empire or that they had been established in the emirates by the empire. Similar institutions had existed in previous Middle Eastern states, both in small states and in large empires; they were part of the common cultural heritage of the Middle East in which both the emirates and the Ottoman and Safavid empires shared. In fact, the Ottoman Empire had evolved out of a similar emirate. After the incorporation of the emirates into the Ottoman Empire, emirates and empire influenced each other's institutions: the empire retained some of the institutions it encountered locally, but integrated them into a more unified legal-administrative system. Rights and duties of the different 'classes' in the emirates were brought into

line with those elsewhere in the empire — at least, in legal theory (see the remarks on taxation above).

2. The emirate of Baban, as described by Rich, showed the same symptoms of decline that were noticed for the empire as a whole in those days. The most salient of these were the frequent change of officials and the over-exploitation of the peasantry. Apparently, the economic and political organization of the emirate declined in a way parallel to that of the empire (and under the influence of the latter, although this should not be thought to be a monocausal process).

3. The descriptions, especially that of Bitlis, make clear that integration in the empire was very partial only. An important indication is the high proportion of the revenue that the mir kept for himself; another, the discrepancy between the number of troops put at the disposal of the Ottoman army and the numbers that the mir could mobilize for his own purposes; a third, the mir's jurisdictional independence, with a qadi who appears as his client. The mir had this independence despite the fact that the empire had the physical power to defeat and depose him (as happened to Abdal Khan). His independence can only be understood from the frontier position of the emirate. Not only is Kurdistan, due to its natural constitution, difficult to keep permanently under control without the consent of its inhabitants; it also lay at this time between two competing empires. In order to ensure the emirates' loyalty, the Ottomans had to grant many privileges to the mirs. Sharaf Khan of Bitlis had even been in Safavid service, and was invited back by the Ottomans who needed him to control Bitlis and gave him privileges in exchange. It is doubtful, in fact, whether the mirs would ever have been able to achieve and maintain such power over their emirates as they did, if they had not been able to balance two empires against each other.

To date, little attention has been given to the flourishing of such semi-independent political units in the periphery of empires or in the buffer zone between two empires. Eisenstadt, in his important work on the political systems of empires (1963), does not even mention this phenomenon. Historical bureaucratic empires (among which he includes the Ottoman Empire) distinguish themselves in his view from patrimonial and feudal political systems by having, among others, a 'clear territorial centralization' (1963: 23). The description of the Kurdish emirates shows that the territorial centralization was not at all so clear.

4. The discussion of the *timar* system and the tax regime showed that the Ottoman legislation protected the peasantry, non-Muslim as well as Muslim, from over-exploitation. One would therefore expect that, in periods of strong central control, the burden on the peasantry might be less than in periods of weak government. On the whole, this seems in fact to have been the case. The incorporation into the Ottoman Empire brought the peasantry some relief from taxation — in the Kurdish provinces too. Next to nothing is known about the actual taxation in the

autonomous Kurdish districts but there are no indications that it was heavier than elsewhere. The weakening of central control in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought, through the *iltizam* system and all its abuses, a serious aggravation of the exploitation of the peasantry. The reassertion of central control in the nineteenth century, however, did not result in a corresponding relief of the tax burden. After the administrative reforms the government was strong and efficient enough to levy the taxes directly instead of through tax-farmers or local chieftains, but it was not able or willing to prevent tribal chiefs and other locally powerful people from taking their tributes as well, so that the peasantry was doubly taxed.

5. The *timar* system also made a part of the peasantry legally subservient to certain tribesmen. The *ashiret-re'yat* distinction did not find its origins here — it was much older — but it was legally sanctioned and consolidated; laws ensured that a caste barrier was maintained.

6. The *mirs* maintained control of the tribes in their emirates by balancing groups or confederations of tribes against each other ('divide and rule') and by keeping tribal chieftains under close supervision at their courts. Recognition of their position by the state solidified their rule. But this by itself is not enough to explain the loyalty to the *mirs'* families. I am aware that the term 'charisma' is only a label, not an explanation, but I find I have to stress the charismatic character of the *mirs'* authority. More than a century after the abolition of the last emirates (see below) people everywhere still speak with awe and respect of the former *mirs'* families. Actual political power may have been in the hands of advisers, the tribesmen were, however, loyal to the *mir*, and no adviser could ever take the place of the *mir* himself.

## Political changes in the nineteenth century

During the first half of the nineteenth century, two opposite tendencies affected the state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire. The empire, which had been decaying slowly but continually during the preceding two centuries, had become so weak that it appeared to be on the verge of collapse. This fanned aspirations to independence and separatism in the periphery. The great influence that the European powers commanded at the Ottoman court had become conspicuous to all, and was rightly interpreted as a further sign of its weakness. This European influence, however, also inspired administrative reform; Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) made vigorous efforts to re-establish effective central control over the entire empire. There were, one might say, simultaneous tendencies towards both decentralization and centralization. Thus it could happen that this period, which sounded the death-knell for the Kurdish emirates, also saw two Kurdish emirates temporarily rise to unprecedented strength and splendour.

When Mahmud II succeeded to the throne, Kurdish mirs were certainly not the only semi-independent rulers in his empire. All over Anatolia locally influential families had arrogated the functions of government and had become virtually independent rulers (*derebeyi*, 'lord of the valley'). Many of the *appointed* governors also went their own way, without paying heed to Istanbul. Egypt had, after a short French occupation (1798–1801), achieved virtual independence under its popular governor Muhammad Ali (1805–1848). In the Russo-Turkish war of 1806–12 the empire suffered a new defeat, and an even worse one followed in 1828–29, when the Russians temporarily took Erzerum and Trabzon (so that peripheral parts of Kurdistan were temporarily cut loose from the empire). In 1828 too, Greek nationalists, whom Mahmud had at first successfully suppressed, succeeded in establishing a small independent Greek state; in 1830 the European powers forced the sultan to recognize the independence of Greece. Muhammad Ali of Egypt, feeling wronged by the sultan, occupied Syria in 1831. The following year his general, Ibrahim Pasha, even defeated the Ottoman army in the heart of Anatolia. In 1839 another Ottoman-Egyptian confrontation took place near Nizib (in western Kurdistan), and again the Ottomans suffered defeat.

The army that was severely beaten by Ibrahim Pasha had, in the previous years, been campaigning in Kurdistan and cruelly, but effectively, reduced disobedient Kurdish chieftains and punished robber tribes. Immediately after the Russian war of 1806–12 Sultan Mahmud had energetically started his policy of centralization. He succeeded to a large extent: 'by a series of political, military and police actions he overcame rebellious pashas and *derebeyis* alike, and replaced them by appointed officials sent from Istanbul'.<sup>97</sup> By 1826 the Anatolian *derebeyis* had been subjected, and he could start the pacification of Kurdistan. His general Rashid Muhammad Pasha (a former governor of Sivas, who was later to become grand vizier) was the military genius that organized the campaigns that followed. By the middle of the century there were no emirates left in Kurdistan. Officially, Kurdistan was from then on ruled directly by Ottoman governors — in practice, however, direct Ottoman rule was to prove very ineffective indeed. Near the cities, the governors had some power; nowhere did they have authority.

Partly as a reaction to the first attempts at centralization, partly in response to the international political situation and the Ottoman-Egyptian wars, two Kurdish mirs revived the old glory of their emirates, conquered vast territories and rebelled against central authority. Mir Muhammad of Rowanduz (because of an eye disease called *Miri Kor*, the blind mir) acceded in 1814 to leadership in the impoverished emirate of Soran. Two decades later he had conquered most of what is now northern Iraq. The *vali* of Baghdad, not capable of stopping the mir, accepted the *fait accompli* of his conquests and granted him the title of pasha — in the vain hope of thus retaining recognition as his superior.

Only when the mir sent troops in the direction of Nisibin and Mardin, and was said to be in contact with the Egyptians of Ibrahim Pasha, did the sultan send Rashid Muhammad Pasha against him. The *valis* of Mosul and Baghdad received orders to assist in the punitive campaign. Miri Kor surrendered on conditions very favourable to him: he was to remain the governor of Rowanduz, but had to assert his submission to the sultan (1835). He was sent to Istanbul, where the sultan bestowed many honours upon him; on the return voyage, however, he mysteriously disappeared. His brother Rasul became governor of Rowanduz for a few years, until, in 1847, the *vali* of Baghdad expelled him. That was the end of the Soran emirate; from then on, Rowanduz was governed by Turkish officials.<sup>98</sup>

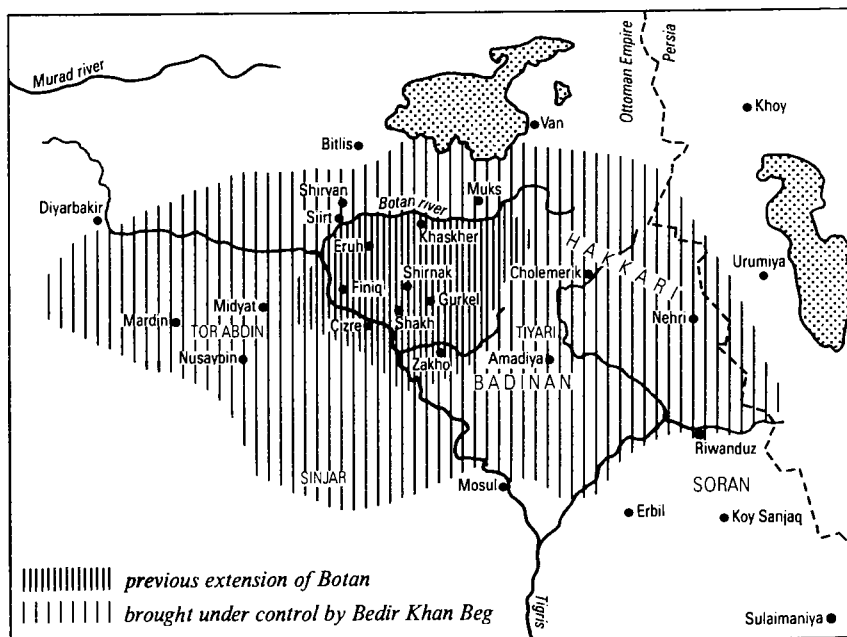
The second emirate to experience a short period of glory before it eclipsed was Botan under its mir Bedr Khan Beg. Many Kurds consider his rule and rebellion the first expression of modern Kurdish nationalism.

### The rise of Bedr Khan Beg and the fall of the emirate of Botan<sup>99</sup>

The emirate of Botan had, for many centuries, been ruled by a family claiming descent from Khalid ibn Walid, one of the Prophet's most famous generals. In one of the succession crises, the three sons of the late mir decided not to compete for an undivided Botan but to divide their territories up amongst themselves, so that from then on Botan really consisted of three parts, the most important being around the old capital of Cizre, the other two having the castles of Gurkel and Finiq as their centres (*Sharafname* I/2: 146). The three parts sometimes made a common front, usually under the leadership of Cizre; at other times their relations were soured and they engaged in severe armed fights against each other. The oral epics that I collected in Botan suggest that the latter situation was the rule rather than the exception — but then, epics generally deal with extraordinary events, not with the ordinary state of affairs. The military backbone of Botan (of the Cizre section) was formed by two confederations of nomadic tribes,<sup>100</sup> the Shillet and Chokhsor (as Bitlis had its Qewalisi and Bilbasi, and Hakkari its tribes of the right and of the left). These two confederations comprised most of the tribes that are still (or were, within human memory) fully nomadic. The Kurds depending on Gurkel were known as the Haji Beyran (after Haji Bedr, one of their early mirs). They comprised a few nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes as well as fully sedentary Kurds without noticeable tribal organization. Those depending on Finiq, called Dehi, had a similar composition.<sup>101</sup> Because Cizre commanded the strongest nomad tribes, it could often subjugate both the Haji Beyran and the Dehi. Friction between the three sister emirates was unavoidable, since the migration routes of the Shillet and Chokhsor crossed the lands of the other two confederations.

These confederations were not monolithic units either. The last mir of

Gurkel, Said Beg, was killed in a battle in which the aghas of Shirnak (which belonged to the Haji Beyran) had joined the mir of Cizre against him. After Said Beg's death these aghas tried (with partial success) to take his place as collectors of revenue. They long maintained a degree of independence *vis-à-vis* the mir of Cizre, but never acquired enough power over the Haji Beyran to arrogate the title of mir.



Map 8. The emirate of Botan at the period of greatest expansion (1846).

Within the Chokhsor and Shillet, two tribes played leading roles, the Miran and the Batuan, respectively. When the mir was not a strong personality and skilful politician, it was the chieftains of these tribes rather than the mir who made all important decisions. 'After all', a member of the Miran's leading family told me, 'the agha is the best man of an entire tribe, while the mir only has his position because the Turks granted it to his family as a hereditary office.'<sup>101</sup> An old saying, still widely known, reflects the same conception that real power belonged to these two tribes:

*Miran mir in,  
Batuan wezir in,  
Shillet seyen pir in*

'The Miran are princes,  
the Batuan ministers (viziers),  
the Shillet old dogs'<sup>102</sup>

Around 1821 Bedr Khan Beg became the mir of this unruly conglomerate. The chieftain of the Miran, Brahim Agha, refused to



recognize his authority. He paid no tribute, and the fact that Brahim had made peace in a war between the Batuan and the Haji Beyran Kurds is still quoted as a proof that he had usurped at least part of the mir's functions. Bedr Khan then had him killed. A war ensued between the Miran, aided by the other Chokhsor tribes, and the tribes loyal to the mir; several hundred were killed. In the end Bedr Khan Beg managed to impose his authority over all; at the same time, he started showing signs of independence *vis-à-vis* the Ottomans. For instance, he refused to send tribal contingents when these were requisitioned in the Ottoman-Russian war of 1828–9.<sup>103</sup>

Bedr Khan ruled the entire emirate (including the Haji Beyran and Dehi sections) with an iron hand. His application of severe punishments for even the slightest offences made Botan a haven of security. Where formerly robbery and brigandage had prevailed, now life and property were respected: everyone prospered.<sup>104</sup> According to foreign visitors, when important decisions had to be taken, the mir convoked the big aghas and asked their opinions; he alone, however, was the one who made the decisions.

The army was slightly modernized. No longer did all tribesmen go to war under their own chieftains — although such tribal units continued to exist. There were now crack regiments, consisting of the best men from all tribes, directly under the mir's command. They were a permanent standing army, more loyal to the mir than to their own tribes' aghas. People referred to them as *ghulam*, which is best translated as 'retainer'.<sup>105</sup> The establishment of these élite units had the side-effect of diminishing the tribe aghas' independent leverage, as they lost their best men to them. Bedr Khan also made alliances with the other two great chieftains of central Kurdistan, Nurullah Beg, the mir of Hakkari, and Khan Mahmud of Muks, and with a number of minor chieftains of the immediate vicinity as well as from places as far as Mush and Kars.<sup>106</sup>

In the series of campaigns against the too independent Kurdish chieftains, general Rashid Pasha also attacked and took Bedr Khan's capital of Cizre after a long siege in 1838. Khan Mahmud tried to come to his rescue with a large army consisting, according to Safrastian (1948: 51), of 20,000 Kurds, Armenians and Assyrians, but he was prevented from crossing the Botan river when the Turks blew up the bridges. Both chieftains had to retire temporarily to their mountain strongholds.

The defeat of the Ottomans at the hands of Ibrahim Pasha's Egyptian troops in 1839 was witnessed by many Kurds. To them it was further proof that the Ottoman state had lost its stamina. In the interpretation of later Kurdish nationalists (among whom Bedr Khan Beg's descendants played conspicuous roles), the mir now started planning the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. No confirmation of this can be found in the contemporary sources. Bedr Khan did revolt, but probably for other reasons and with more limited intentions.<sup>107</sup> Using the temporary setback to Ottoman re-centralization, he conquered

neighbouring territories. In 1845 he controlled *de facto*, through military garrisons, the area roughly between the line Diyarbakir-Mosul and the Persian border.<sup>108</sup> Two American missionaries spent four weeks with him in the summer of 1846, and noted that 'nearly every chief in northern Koordistan came to make their respects to him, bringing him presents of money, horses, mules, and other valuable property. Even the Hakkari Beg ... and Khan Mahmood ... seemed to think themselves honoured by being in waiting upon him'; and: 'The many spirited chiefs under him, though restive and extremely impatient of restraint, dare not lift a finger in opposition to him ...'<sup>109</sup> The mir also told his guests that he did not intend to break his pledge of loyalty to the sultan. This makes later interpretations of his nationalist and secessionist ambitions doubtful at least.<sup>110</sup> However, other events interfered with whatever designs Bedr Khan Beg may have had.

British and American missionaries had 'discovered' the Christians of central Kurdistan; a not very edifying competition for the conversion of the Nestorians had started. About half of these Nestorians were tribally organized and very independent-minded, others were peasants subservient to Kurdish aghas. All hoped for deliverance from the perpetual political domination by Muslims, c.q. the Kurds. Defeat of the Ottomans by a Christian power, Russia, seemed to them a foreboding of better times. They welcomed the missionaries because they expected that European governments might help them become their own masters. Inevitably, some Nestorians aspired to derive power from association with these foreigners. The Mar Shimun, the Nestorians' religious leader, arrogated a political power that he had never had before — which sowed discord among the Nestorians as well as irritation among the Kurds.<sup>111</sup> The Kurds were more than irritated, in fact; they felt threatened, and the missionaries did little to alleviate their fears. In the Tiyari district American missionaries built a school and boarding house on the top of a hill, dominating the entire area. This fortress-like structure could only arouse further Kurdish suspicions.<sup>112</sup> Tension between Muslims and Christians rose uninterruptedly. When the Tiyari Nestorians, among whom the Mar Shimun lived, stopped paying their annual tribute to the mir of Hakkari, the latter asked Bedr Khan Beg's support to punish them. A large body of tribal troops was sent against the Tiyari (1843). Many Kurds were apparently only too eager to vent their anger on the Nestorians.<sup>113</sup> An ugly massacre ensued, to be followed a few years later by an equally bloody invasion of another district.

The echoes resounded in Europe, and were to cause Bedr Khan's fall. The British and French exercised pressure on the Ottoman government to punish this chief and prevent further Christian massacres. A strong army was sent against Bedr Khan, and in 1847 he was forced to surrender. He and all his relatives were brought to Istanbul — where they were received with a great show of honour — and sent into exile. Nobody was allowed to succeed him.

### Botan after the disappearance of the mir

Almost immediately the emirate fell apart into a hodgepodge of mutually inimical tribes. Without the mir it was not possible to keep rivalries in check. The Ottoman governors were despised and distrusted by all, and therefore could not play a conciliatory role, even had they wished to. They did not have the power to impose law and order here. The security that had prevailed in central Kurdistan under Bedr Khan disappeared. Travel became extremely dangerous. Mutual distrust prevailed. Feuds and other conflicts, not timely ended, broke up most tribal units. New sub-tribes, not existing until then, broke away. A few chieftains (e.g. the aghas dominating non-tribal Shirkak, and the chieftains of the Miran) managed to increase their political and economic powers in this turmoil. None, however, could take over the mir's position: there were too many rivals. Only later, when Mustafa Agha of the Miran was made a pasha of the Hamidiye, the tribal militias formed by Sultan Abdulhamid II, did he manage to become the single most powerful man of the area (see below).

Before that time, there was a short period immediately following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, when the emirate reintegrated. Two of Bedr Khan's sons, Osman and Husayn, were appointed as military commanders, with the title of pasha, in this war. The troops under their command were, apparently, mostly Kurds. After the Ottoman defeat, the two brothers returned, with their Kurdish troops, to Botan and tried to revive the old emirate. Osman Pasha, the elder, proclaimed himself mir. The majority of the tribes seemed to be enthusiastic in lending him their support.<sup>114</sup> According to later nationalist sources,<sup>115</sup> for eight months Osman ruled the long stretch of territory between the towns of Cholemerik, Midyat, Mardin, Nisibin, Zakho and Amadiye. Like a real sovereign, he had his name mentioned in the Friday prayer. The revived emirate of Botan initially held its own against the Ottoman troops despatched to suppress the rebellion; Osman Pasha could only be taken prisoner by deceit. After his capture, nothing of the emirate's unity remained and it fell apart into feuding tribes; neither did the confederations Shillet and Chokhsor outlast the emirate. The Miran tribe came to dominate the others for some time, partially because its chieftain, Mustafa Agha, was made a commander of the Hamidiye tribal militias, but there was no longer any political integration of the tribes into a larger whole. Single tribes, or only sections thereof, became the most significant political units. The Teyyan tribe, for instance, that once was one of the components of the Shillet confederation, has fallen apart into a number of *qabile* linked together by nothing but a common name. There is no paramount chieftain anymore, and no co-ordination whatsoever between the different *qabile*.

Thus, in a few generations, tribal organization in Botan has shown a rapid devolution from complex, state-like to much simpler forms of social and political organization — as if it has taken a few steps back on

the evolutionary ladder. In this case it is clearly a response to central government interventions. The denser the administrative network of the state became, the smaller and simpler the tribes. The state did not give up indirect rule altogether, but this took place at increasingly lower levels. After the *mirs*, some government authority was delegated to the tribe *aghass*, and later again *qabile* *aghass*, village *aghass* or the *mezins* or *bavik*. It would seem that this process, more than any other factor, determined the effective size and, therefore, the complexity of the tribes.

### The new land code and its effects

This is not the place to discuss all reforms in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> The abolition of the emirates was discussed above; I shall now turn to another measure that greatly affected the social and economic organization of Kurdistan. The Land Code, issued in 1858, was intended to bring about a normalization of the land regime and to do away with many abuses. Much land in the empire had been appropriated as private property, both by local aristocracies and by — originally appointed — *multezims* (tax-farmers). Elsewhere the practice of selling the office of *multezim* (by auction) led to over-exploitation of the peasantry,<sup>117</sup> with massive land desertion as a result.

Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) had revoked the last fiefs and converted them into tax-farms. The Land Code<sup>118</sup> that his successor Abdulmejid issued reasserted that the ultimate *ownership* of land was vested in the state (except a narrowly defined class of land that remained privately owned *mulk*, and a small sub-category of *vaqf*-lands). The *possession* of the land was to be granted to individuals by a special government agency (the *tapu* office: land registry), against the payment of a small fee. The possessor was to receive a title deed (*tapu senedi*), stating his rights to the land. All arable land was thus to be registered in the name of private persons; communal tenure was not recognized (art 8: 'the whole of the land of a village or town cannot be granted in its entirety to all of the inhabitants, nor to one or two of them. Separate pieces are to be given to each inhabitant ...'). The formulation of the code reflects its European inspiration as well as the reformists' desire to break up the tribes. In fact, the Land Code was almost certainly also intended to offer nomadic tribes a bait to settle easily acquirable arable lands. Pasture lands could also be registered in the names of individuals — if so required, (art. 24).

The registration of land by *tapu* officials soon started, but progress was slow, for the task was enormous. In Iraq, where the registration started in 1869 when Midhat Pasha, a famous reformer, became the governor of Baghdad, it was only partially carried through, to be continued by the British after they occupied it (South Iraq in 1914, Iraqi

Kurdistan in 1918/19).<sup>119</sup> Soon after its inception, however, two tendencies became clear:

1. Possession soon developed into full ownership. The code made possession inheritable, and land was transferable by gift or saleable against money, on condition of permission from the *tapu* office. The holders, however, ignored whatever restrictions there were on their rights to the land, and considered it as free *mulk*.
2. While the Code apparently intended the actual tillers of the soil to become its legal possessors (see art. 8, quoted above), and contained clauses preventing corrupt practices, its actual execution benefited only a small elite. The 'ignorance and venality of the *Tapu* officials'<sup>120</sup> aggravated the effects of the common villagers' fear and distrust of a government that only recognized them on the day of tax collection or recruitment for military service.

Thus, people who knew how to deal with government officials could have large tracts of land registered in their names. In Kurdistan, these were mainly aghas, shaikhs, and certain classes of townsmen: merchants and higher officials. The actual tillers of the land only realized what had happened when it was much too late. Dowson, who made an official survey of landholding in Iraq around 1930 (Dowson 1931), remarked on Kurdistan: 'Many villages appear to be wholly or partially registered as the personal possessions of local notables, without any consideration of the immemorial rights of those who had regularly occupied and tilled the land or pastured their flocks thereon. The pinch in these cases seems to have been mainly felt when the lands were pledged, and forfeited, to town-dwelling merchants for debt. The personal touch and interdependence that existed between even the most arbitrary local chieftain and the village cultivators appears not infrequently then to have been replaced by more mechanical efforts to exploit the land from outside and by obstruction to such efforts from within'. In other cases the agha himself intensified exploitation; usually he then left the village and became an absentee landlord.

Dowson's sketch is certainly not true for all of Kurdistan; there are wide divergences. In many mountain villages of northern Kurdistan most or many of the villagers do have title deeds, as I was assured repeatedly. In others the land legally belongs to the agha, but the villagers pay as rent the same amount that elsewhere is given as tribute to the agha ('*zakar*'). In these villages it seems that land registration has not yet brought great changes. Large *tapu* holdings are very rare or absent in the mountains; in the plains, on the other hand, they were (until recent land reforms) the rule rather than the exception. An example of a lineage that owes much of its political and economic influence to this land registration was mentioned in chapter 2: the *Dizayi*. Their ancestors (either Ahmad Pasha or his sons) had a large

part of the plain of Erbil registered in their name, and later added to their possessions by other means.

The effects of the execution of the land code may thus be summarized:

1. Reduction of the communal features of the tribal economy; individualization.
2. Increased economic stratification within the tribe. Many aghas became landlords, their followers becoming their share-croppers. In the course of time this was to give some aghas inordinate power over the commoners.
3. A new class, with a new life-style, emerged: the urban-based landlords.<sup>121</sup>
4. New forms of cooperation and patronage developed between the urban-based landlords and tribal aghas who remained in the villages. Thus, when Hay came to Erbil in 1919 he found that the urban aghas had 'magnificent guest-houses'. Tribal chieftains, when coming to town, always stayed in one of these: 'Every chief is the client of one or other of the town aghas', a connection that may have existed for generations. In exchange for hospitality the visitor brought small gifts, and was 'also expected to look after his patron's interests in the country in the event of any tribal disturbances, while the latter will sometimes act as the chief's representative in the town.' (Hay 1921: 83-4).
5. In many cases the actual cultivators lost some of their traditional rights and became share-croppers or even hired labourers. The landlords could evict them if they wished.<sup>122</sup> This latter competence remained largely potential, until the mechanization of agriculture made most manpower superfluous (in the 1950s); many former share-croppers were then in fact evicted. As the land was legally the landlord's, these could even count on state support when peasants protested. Although this happened a century after the Land Code was issued, it was an immediate consequence of this law (or rather, of the way it was executed).

#### **Land policy of the British in Iraqi Kurdistan**

Under the Ottoman government, the execution of the Land Code had been rather incomplete. Even where it had been executed it was not infrequently ignored, and the old relations of production existed.<sup>123</sup> The British occupation revived the *tapu* office, because an accurate land registration was seen as a prerequisite for revenue collection. There was no desire to correct the many abuses of land registration. As the revenue commissioner noted, in 1919: 'We must recognize that it is primarily our business not to give rights to those who have them not, but to secure the rights of those who have them'.<sup>124</sup> In fact, British policy appears to have quite consciously favoured tribal chieftains against commoners. Sir Henry Dobbs, High Commissioner of Iraq from 1923 to

1929, made this into a cornerstone of his land policy.<sup>125</sup> The effects were especially noticeable in South Iraq, where chiefs of the Arab tribes became the owners of vast holdings. But in Iraqi Kurdistan too the tendencies resulting from the Ottoman Land Code were strengthened and accelerated under British rule. A few other aspects of British tribal policy in Iraq will be discussed summarily below.

### **The establishment of Kurdish tribal militias: the Hamidiye**

In 1876 Abdulhamid II became sultan. Although reforms, begun under his predecessors, continued under this sultan, several of his policies seemed to work in the opposite direction. Whereas the reforms aimed at the settlement of nomads and detribalization, Abdulhamid took measures which seemed diametrically opposed to this general line. In 1891 he established a tribal militia, or gendarmerie, led by tribal chieftains, to police the eastern provinces of the empire. These militias were named Hamidiye, after the sultan. The obvious result of the new competences that the appointed chieftains-cum-officers received was an inordinate increase in their powers, leading to unavoidable abuses. Another effect was the strengthening of some tribes at the expense of others leading to changes in the regional balance of power.

This, as many of the sultan's other reactionary measures, was in response to the threatening attitude of the big powers, especially Britain and Russia.<sup>126</sup> Parts of the eastern provinces of the empire had twice, in the wars of 1828-9 and 1877-8, been occupied by Russian troops. Russia fanned Armenian nationalism and separatism in the east, on the model of the successful Slavic example in the west. Some Armenians had, in fact, aided the Russian invaders in 1877-8. At the Berlin Congress (1878) Britain too had assumed an interest in the 'Armenian question'. In the 1880s Armenian terrorist bands became active, in Istanbul and in the east. The Kurds' loyalty to the Ottoman state was doubtful too. In 1880 a shaikh, Ubeydullah of Nehri, led a rebellion with the declared intention of establishing a Kurdish state, and attempted to enlist British support for his plans.<sup>127</sup> In times of new crises the Kurds, as Muslims, might conceivably rally to the sultan-caliph's pan-Islamic appeals and oppose the Armenians and/or Russians; they might just as well not. It is against this background that the formation of the Hamidiye has to be seen: as a means of making it more rewarding for the Kurds to be loyal to the sultan, and as the most effective way to police eastern Anatolia.<sup>128</sup>

The Hamidiye were modelled on the Cossacks. They were recruited from nomadic or semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes and an occasional Turkish tribe (*Qarapapakh*), and were grouped into cavalry regiments led by their own tribal chieftains. Some large tribes provided one or more regiments, of c. 800-1,000 men each; smaller tribes were joined

into one regiment. Military training was provided by officers of the regular army. The Hamidiye units were not permanently mobilized. They received pay only when on active duty, but their families were exempted from most taxes. The number of Hamidiye regiments gradually increased: there were 40 in 1892, 56 in 1893 and 63 in 1899.<sup>129</sup>

The direct aims of the establishment of the Hamidiye regiments were suppression of Armenian separatist activities (which did not then amount to much), and a better control over the Kurds. By thus providing paid employment of high prestige and a virtual licence to raid, the sultan hoped to install in the Kurds a strong loyalty to him personally. He was quite successful in that: Kurds considered him the sultan most disposed to them, and called him *Bave Kurdan* ('Father of the Kurds'). Some observers (e.g. the British consuls in the area) perceived the aim of dividing the Kurds in order to rule them: 'In some cases the selection of tribes for the Hamidiye was used to maintain the balance of power in the region, while in others it had the opposite effect. Weaker tribes were usually chosen where possible because the better quality equipment and training available to them offset the greater strength of their traditional rivals.'<sup>130</sup> Or, in the words of a later, outspokenly pro-Kurdish British agent, the very aim of the Hamidiye had been '[to use] tribal feuds so as to create a system which would make combination against the government very difficult'.<sup>131</sup> If balancing the tribes against each other really was an actively pursued aim, it was only very partially successful. It is true that in the years 1893-4 an increase of inter-tribal feuding was noticed (Duguid 1973: 147). A more important fact, however, is that the Hamidiye gave some chieftains more power over their neighbours than they would otherwise have been able to exert. In fact, in any tribe the choice of one agha as the Hamidiye commander, rather than any of his rivals, ended most disputes in his favour. He had from then on enough spoils to distribute (paid employment of a highly valued kind, as well as arms) to win major sections of the tribe over to his side. And he could use the Hamidiye against his rivals and enemies. At least two chieftains rose to positions of such power as Hamidiye commanders that they ultimately posed a potential threat to the state.

### **Mustafa Pasha of the Miran**

The first of these was Mustafa Pasha of the Miran.<sup>132</sup> Of all the chieftains of the former emirate of Botan, he alone was made the head of a Hamidiye regiment, and received the title of pasha. Chieftains of other nomadic tribes were given subordinate officer ranks.<sup>133</sup> Both the Chokhsor and the Shillet tribes thus came under his command, and through them he controlled the sedentary population. Lehmann-Haupt, who passed through Botan at the time, noticed that Mustafa Pasha,



soon after his inauguration, had established his own petty 'kingdom'. The Ottoman administration had no influence there, not even in the town of Cizre; everything was in Mustafa Pasha's hands. He also took a heavy toll from passing caravans and from the transportation rafts floating down the Tigris; his men raided the wide surroundings.<sup>134</sup> Thus Mustafa Pasha acquired some of the powers that had formerly been held by the mir. There were two important differences, however:

1. His power was not based on consensus but on violence. That became clear in inter- or intra-tribal conflicts. These were never brought before him, as they had previously been brought before the mir, but before one of the shaikhs.<sup>135</sup>

2. He could maintain his independence *vis-à-vis* the civil administration because he had powerful protection (again, unlike the mirs, who depended mainly on themselves). The protector of the Hamidiye commanders was Zeki Pasha, the commander of the Fourth Army Corps at Erzincan and a brother-in-law of the sultan himself. To the great annoyance of the civil officials, Zeki Pasha removed the Hamidiye from under their judicial competences, and always protected transgressors. Thus there were, in fact, two parallel, and competing chains of authority from the sultan to the eastern provinces. Hamidiye units frequently broke law and order which the civil administration considered its concern, but their offences usually went unpunished.<sup>136</sup>

Mustafa Pasha's name is still mentioned with great awe, and his family is much respected in the northern Jazira. Major Noel, on reconnaissance there in 1919, gathered that all the nomadic tribes there were actually *branches* of the Miran — a mistake that shows to what extent Mustafa Pasha's family apparently dominated the other tribes.<sup>137</sup>

### Ibrahim Pasha of the Milan

Another Hamidiye commander who became of more than local renown was Ibrahim Pasha, the chief of the large Milan confederation (not to be confused with the Egyptian general of the same name, who operated in the same area a few decades earlier). Turkish and foreign authors have spread his fame as a robber of mythical proportions, the 'uncrowned king of Kurdistan'.<sup>138</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, the Milan consisted of a fluctuating number of tribes (including, beside Sunni Kurdish, a few Arab and Yezidi Kurdish tribes), grouped around a small nucleus of Milan proper. There were fortified headquarters at Viranshehir; most of the tribes were nomadic in the provinces of Urfa and Raqqa. The chiefly family laid claims to supremacy over even more than this conglomerate. According to legend all present Kurdish tribes originated from two primordial tribes, Mil and Zil (or Milan and Zilan). Many tribes still acknowledge belonging to one of these two groups, that were supposed to have come from the south and from the east,

respectively. Ibrahim Pasha claimed that his family were the overlords of all Mil tribes. Sykes, who travelled much in Kurdistan, noticed that, in fact, Ibrahim Pasha was much respected by tribes as far away as Dersim and Erzincan — although they owed him no direct political allegiance (Sykes 1908: 470). This respect in itself had never been sufficient to give members of the family actual political power. In the preceding century some of Ibrahim's ancestors had acquired great powers, and built up a formidable tribal confederation; under others it rapidly declined. In the 1850s internal conflicts made the confederation fall apart, from which their neighbours and traditional enemies, the Arab Shammar tribe, profited by conquering parts of their territory and taking tribute from tribes that were formerly tributary to the Milan. Ibrahim became the chieftain in 1863, and soon reunited some of the sections of the confederation. Coalitions of Arab and Kurdish tribes, led by the Shammar, undertook two great attacks on him, but met with failure. For their third attack the Shammar could no longer count on their Kurdish allies. The important (Kurdish) Kikan tribe even changed sides, started paying tribute to Ibrahim Pasha, and helped the Milan in defeating their former allies the Shammar.<sup>139</sup>

From then on, Ibrahim expanded his dominions, subjected ever more tribes and took tribute from ever wider territories. The fact that such a powerful man was made a Hamidiye commander suggests that the sultan had other aims than that of simply balancing the tribes against each other. Ibrahim Pasha always remained loyal to the sultan, but the provincial administration considered him their worst enemy. His men raided a vast area, and at times even set up their tents around the city wall of Diyarbakir and harassed the town population. This led to the first open expression of protest *against the sultan* there. Young townspeople, among them the later famous Ziya Gokalp, occupied the town's post office until the sultan promised to send Ibrahim Pasha to the south to protect the Hijaz railway.<sup>140</sup>

In July 1908 the Young Turk revolt put an end to Abdulhamid's rule. Then Ibrahim Pasha revolted; he refused to recognize the new regime, and declared himself independent. He tried to incite all of Syria to revolt — apparently in favour of the sultan, against the Young Turks. Adequate military operations by the Turkish army, however, defeated Ibrahim, who was forced to flee south into the Abdulaziz mountains (between Urfa and Raqqa). Five thousand of his men offered their submission to the Turks.<sup>141</sup> Ibrahim soon died. His son Mahmud, however, remained very influential. In fact, a British 'expert' in 1919 pointed him out as one of the two fittest candidates to rule the Kurdish vassal kingdom that the British then intended to establish.<sup>142</sup>

The Hamidiye also played an infamous role in the first series of Armenian massacres (1894–96). These followed an Armenian rebellion in the Sasun area. The revolt was a protest against double taxation: by the government, that had started to collect taxes directly, and by the

Kurds, who continued to take their traditional share of the Armenians' crops. The Hamidiye were sent to suppress the revolt. All over eastern Anatolia attacks and raids on Armenian villages were carried out in its wake; mainly on orders of the sultan, but also at the Hamidiye's own initiative. Thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of Armenians were killed; many more were robbed of all they had. In spite of all the brutality, however, it should be added that (unlike two decades later) there were no attempts at systematic expulsion or extermination of the Armenians. In fact, the civil administration tried to undo some of the harm the Hamidiye had wrought. A British consul reported that, 'Much of the booty seized by the Kurds in the Erzeroum area in August and September of 1894 was in the process of being returned to its Armenian owners by the government'.<sup>143</sup>

When the Young Turks deposed Sultan Abdulhamid (1908) they also disbanded the Hamidiye (the sultan's loyal supporters), and demoted those sons of Kurdish chieftains who had become officers in the regular army. However, because Kurdish tribal units appeared a useful and even necessary complement to the regular army, especially in the difficult terrain of the eastern frontier, the Hamidiye were soon revived as militias, more closely integrated in the army, but not very different from before. Such regiments fought in the Balkan War of 1912–13 (where they suffered heavy losses), and on the eastern front in the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence. It was from the ranks of the commanders of these militias, who had helped Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) regain independence for modern Turkey, that the Kurdish nationalist party, Azadi ('Freedom'; established in 1923), drew its membership. We shall find these chieftains in the background of the great Kurdish revolt of 1925, which will be discussed in chapter 5.

## Changes in the early twentieth century

Trying to give a balanced account of all changes that took place in Kurdistan in the first few decades of the twentieth century would be too ambitious a project. I shall restrict myself to mentioning a few that had a direct impact on tribal organization.

### New borders: further partitioning of Kurdistan

The First World War resulted in the complete collapse of the Ottoman Empire and, in spite of Western promises, of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the further partitioning of Kurdistan. The borders delineating Turkey, Syria and Iraq cut through tribal territories. Many nomadic tribes had summer and winter pastures on opposite sides of these borders. They were thus forced to change their migration routes — if they could find alternative pastures — or to settle. Thus, for instance, most of the nomads of Botan remained in Turkey, where they

had and still have their summer pastures. They spent the winters in the small strip of lowland immediately north of the Syrian and Iraqi borders. Only the Miran settled in the Syrian Jazira, their former winter quarters — mainly for political reasons (fear of persecution by Atatürk). Minor sections have settled in Iraq. The settlement of the nomads in Turkey has progressed, especially since the 1950s, at least in part because the remaining winter pastures are not really sufficient. The Miran, in Syria, have taken to agriculture because they were cut off from their traditional suppliers of wheat, the peasants of Diyarbakir.

Together with the borders, a new profession emerged: that of smuggler. The availability and prices of tobacco, luxury goods and meat differ considerably between the countries to which parts of Kurdistan belong. This fact, and the lack of other cash-earning jobs in Kurdistan, combined to make smuggling one of the pillars of the Kurdish economy. It is impossible to make a calculation of its contribution to the 'national income' of Kurdistan, but I would dare to guess it ranks third, immediately after agriculture and animal husbandry.

It seems that at first smuggling, too, had de-tribalizing effects. It was a job that could be done individually, and it tended to make tribesmen less dependent on the tribes and the aghas. That is no longer the case. Improved control makes it very difficult to cross the borders illegally; along the Turkish-Syrian border there are minefields. There is a small élite of expert border-crossers, but most smuggling (and, without exception, all large-scale smuggling) is carried on through the bribing of border officials. This has lent or restored economic and political power to two categories of people who know how to bribe officials: the old élite of aghas, and a new class of entrepreneurs. The ordinary smuggler has become an employee of these, linked up in a new system of patronage.

### **Tribal policies in the successor states**

The governments of the four states among which Kurdistan has been divided since 1919 each had their own policies *vis-à-vis* the tribes. For some time, the British in Iraq gave a number of tribal chieftains despotic powers which they had never possessed before. Out of the contenders for tribal leadership they selected one as *the* chieftain of the tribe; such an agha not only derived power from association with the British in the ordinary way, but was explicitly given absolute jurisdictional authority over his tribe. According to the Tribal Disputes Regulations, disputes between tribesmen did not need to be brought before ordinary civil courts, but could be resolved by traditional means, i.e. by *the* chieftain or by a council of elders applying customary law. Not only civil cases, but also criminal ones were thus adjudicated.

For a short time Kurdish aghas were given appointments as district governors as well, with authority over Kurdish gendarmes. Understandably, these gendarmes were often used as the aghas' private armies. Even when the deliberate policy of indirect rule in Kurdish districts was

discarded, the British continued to pay salaries to the 'loyal' chieftains, thus strengthening their positions. The British government of Iraq was the last government to practise indirect rule in Kurdistan as an explicitly formulated policy. In the later years of the mandate they reneged on this policy. When Iraq became an independent kingdom, further favours enjoyed by the chieftains were withdrawn, such as the salaries. The result was a gradual weakening of the aghas' power over their tribes.<sup>144</sup>

The government of Turkey followed a quite different policy towards the Kurds, almost from the beginning.<sup>145</sup> Turks and Kurds had fought together for the independence of Turkey within its present borders, pushing back Greeks and Armenians who claimed part of the same territories. Once independence was gained, the Kemalist government, anxious to maintain its territorial integrity, set out on a policy of assimilating the Kurds and other non-Turkish groups. After the great Kurdish revolts, in 1925 and 1928-31, this policy was accelerated and assumed a more violent character. The repression of the rebellions was extremely brutal and took many lives. Many aghas and shaikhs were executed, put to flight or sent into exile; numerous tribesmen were deported to other parts of the country. Gendarmerie posts and schools brought the state closer to the tribesmen and taught them that they were not Kurds anymore but Turkish citizens. Everything that recalled a separate Kurdish identity was to be abolished: language, dress, names and even the tribes themselves. The government did away with all forms of indirect rule, and largely, though not completely, eliminated the intermediary positions of tribal chieftains. All shaikhs were persecuted and lost their practical political roles. In many areas this resulted in a definite increase of feuds and other conflicts.

Direct rule proved difficult to implement in practice, and there was a gradual return to forms of indirect rule, facilitated by changes in government. New chieftains emerged, others returned from their exiles. The chieftains are not, in general, as powerful as before, but many officials still find it easier to deal with the population through them than directly. Indirectly, then, at least, the state supports the aghas' position as it did in the past.

The same is more or less true of the other parts of Kurdistan. There are no longer any big aghas because of the tightening of central control; but informal systems of indirect rule persist in the interstices of the administrative network. The aghas who know how to deal with government officials (province or district governors, gendarme officers, public prosecutors and judges, intelligence officers) can increase their influence at the expense of their rivals. They have spoils to distribute among their followers, such as easier access to public services, work and — in a limited number of cases — exemption from military service and dismissal of criminal charges. This, of course, enlarges their following. The officials, on the other hand, find that the only easy way to maintain a sufficient degree of law and order is to use some aghas and even

shaikhs again as intermediaries. Interesting forms of symbiosis of these two types of authorities have thus developed. The rivals of the successful aghas and shaikhs attempt to mobilize public opinion against them by adopting a nationalist stand and accusing them of collaboration or even treason.

A favourite accusation is that of working for one of the intelligence services. I have heard nearly every shaikh I know, and many an agha, be accused of receiving money from and giving information to the intelligence service of their own or another country. The few with whom I discussed the subject personally admitted to having occasional contacts with such an agency, but claimed that they were obliged to, at the risk of reprisals, and that they kept these contacts as non-committal as possible. These same informants took it for granted that the success of their most influential rivals was primarily due to such collusion with high officials.

In Turkey, friendship with government officials is not the only way in which aghas may attempt to derive power from the state. There are free elections, both for parliament and senate and for the office of mayor in towns and central villages. Each province elects its own members of parliament and senators. Some provinces are so small that the personal following of some aghas or shaikhs, or else of a coalition of aghas, may be sufficient to vote them into parliament. Once they are in parliament, they have the possibility of doing much for their followers. They may, for instance, ensure that roads, irrigation, piped water, electricity, schools and other desired scarce goods, reach the villages of their followers rather than those of others. And they use their influence as parliamentarians in the capital to take care of the legal and business interests of their supporters. Villagers who are in serious trouble sometimes go to Ankara to ask 'their' M.P. to do something about it. Those villagers who have local influence receive preferential treatment of course, but others can make claim to such assistance. The elected mayor also has spoils to offer his supporters — though to a lesser extent. Both member of parliament and mayor, through their position, have great possibilities of increasing their local power. For this reason election time is a period of intense political struggle. Dormant conflicts are revived, new ones break out, traditional rivalries receive new impulses. Kurdish society seems to become more tribal in such periods. Usually it takes more than a year before the tension generated by the elections dissipates.

## Conclusions

Around the year 1500, Kurdistan, as described above, consisted of a number of emirates, the autonomy of which fluctuated with the strength of the surrounding empires. These emirates resembled in many respects

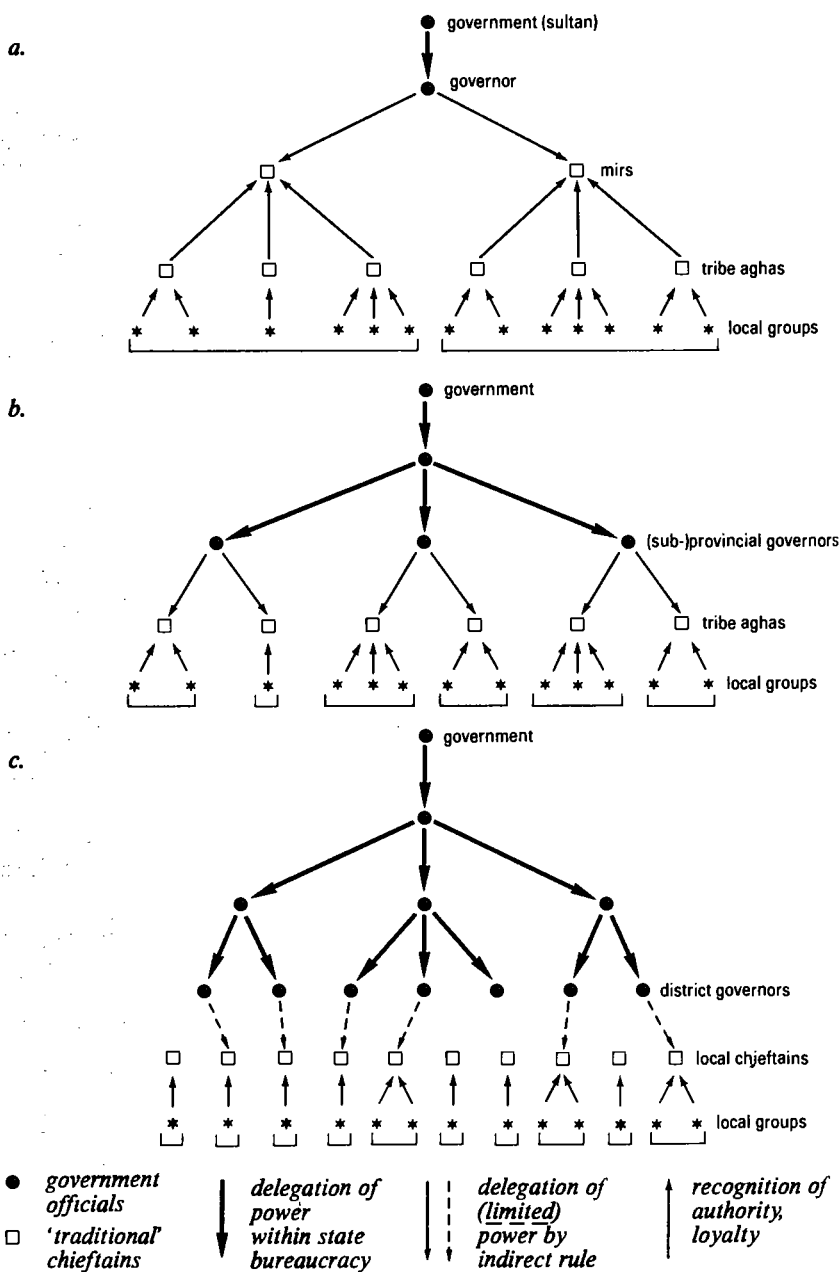
(organization and stratification) the larger states around them. There was a subject, tax-paying *re'aya* class (peasants, craftsmen, merchants), including many non-Kurdish elements, and a 'military' class of tribesmen. The latter were organized in a number of confederations of tribes, and the sources suggest that corporate action at the level of the confederation was not uncommon. At least some mirs had an armed retinue whose loyalties to them were stronger than any tribal solidarity. Loyalty to the mir was certainly not restricted to his retinue alone; it was one of the factors (maybe even the most important one) that kept the emirates together. The fact that the rulership of individual mirs might at times be questioned, but that the institution as such was not, may be related to the tradition of divinely sanctioned kingship in the Middle East; the concept of the supreme ruler was present in everyone's education and did not need further justification. The Ottoman conquest left most of the emirates intact, and consolidated the positions of the then ruling families.

In the nineteenth century, the administrative network of the Ottoman state was refined and the emirates were abolished. Indirect rule continued to be practised, however, but on lower levels. In this period, chieftains of large tribes competed with each other for a following among the tribesmen and for power derived from the state. Some chieftains acquired powers such as previously no tribal chieftain had ever had, due to the backing of their positions by an increasingly strong state apparatus. The typical political units of this period are the large tribes. The sources mention corporate action of single tribes, but rarely of the larger groups seen previously. The only exception is action led by shaikhs, the only authorities enjoying the loyalties of sections of more than one tribe (see the next chapter).

As in this century, state control further increased and great tribal chieftains ceased to exist. Several tribes still recognize a paramount chieftain, but he has lost his utility, and has no special functions any more. Large tribes no longer act as corporate units; only the village, the administrative unit par excellence, and the *bavik* (shallow lineage) do so occasionally. It is the village agha and the *mezin* (elder) of a *bavik* who are mostly seen to perform political functions.

This gradual atomization of Kurdish society is schematically represented in fig. 6. As the administrative network becomes denser, the autochthonous units become smaller, and important political functions are performed by chieftains of lower levels. Concomitantly, organization becomes less complex. For large tribes or confederations (stage b) it was useful to have a ruling lineage that did not belong to any of the tribe's sections, and a retinue was often imperative. In the small tribes, clans and lineages that are now the basic political units, the chieftain is often a relative of the commoners. Where such a chieftain receives strong state support and his position is backed up by coercive powers (as was the case with some chieftains in Iraq under British

Fig. 6 Growth of the administrative network and the breaking up of large autonomous units in the periphery.





occupation), he may assume a tyrannical rule even over his relatives. In cases where less power is delegated, and only informally, the chieftain is more a *primus inter pares*. The latter is now generally the case, and has long been the case with the settled or semi-nomadic tribes of the mountainous regions.

Kurdish society has thus, during the past five centuries, passed through what are generally recognized as crucial stages in social evolution: tribe, chiefdom and (proto-) state, but in *descending* order. This devolution of Kurdish political institutions is an immediate consequence of the development of the political institutions of the states into which Kurdistan was incorporated.

Another process of formation of (quasi-) tribal units, in which the state was more directly involved, is the organizing of militias, frontier guards and the like. Somewhat related is the practice (especially frequent in Iran) of breaking up and resettling tribes.<sup>146</sup> The units thus formed were of heterogeneous origins, but in the course of a few generations more homogeneous sections developed within these units, partly as a consequence of endogamy. Many large tribes may owe their existence to similar developments.

## Notes

1. V. Minorsky, 'Shah-sewan', *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>, gives the traditional account of the Shah-Savan's origins, Tapper 1974 a serious revision. The name *Shahi Sevan* ('those who love the Shah') was used well before the date established by Tapper, however, by Evliya Chelebi, for instance, to denote various groups loyal to the Safavids. What their relation to the present Shah-Savan is remains unclear.

2. Anderson 1974: 107-9, after E.A. Thompson, *The Early Germans* (Oxford, 1965).

3. Brown 1963: 13. In some cases chieftains were created where before there were none, in others, 'although some sort of traditional leader existed before colonial rule was established, his social role changed greatly after he was recognized as a chief with administrative authority.'

4. The historical survey is based mainly on the following sources and secondary works: the *Sharafname* (references are, unless indicated otherwise, to Charmoy's translation: where literal quotations are given I have translated these from the Persian text); Iskandar Beg Torkman, *Alam-ara-ye Abbasi*; von Hammer 1827-35; Hinz 1936; Sohrweide 1965; Schmidt-Dumont 1970; Mazzaoui 1972; Sarwar 1939; Sümer 1976; Shaw 1976; Tansel 1969; Parmaksizoglu 1973. Other sources used will be mentioned in the notes. The study by Allouche (1983) appeared too late to be used here.

5. Cahen 1968: 316.

6. Hinz 1936: 51; Cahen 1968: 361-5; Mazzaoui 1972: 10; *Sharafname*: passim.

7. *Sharafname* II/1: 248-252.

8. In the *Tarikh al-Ghiyathi* (ed. Schmidt-Dumont, 1970), no Kurdish tribes or leaders are mentioned in this connection, nor in the other sources adduced by the editor.

9. Hinz 1936: 51, 137; Woods 1976: 104-114; *Sharafname*: passim; Minorsky, *Kurden*.

10. *Sharafname* II/1: 3.

11. Schmidt-Dumont 1970: 78-9; Mazzaoui 1972: 11-2.

12. Hinz 1936: 53-4; Schmidt-Dumont 1970: 74.

13. On Safi ad-Din's life, and his orthodox religious attitudes, see especially

Sohrweide 1965: 96–117, and Mazzaoui 1972: 46–51.

14. According to Fadl Allah ibn Ruzbihan Khunji (late sixteenth century), who was a staunch Sunni and therefore strongly opposed to the Safavids, the shaikh's followers 'openly called Shaykh Junayd 'God (*illah*)' and his son 'Son of God (*ibn-Allah*)' ...' In his praise they said 'he is the Living One, there is no God but he' ... (Minorsky 1957: 66).

15. The 'tribes' mentioned in this connection are: Ustajlu, Shamlu, Rumlu, Tekelu, Zul Qadir, Afshar, Qajar, Varsaq (Mazzaoui 1972: 81; Sümer 1976: 18–19). These are not all Qizilbash groups; on other occasions others are mentioned, e.g. Qaramanlu, Bayat, Bayburtlu. Nor should it be thought that these groups were entirely Qizilbash, or even that all members who were Qizilbash joined Ismail. Teke (southwest Anatolia), Rum (central Anatolia) and Sham (Syria) were large and but vaguely delineated regions, the population of which included Sunni Muslims, moderate Shiites and extremist Shiites, some of the latter being Qizilbash. Thus we find Tekelu, Rumlu, etc. both on the Safavid and on the Ottoman sides in later years. In Chaldiran, Zulqadir chieftains were in command on both sides (see the lists in Sarwar, 1939: 78–80).

16. See e.g. Sümer 1976: 53–6.

17. Sarwar 1939: 30–39; Mazzaoui 1972: 78–82

18. Sarwar 1939: 43–57.

19. This beylik (principdom) was established in 1378 when the Turkish chieftain Zain ad-Din Qaraja Zul-Qadir conquered Marash and Elbistan. His son further expanded his possessions. Ottoman and Mamluk sultans frequently intervened actively in the succession to rulership of the beylik by supporting their favourite candidates. It became nominally a vassal state to the Ottoman Empire, but maintained a precarious autonomy, which came to an end when, in 1514, Sultan Selim killed its last ruler Ala ad-Dawla for not joining him in the battle of Chaldiran.

20. The Ustajlu were one of the first Turkish tribes to join Ismail in 1500 (Mazzaoui, 1972:81). It seems probable that Muhammad Beg was their chieftain (or one of their chieftains). On this appointment the Shah lent him the title of *khan* (Sarwar 1939: 53).

21. Sarwar 1939: 52–4, 72; *Sharafname*: passim. On Muhammad Khan Ustajlu's pillage of Cezire see also the contemporary Aramaic document translated by A. Scher (1910: 123–6), 'Pillage de Gazarta et de ses villages'. A part of this document is translated below.

22. This will be illustrated by the case studies in the next section. See especially Hakkari.

23. These Kurdish chieftains were: Melik Khalil of Hasankeyf, Shah Ali of Cizre, Mir Shamsuddin of Bitlis, Mir Daud of Khizan, Ali Beg of Sasun, Mir Shah Muhammad Shirwi, and 10 others. The last-named two were not imprisoned by the Shah; all others were. (*Sharafname*, II/1: 289–291).

24. Translated into French by Scher (1910): 123–6.

25. See e.g. Sohrweide 1965: 145–158.

26. *Ibid.*, 162. See also Altindag, 'Selim I', in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*; Tansel (1969): 20–39.

27. As related above, Muhammad Beg had received the title of *khan* from Shah Ismail, upon his appointment to Diyarbakir.

28. Detailed accounts of the battle of Chaldiran and the developments that preceded it, in: Von Hammer, *GOR* 2: 392 ff; Tansel (1969): 30–67. Shorter, but very precise and readable is Sarwar's rendering (1939): 72–85; as well as the article 'Selim I' in *Islam An-si-klopedisi* (by S. Altindag). The events in the Ottoman lands receive extensive treatment in Sohrweide 1965: 138–164.

29. *Sharafname* II/1: 295 ff.

30. See Von Hammer, *GOR* 2: 433. The major source is, however, Idris' own account, as written down by his son, Ebu 'l-Fazl, in his *Zail-e Hashi Behesht* (a continuation of Idris' own historical work, the *Hasht Behesht*). Huseyin, *Bedayi' ul-vaqayi* (edited by A.S. Tveretina, Moscow, 1961) also depends heavily on Idris himself. Another major source, confirming Idris' central role, is the Ottoman historian, Sa'd ad-Din (Hoja Sadettin Efendi, *Tacu't-tevarih*. Hazirlayan I. Parmaksizoglu, cilt 4. Istanbul 1979).

31. The following Kurdish mirs are mentioned as actively fighting the Qizilbash: Mir Sharaf of Bitlis, who retook the town of Bitlis; Melik Khalif formerly of Hasankeyf and Siirt, who retook both; Muhammad Beg of Sasun and Hazo, who conquered Herzen and fought the Qizilbash; Sayd Ahmad Beg Rifqi, who took the castles of Etek and Miyafarqin; Qasim Beg Merdisi, who conquered Palu and planted the Ottoman banner on its castle; Said Beg of Soran, who took Kirkuk and Erbil; Shah Ali Beg of Cizre; and others, altogether twenty-five chieftains (Von Hammer, *GOR* 2: 433-4).

32. See below.

33. Paraphrased after the *Sharafname*, II/1: 296-7.

34. The historian Ebu'l-Fazl, son of Idris Bitlisi (cf. note 30).

35. More detailed (though very incomplete) narratives of the events in Kurdistan in this period are to be found in: Sarwar 1939; Tansel 1969: 78-89; Von Hammer, *GOR* 2: 433-461; *Sharafname* II/1: 294-8 and *passim*.

36. The *khutba* is a ceremonial sermon pronounced at the Friday prayer meeting, which used to contain prayers for the prophet, the four rightly guided caliphs, the contemporary caliph (when there still was one), and usually for the ruler who was regarded as sovereign. Having one's name read in the *khutba* thus was tantamount to proclaiming full independence. The same is true of the minting of coins.

37. *Sharafname* I/2: 184.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, I/2: 114-132. On their relations with the Mahmudi and Dumbili also II/1: 158-177.

40. The history of these Nestorians is described in J. Joseph's excellent study (1961). Before their mass exodus the Nestorians constituted a high proportion of the population of Hakkari. Cuinet gave the following statistics for the province (*sanjaq*) of Hakkari around 1870: Kurds 165,000; Assyrians 97,000, of whom 52,000 were 'autonomous' (the 'tribal' Nestorians).

41. 'Kurden', *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>

42. After its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire Van had been made into an *eyalet*, administered by a centrally appointed wali; the government of most subdistricts remained in the hands of Kurdish ruling families, as is apparent from Evliya Chelebi's *Seyahatname* (Book IV: 1226/8 in the edition of Temelkuran and Aktash). For a discussion of this form of indirect rule, see later in this chapter.

43. Sayd Muhammad was apparently suspected of having acted as a go-between for Sultan Sulayman's rebellious son Mustafa and the Persian Shah Tahmasb (*Sharafname* I/2: 127).

44. *Sharafname* II/1: 1-16.

45. *Ibid.*, II/1, 2. Many chieftains of large tribes, confederations or emirates are of foreign origin; and even when they are not, they often claim to be so. Islamic heroes in particular are likely to be invoked as ancestors. Thus the Chemishkezek family *pretended* to be descended from the Abbasids.

46. It is not possible to say how many of the Chemishkezek subjects were Shiites, but the number probably was considerable. The mir, Haji Rustem Beg, was probably a follower of the Safavid order, for he and a large number of aghas fought on the Safavid side in Chaldiran. As written in the text, after this battle some Chemishkezek returned to the Ottoman Empire; others, however, remained in Iran. Sharaf Khan mentioned 1,000 Chemishkezek families, who were Qizilbash, in Iran. A century later Shah Abbas was to send these as frontier guards to Khorasan (see chapter 3). At present the majority of the population of the district of Chemishkezek are Alevis. According to Dersimi (1952), all its inhabitants are Alevis, which may be an exaggeration. Cuinet's statistics for c. 1870 are not entirely clear, because the categories are not defined: 10% Armenian; 50% Qizilbash; 20% Muslim and 20% Kurd. (Cuinet 1891-94, II: 392).

47. This sub-section is based mainly on the following works; von Tischendorf (1871); von Hammer 1815; Gibb and Bowen (1950-57); Inalcik (1955); Inalcik (1973); Lybyer (1913); Shaw (1976); Karpat (1974).

48. The *aqche* was a silver coin, of approximately 0.7 gr. by the middle of the sixteenth

century. Both the weight of the *aqche* and the rate of exchange against other coins used changed over time. The rate of devaluation is immediately apparent from the weight of the *aqches* minted under the following sultans: Muhammad I (1413–1421): 1.121 gr; Muhammad II (1451–1481): 0.865 gr; Selim I (1512–1520): 0.69 gr; Murad III (1574–1595): 0.462 gr. This devaluation necessitated regular revisions of the rates of taxation, which generally lagged behind considerably. The above figures were compiled by N. Beldiceanu (1957): 70–86. An indication of the purchasing power of the *aqche* is that the price of 1 kilo (c. 25.6 kg) of wheat in eastern Anatolia, around 1515, was 8 *aqche*, that of 1 kilo of barley 6 *aqche* (Hinz 1950: 185 n).

49. The difference between *zeamet* and *timar* is not simply one of level of revenue, as the specifications generally given seem to imply. They belonged to different *ranks* of grantees; moreover, the amount of revenue for which one had to maintain a *jebelu* was different in both types of fief. The *timar*-holder had to maintain one for every 3,000 *aqche*; the *zeamet*-holder for every 5,000 *aqche*, above a certain minimum (Shaw, 1976: 125; Inalcik 1973: 113). In practice, some *timars* had higher revenues than some *zeamets*. Thus in Palestine in the sixteenth century the highest *timar* revenue was 19,225 *aqche*, the lowest *zeamet* revenue 10,000 (Lewis 1954: 481–2).

50. Inalcik 1973: 108.

51. Werner 1972: 110, after data compiled by Barkan (1958). Other authors give much higher figures. Von Tischendorf (1872: 49) for instance speaks of a total of 200,000 *sipahis*, basing himself on d'Ohsson. The competing claims are discussed by Mutafchieva in Mutafchieva and Dimitrov (1968): 10f. She tends to support the higher claims, which are rejected by Werner.

52. The term *re'aya* ('the flock'; plural of *ra'yet*) denoted at first only non-Muslim subjects, who were obliged to pay taxes to the Muslims who had subjected them. This always remained the primary meaning of the term, and it is used in Ottoman law-books in this sense. However, it came to be used, by extension, for *all* dependent peasants, both Christian and Muslim. Not all *re'aya* were peasants, many were merchants or craftsmen.

53. Thus in Albania in 1431, 16% of the *sipahis* were former Christian fiefholders, 30% Anatolian Turks, 50% *qullar* of the sultan or *begs*; the remaining 4% were *qadis*, bishops(!), and palace favourites (Inalcik 1973: 114).

54. In fact, quite a few members of the peasant class managed to receive *timars*, as is apparent from the frequent fulminations in law books that condemn this practice. See e.g. the laws in Von Hammer's *Staatsverfassung*, vol I: 350, 366, 371–2).

55. Taxation in the Ottoman Empire remains an extremely complicated and often confusing subject, because of the many local variations and the gradual alterations made in the tax laws in the course of the centuries, and also because actual practice did not always conform to the rules. A first survey of the various taxes was given by von Hammer (1815), who also translated summaries of some *qanunnames* as examples. This book remains very useful. The most important contributions to our understanding of Ottoman taxation were made by Omer Lütfi Barkan, whose edition of the *qanunnames* of many provinces and districts (1943) is an inexhaustible source of information. The first volume of his collected works (Barkan 1980) contains his numerous articles on the land regime. Halil Inalcik's works (1955, 1959, 1969, 1973) are further landmarks in research. Among the many other studies on this topic, Cvetkova (1960) deserves mention.

Ottoman tax registers, providing detailed information on the taxes actually paid, and therefore giving a better insight in the social and economic realities, have been published for several regions, thus Gökbilgin (1952) on Edirne, and Cohen and Lewis (1978) on Palestine.

To date, relatively few studies dealing with the Kurdish provinces have appeared. Hinz (1950) analyses *qanunnames* (published by Barkan); Göyünç (1969) edits and analyses various archival sources; the account books of Diyarbakir's governor that were published and analysed by Kunt (1981) give an insight into the actual practice. See also Bruinessen and Boeschoten 1988.

56. Lewis (1954: 485) concluded that 'the *jizye* belonged to the *Bait al-Mal* (the central treasury) and, unlike some other revenues, was never granted to fief-holders or holders of *khas's*'. There were, however, exceptions. The *jizye* of certain districts was not

infrequently assigned as the regular pay (*ojaqliq*) of a specific military unit (see: Inalcik, 'Djizya. ii: Ottoman', in *E.I.*). In Kurdistan there were more outrageous exceptions; as we shall see below, half of the *jizye* of Bitlis accrued to the Kurdish mir there.

57. Average values of the *resm-i chift* for the sixteenth and seventeenth century Ottoman Empire are given by Von Hammer (1815, vol. I: 187). For a whole *chiftlik*, one paid 42 *aqche* per annum, for a half *chiftlik* 21 *aqche*. Peasants holding even less paid 12 *aqche*, 6 *aqche* or nothing at all. In the beginning of the sixteenth century 42 *aqche* corresponded to the price of 130 kilograms of wheat; due to the devaluation of the *aqche* the real value of this tax gradually decreased.

The *resm-i chift* was divided among the *sipahis* and their officers, in proportions that varied from province to province. Typical distributions of the 42 *aqche* were: 27 to the *sipahi*, 12 to the *subashi*, and 3 to the *sanjaqbegi*; elsewhere 27 to the *sipahi* and all remaining 15 to the *sanjaqbegi*.

58. The dimensions of the dunum varied from one region to another. Usually it was around 0.1 hectare (0.25 acre) or slightly less.

59. Inalcik 1973: 111–2.

60. These later taxes, often initially introduced as a one-time contribution to the financing of a specific project, such as (typically) a military campaign, and afterwards institutionalized as regular annual tributes, have been relatively little studied. See Cvetkova (1959); M. Bowen, 'Awarid', in *E.I.*<sup>2</sup>

61. These districts are: Erzincan, Kharput, Mardin and Birejik. The following specifications are after Hinz's summary (1950: 183, 201).

62. Summarily translated by von Hammer (1815, vol. 1: 245–8).

63. Inalcik (1973): 116.

64. Cvetkova wrote an excellent study on the introduction and development of the *ilizam* system in one specific region (Cvetkova 1964). On the economic crisis that obliged the empire to adopt this system see Inalcik (1951). A concise summary of the relevant transformations in the empire is given in Werner (1972).

65. For generalizing descriptions of the way in which the Ottoman land regime was affected by the alternating weakening and strengthening of the central government see: Karpat (1974), Shaw (1976).

66. On this division see von Hammer, *GOR* 2: 456–7, 650–1, 677–80.

67. A *qanunname* quoted by the seventeenth century traveller Evliya Chelebi, and again by Von Hammer (*GOR* 2: 650) listed the *sanjaqs* as follows:

Kurd hukümetleri: Jazira, Egil, Genc, Palu and Hazo.

Ekrad beglikleri: Saghman, Qulp, Mihrani, Tercil, Ataq, Pertek, Capaqcur and Cermik.

Ordinary Ottoman sanjaqs: Kharput, Erghani, Siverek, Nisibin, Hisnkeyf, Cemiskezek, Siirt, Mifarqin, Aqceqal'e, and Khabur and Sinjar. (Evliya Celebi, vol. 1: 125 and vol. IV: 1116, in the edition by Temelkuran and Aktas).

The number of sanjaqs and their status underwent several changes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (for a survey of these changes see Bruinessen and Boeschoten 1988). The present list must date from the second half of the 16th century or even later, because of the omission of Bitlis (which was part of Diyarbakir until 1548, when it was added to the newly constituted province of Van), and the inclusion of Hasankeyf and Cemiskezek among the ordinary sanjaqs (they had been left autonomous in 1515, see the history of these emirates elsewhere in this chapter).

68. Bitlis is not mentioned in the list in the preceding note, but it had apparently the status of an Ekrad begligi.

69. Evliya Chelebi was an eye-witness to these events, and himself narrowly involved in them, being the nephew and protégé of the *vali* of Van, Melek Ahmed Pasha. A short summary of the relevant parts of vols. IV and V of Evliya's *Seyahatname* is given by Sakisian (1937).

70. Evliya, according to Von Hammer's translation of Book 1, Part 1: 94. The relevant lines are lacking from the first Turkish printed editions; Von Hammer worked from another manuscript. The recent edition of Book 1 by I. Parmaksizoglu (1983: 148–9), based on the original manuscript, confirms Von Hammer's reading.

71. Von Hammer's translation, p. 104 and Parmaksizoglu's edition, p. 164. The figures

are defective in the earlier printed editions.

72. Von Hammer 1815, vol. II: 266. The *eyalet* of Shahrazur was much larger than the plain of the same name in southern Kurdistan. It included all of the Sulaymani and Kirkuk districts, parts of which were mountainous areas and hard to control.

73. Birken's list of the *sanjaqs* of Diyarbakir (Birken 1976: 185–195) includes several that were at one time or another ruled by autonomous Kurdish rulers on a hereditary basis and that do not occur in Evliya's list: Fasul, Cungush, Khenjok, Hilwan, Khozat, Mardin, Poshadi, Sewerek, Zeriqi. See also the list for 1831 in Akbal (1951): 622.

74. Birken (1976): 154 (after d'Ohsson, who is unfortunately not always a very reliable source).

75. The evidence is all of a negative kind. Virtually the only sources on Ottoman policy towards the Kurds in this period are the *Sharafname* (which was, however, written eighty years after this date) and a chronicle of Selim's rule written by Idris himself and finished by his son Ebu'l-Fazl. The latter text has not been published, but both Von Hammer and Sarwar used manuscript copies extensively, and neither of them mentioned any transplantation of Kurds. The *Sharafname* does not mention any Kurds inhabiting the Armenian plateau. The French traveller Tavernier, who crossed the plateau around 1655, wrote that (the northern part of) the plateau was almost exclusively inhabited by Christians (Tavernier 1679, Vol I; 25).

76. The Germiyan had been moulded into a tribe 'd'origine confuse' around 1275, and emerged as a separate principality, with its capital at Kutahya, around 1300 AD. (Cahen 1954: 356). See also: 'Germiyan' (by I. Melikoff) and 'Anadolu' (by F. Taeschner) in *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>

77. Two short studies based on Evliya's description of Bitlis appeared half a century ago: Sakisian (1937) and Köhler (1928). The first of these is a short summary of Evliya's text, strongly focusing on the personality of the mir, the second a translation of ten pages of a manuscript, with introduction and commentary. An edition of the entire Bitlis section is being prepared by Robert Dankoff.

78. Tavernier 1679 I: 303–6.

79. According to the eighteenth-century Armenian historian Chamchean, quoted by W. Köhler 1928: 27–8.

80. It is also conceivable that these Muslims were converted ex-Christians, but it would be difficult to explain why those in the hills were converted while those in the plain remained Christians.

81. This is not the only time that we find the number of tribes in a legendary confederation given as twenty-four; the number must have carried a symbolic meaning. Thus, the Turkish Oghuz were said to have consisted of twenty-four tribes (in earlier versions, nine tribes), and the *Sharafname* speaks of twenty-four Kurdish communities in the Persian-controlled Qarabagh that were made into a confederation under Shah Tahmasb and given the name of Yigirmidort (Turkish for 'twenty-four') (Bidlisi 1860–62, p. 323 of the Persian text).

82. The Bilbasi consisted of: 1. Kelechiri; 2. Khirbeli; 3. Baliki or Bayigi; 4. Khiyarti; 5. Guri; 6. Berishi; 7. Sekri; 8. Garisi or Karsi; 9. Biduri; 10. Bela Kurdi; the Qewalisi consisted of: 11. Zerduzi; 12. Endaki; 13. Pertafi; 14. Kurdiki or Girdiki; 15. Suhrewerdi; 16. Kashakhi; 17. Khalidi; 18. Estudki or Iztuki; 19. Ezizan (*Sharafname* II/1: 232; or p. 361 of the Persian text). The number of sub-tribes given is almost certainly determined by Sharaf Khan's wish to arrive at a total number of twenty-four *qabiles*. It should be noted that the Kurdiki (or Girdiki; the Arabic script allows both readings) who are given here as a sub-tribe of the Qewalisi (no. 14), are elsewhere mentioned as the large tribe residing in Bitlis before the Rojeki conquest (*Sharafname* II/1: 229).

83. Evliya probably inferred this number from the number of aghas he met at Bitlis (also 70).

84. Evliya's estimates are not consistent. Shortly after his first arrival at Bitlis he mentioned 70,000 soldiers (Evliya IV: 1162) — probably a repetition of the mir's boast. Later he gave a figure of around 47,000 (*ibid.*: 1227). Tavernier was the mir's guest probably some time before Evliya (he does not mention when precisely he was at Bitlis). He reported that Abdal Khan could put 20 to 25 thousand horsemen in the field at any

time he wanted, as well as a large number of foot-soldiers, hardy herdsmen (Tavernier 1679, I: 304). This compared very favourably with the military power of the *beglerbegi* of Diyarbakir (20,000 horses) and the *sanjaqbegi* of Mardin (2,000 horses) whom Tavernier had also visited.

85. The Turkish scholar N. Sevgen found the original edicts (*hukm-i sherif*) instating Sharaf in 1578. He reproduced them, with a rendering in simplified modern Turkish, in B.T.T.D. nr 9 (1968): 74–6.

86. The term 'kharaj' was used ambiguously in the sixteenth century: sometimes it denoted a tax (paid by Christians) the rate of which depended on the amount of land held (and therefore interpreted as a land tax); sometimes it was a fixed sum, and apparently identical with the *jizye*, the land tax was then called *kharaj-i erziye*, in order to distinguish it. The fact that '*jizye* and *kharaj*' are a fixed sum here seems to suggest that only the poll tax is meant and that land tax is not yet included in it. It is, however, a rather high sum. European residents of Diyarbakir in the early sixteenth century under the Aqqoyunlu paid 55 *aqche* as *jizye* (Hinz: 1950: 182 n). No figures for the *jizye* paid by peasants have, to my knowledge, been published yet. It is not impossible that 'kharaj' refers in this case to another tax, distinct from both the ordinary poll tax and the land tax.

87. Evliya uses the term 'noker', a word of Mongolian origin (meaning 'friend', 'companion'), that is often used to denote a sort of retainer. In the sixteenth century registers of eastern Anatolia 'nokers' are frequently mentioned, but it is unclear what precisely they were. I. Miroglu (*Tarih Dergisi* 28–29 (1975): 72n) calls the term a synonym of '*sipahi*'; but that is obviously wrong; there are too many *nokers* in the urban registers he presents. Beldiceanu gives a good discussion of the term in a review of another work by Miroglu (*Turcica* IX/1 (1977): 278–9).

88. The *naqib al-ashraf* is the officially recognized leader/administrator of all the local sayyids (or *ashraf*), descendants of the Prophet, in a certain district.

89. Evliya gives his regular annual income as 80 *kise* ('purses'), the same as that of the qadi in the provincial capital Diyarbakir, and twice that of the qadi of Malatya. This was equivalent to 3.2 million *aqche*, for around 1660 the *kise* amounted to c. 40,000 *aqche* (Von Hammer 1815, vol. II: 171).

90. According to Von Hammer every mufti of the empire had to make his legal decisions according to the rulings of Abu Hanifa. The only exceptions he mentioned were Mecca, Medina, Cairo, Aleppo, Jerusalem and Damascus. These towns are inhabited by a majority of followers of other rites; beside the Hanafi mufti there were also muftis of other schools there, who were, however, only allowed to make decisions in questions 'immediately concerning the rites' (Von Hammer 1815, vol. II: 391). Against this background, the independence of Bitlis is extraordinary indeed.

91. Evliya enumerated twenty city quarters and said that eleven of these were inhabited by 'Arabs, Jacobites and Armenians', the remainder by Muslims (Book IV; 1163). In the printed edition, the Armenians have disappeared; I found them mentioned in the original manuscript, which I studied later.

92. Around 1870 the districts of the former emirate had the following religious-ethnic composition:

|                | Muslims      | Yezidi     | Christian    |
|----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Bitlis         | 70,500 (65%) | 1,000 (1%) | 37,000 (34%) |
| (incl. Akhlat) |              |            |              |
| Mush           | 66,750 (54%) | 1,000 (1%) | 55,500 (45%) |
| Khiuus         | 16,750 (63%) | —          | 10,000 (37%) |

(Cuiet 1891–4, I: 138; II: 526–7)

93. Non-Muslims subjects (*re'aya*) were not allowed to carry arms in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, many instances are known where Kurds and their Christian neighbours/subjects fought shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy.

94. The best source on the role of Baban in Iraqi history is still Longrigg (1925) (*passim*).

95. This 'feudal' organization pre-dated incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. The first Baban prince mentioned in the *Sharafname*, Pir Budaq, was said to have installed

*mir-i liwa* (*sanjaqbegis*) in the districts under his sovereignty, and to have given these drums and standards as insignia — just as the Ottoman sultans were to give to them *sanjaqbegis* (this may be a projection back into the past of more recent practices, however) (*Sharafname*, II/1: 136). In Sharaf Khan's own time (1597) 'each of the aghas of the different tribes was placed over a district of this country ...' (ibid.: 144).

96. In the sixteenth century, he was second only to the Grand Vizier and the Shaikh al-Islam (the highest mufti of the empire). 'His influence stemmed from his power to provide access to and communication with the sultan and exploitation of harem rivalries and factions' (Shaw, 1976: 115).

97. 'Derebey', in *E.I.*<sup>1</sup> (by J.H. Mordtmann and B. Lewis).

98. There is much literature, both Western and Oriental, on Miri Kor and his revolt. The most interesting primary source in a Western language is Fraser (1840) vol I: 63–83. It contains an account of a visit by Dr. Ross, the physician of the British residency at Baghdad, to the mir. Many other sources are used in the best secondary accounts I know: Jwaideh 1960: 147–173, and Nebez 1970.

99. The following is based on oral information, collected in Botan, spring and summer of 1976.

100. The names of the tribes and other groups composing these confederations are: *Chokhsor*, *Miran*, *Diduran*, *Elikan*, *Soran*(?), *Garisan*(?)

*Shillet*: *Batuan*, *Kichan*, *Teyyan*, *Kherikan*, *Musereshan*;

*Haji Beyran*: *Sperti*, *Giteyan*, *Heweri* (all three nomadic), *Goyan* (semi-nomadic), and the non-tribal Kurdish and Armenian peasants of the subdistricts *Shirnak* and *Silopi*.

*Dehi*: *Garisan* (nomadic), *Dersevi*, *Kheskheri*, *Erukhi*, *Chufi*, *Jilan*.

Two other tribes of the *Cizre* district, the *Harunan* and *Hesinan*, did not belong to any of these confederations.

101. *Cizre* was at this time no longer an autonomous *hukümet*, as it had been in the sixteenth century. *Bedr Khan Beg* was not only the officially recognized mir, he was also *mute sellim* (provincial governor) and a *miralay* (colonel) of the *asakir-i redife* (reserve militias, formed after 1833), according to Ottoman documents published by N. Sevgen in *B. T. T. D.* 11 1968: 49. Von Moltke relates how *Bedr Khan* acquired the latter title. In May 1838 he was forced to surrender his capital, after a siege lasting forty days, to *Rashid Pasha*. Thereupon he joined the Ottomans in the submission of his former ally *Said Beg* of *Finik*, in a siege in which Moltke also participated. As a reward for this loyal service he was given the rank of a *miralay* of a *redife* regiment that did not yet exist (Von Moltke 1882: 256).

102. What the third part of this three-liner refers to is entirely obscure to me; no one could give me a satisfactory explanation.

103. *Safrastian* 1948: 55.

104. The missionaries *Wright* and *Breath*, who visited *Bedr Khan Beg* in 1846, gave a few instances of the security in those parts of Kurdistan, which compared favourably with the situation elsewhere. ('Visits of Messrs Wright and Breath to *Bader Khan Bey*,' *Missionary Herald* 42, [Nov. 1846]: 378–383). On their way from *Urmia* to the mir they spent the night in a village of (self-confessed) former robbers, who admitted that before *Bedr Khan's* time they would certainly have robbed them of their belongings (380). After their stay with the mir they concluded: 'The guilty under his government found no escape. Bribery, favouritism, etc, which too often, in these countries, pervert the course of justice and nullify the force of law, are unknown here' (381).

105. This term is used in a wide range of meanings. In the Ottoman Empire it was the term used to denote the personal slaves of members of the ruling class, recruited through the *devshirme* system of sale or capture in war. Thence it acquired the secondary meaning of bodyguard. It has strong connotations of vassalry rather than servitude. It is still used in Kurdistan now for the big aghas' retainers.

106. According to a list of allied chieftains in *Bletch Chirguh* (1930): 14. This brochure (a publication of the Kurdish national league *Khobun*) was probably written by *Bedr Khan's* descendant *Sureya Bedirkhan*.

107. The documents dealing with *Bedr Khan Beg* that were found in Ottoman archives



and published by N. Sevgen in *B.T.T.D.* 11–19 (1968/9) suggest another reason for the revolt. There were plans for administrative reorganization, according to which Botan was to be split and divided between the two *eyalets* of Diyarbakir and Mosul. Bedr Khan vehemently protested against these plans, which, he thought, were designed to break his power.

108. According to Bedr Khan's visitors Wright and Breath (see note 104).

109. *Missionary Herald* 42 1846: 381.

110. Of course, it is conceivable that the mir wanted to keep his real designs hidden from his visitors. But that would be in contrast with the behaviour of all later nationalist leaders, who, without exception, tried to enlist foreign support through the intermediary of whichever foreigners were around.

111. 'Visits of Messrs. Laurie and Smith to Asheta and Julamerk', *Missionary Herald* 41 (Apr. 1845): 120–1.

112. Layard, who cannot be accused of nurturing sympathies for Bedr Khan, visited the Tiyari district not long after the massacres by the Kurds and saw the ruins of these buildings. He admitted that Kurdish fears and suspicions were understandable; 'There are circumstances connected with the massacres of the Nestorians most painful to contemplate ...' Layard 1849, I: 179.

113. This is the version Laurie and Smith (see note 111) gave of the changes leading to the first Nestorian massacre. Other sources give slightly different versions. In all, Bedr Khan is, in the main, responsible for the attack, and it was directed primarily against the Mar Shimun. Several Nestorian opponents of the Mar Shimun remained not only unharmed but even received gifts from Bedr Khan because they had previously proclaimed their loyalty to him (Smith and Laurie, *Missionary Herald* 4 [April 1845]: 118).

114. This impression is confirmed by documents in the Ottoman state archives. Sevgen [*B.T.T.D.* 24, Sep. 1969: 43] gives a partial list of tribal chieftains that joined the insurgents. The districts that sent most support were Shiriwan, Erukh and Khizan. There is no indication as to the participation of the nomads.

115. Especially Chirguh 1930, on whom all others seem to depend.

116. The best discussions I know are by Davison (1963), Lewis (1968, esp. pp 75–128) and Shaw and Shaw (1977: 1–171); and, especially for Southern Kurdistan, Longrigg (1925): 298–324.

117. This is illustrated, e.g., by the following observation Von Moltke made in 1838: 'The sale of offices remains the great, main source of the state's income. The candidate borrows the purchase money at a high rate of interest from an Armenian business house, and the government allows these tax-farmers to exploit these provinces as they want, in order to indemnify themselves. However, they live in the fear lest a competitor make a higher bid before they have had sufficient time to become rich. And once they have become rich, it is the fisc they have to fear' (Von Moltke 1882: 48).

118. A full translation of the Land Code is to be found in S. Fischer, *Ottoman Land Laws* (London 1919).

119. A map in Dowson 1931 (plate 1) shows that most of the plains of Iraqi Kurdistan had been registered as well as a number of valleys. Large parts of Badinan, Rowanduz, Pizhdar and Shahrazur still remained unregistered.

120. Longrigg 1925: 307.

121. This was not an entirely new phenomenon; formerly *timar*-holders, *multezims* and other officials had developed that lifestyle. It then became more generalized, and was no longer associated only with officialdom.

122. Art. 23 of the Land Code stated that whoever rented land from its legal possessor could never acquire permanent rights.

123. The best and most reliable source is Dowson's study (1931). A note on the situation as the British found it, on Turkish practices in recent times and British measures, is to be found in the government paper 'Review of the Civil Administration of the occupied territories of al-'Iraq, 1914–1918' (Baghdad, Govt. Press, Nov. 1918). In 1932 the government of Iraq issued as law no.50 the Land Settlement Law, which brought some recognition to traditional forms of tenure as well.

124. Lt. Col. E.B. Howell, 'Note on Land Policy', Baghdad 1919, quoted by Sluglett 1976: 239.

125. See Sluglett 1976: 249–253.

126. Abdulhamid's image in the West, as a brutal, ruthless, bigoted, paranoid tyrant and enemy of progress was spread by biased European contemporaries. Recent historical studies tend to stress that the reforms did not come to a halt suddenly, but were continued under his rule and, secondly, that for many of his reactionary measures he had hardly any choice at all, given the international situation and imperialist agitation inside the empire. See e.g. Shaw and Shaw 1977: 172–271 and Duguid 1973.

127. A short description of this revolt is given in the Appendix to chapter 4. The best available study is Jwaideh 1960: 212–289.

128. For a fuller description of the background and also of the context of the sultan's other measures, see Shaw & Shaw (1977) and Duguid (1973). There is much additional material in Kodaman (1979 and 1987).

129. This is a summary of Shaw & Shaw 1977: 246. The primary sources these authors used are contemporary British consular reports from eastern Anatolia. More detail in Kodaman (1979), after Ottoman archival materials.

130. Duguid (1973): 145–6, after consul Anderson at Diyarbakir (1892).

131. Major E. Noel, 'Note on the Kurdish situation' (Baghdad, 1919). Enclosed in FO 371, 1919: 44A/112202/3050.

132. The following notes on Mustafa Pasha are mainly based on interviews with his descendants at Qarachokh in northeast Syria in May 1976, and a few observations by Lehmann-Haupt and Noel.

133. The Hamidiye had the same military ranks as the ordinary army: *onbashi* (headman of ten), *yuzbashi* (headman of hundred, 'captain'). I do not know which of the tribes were originally enlisted in Mustafa Pasha's Hamidiye regiment. In the Balkan War (1912–13), when the old Hamidiye were revived (under the name of 'militia'), Mustafa Pasha's son Abdulkarim Beg led a regiment consisting of four tribes only: Miran, Kichan, Teyyan and Kherikan.

134. Lehmann-Haupt I: 363–4; II: 228–9.

135. Oral information, from representatives of several tribes.

136. This point is elaborated upon by Duguid (1973, esp. p. 152). He also suggests that the Hamidiye were meant by the sultan to counterbalance the influence of local urban-based notables, who filled most offices.

137. 'Notes on Kurdish tribes (on and beyond the borders of the Mosul vilayet and westward to the Euphrates)'. Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1919. Enclosed in FO 371, 1919: 44A/149523/3050.

138. E.g. M. Wiedemann, 'Ibrahim Paschas Glück und Ende', *Asien* 8 (1909): 34–37, 52–54; Ziya Gökalp, *Kurt ashiretleri hakkında sosyolojik incelemeler* (contemporary notes, first published in 1975 at Komal, Ankara); M. Sykes 1908: 469ff; Soane 1926: 43; Nikitine 1925b: 15; Rondot 1937: 34–38; Longrigg 1925: 286ff.

139. This episode is described by Rondot (1937: 35–6). A Kurdish ballad referring to it was published in the Kurdish journal *Hawar* no. 24 (Damascus, 1934; reprinted Berlin 1976): 'Delale Beriye', Kurdish text with French translation and commentary by C. Bedir Khan.

140. E.B. Şapolyo, Ziya Gökalp. *İttihad, terakki ve meşrutiyet tarihi* (Ankara 1941): 43.

141. According to Wiedemann (see note 138).

142. Capt. Woolley. FO 371, 1919: ME44/91479/3050.

143. Duguid (1973): 149, after the British consul at Erzurum.

144. As noticed by Leach (1940). The salary of the paramount chieftain of the Balık was stopped a few years before Leach's visit (1938), with the result that his influence as a tribal leader declined rapidly. Leach added that 'the Balık have scarcely any functioning unity as a tribe at the present time' (Leach 1940: 19).

145. See Vanly 1980; Beşikçi 1977; Rambout 1947: 23–45; *D.D.K.O. dava dosyası* (Ankara: Kormal 1975).

146. Many examples in Perry (1975).

## 4. Shaikhs: mystics, saints and politicians

### Introductory remarks

In the sections on tribal leadership, it has been argued that aspirants to power within the tribal domain rarely depend on their personal capacities alone. Not only do many employ retainers (a mild term for hired thugs) to give substance to their claims to respect and influence; they also deftly employ whatever *external* sources of power they may find. The last cannot be called a typically Kurdish phenomenon; it is one of the few that probably occur in all tribal societies, as well as many others. Nor is the range of external power sources significantly different from one society to the other; they can generally be subsumed under the headings of *God* and the *State*. Rare indeed are the individuals who rise to prominence in their own societies without having had recourse to at least one of these two external power sources. The greatest Kurdish leader of this century, Mulla Mustafa Barzani owed his position to a large extent to his and his ancestors' use of both these sources. The same, though less conspicuously so, is true of his major rival, Jalal Talabani. In the preceding chapter the relations between tribal politics and those of surrounding states were discussed; this chapter will deal with that part of the religious sphere with the greatest political significance.

There are several ways in which a person may derive political and economic leverage from association with the Divine. This is done most successfully in Kurdistan by the shaikhs. This chapter, therefore, deals in the first place with these popular saints and religious leaders, and with the dervish orders in which their followers are organized. By way of introduction something has to be said of the context in which claims to association with the Divine have to be made: Islam and the roles it recognizes.

### God incarnate

The most direct way to derive power from God would, of course, be to claim to *be* God. This is a rather risky affair, however; even for the mystic who has attained union with the Divine, it is wiser not to say so

aloud, as the fate of the illustrious Hallaj showed.<sup>1</sup> For the orthodox Muslim, associating oneself so directly with God is *shirk* ('polytheism'), the gravest sin. Among the Sunnis therefore, this claim has rarely if ever been made. There is, however, one exception among the Kurds. The Naqshbandi shaikh, Ahmad of Barzan, did in fact once proclaim himself divine and was venerated as such by his followers.<sup>2</sup> Four centuries earlier, the heterodox Safavi shaikhs Junaid and Ismail (the later shah) had also made this claim, with even greater success. According to the heterodox Ahl-e Haqq, both God and seven angels that are His emanations have repeatedly been incarnate in human bodies, and may also temporarily take possession of the bodily vehicle of an ordinary human being. Several of the great religio-political leaders of this sect were reputed to possess such a 'divine spark'. Sayyid Berake, who lived in Tutshami, west of Kermanshah, in the early nineteenth century, was probably the most ambitious and successful example in recent times. He reputedly functioned as the bodily vehicle for several divine emanations, played a regionally prominent political role, and managed even to manipulate the entire Ahl-e Haqq cosmology to suit his political ambitions. His descendant Sayyid Nasruddin, whose guest I had the honour to be, does not make any claims to divinity himself — to the contrary, he is a most unassuming and humble person — but all his followers recognize in him a divine spark (which his father, who is still alive, apparently does not possess!), and would probably offer him absolute obedience if he ever demanded it.

### Prophet

Safer than proclaiming oneself divine is the claim to be the recipient of divine inspiration. Orthodox Islam recognizes Muhammad as the *last* Prophet (*rasul*), the 'seal of the Prophets', i.e. the last human to receive a revealed Book. Thus, whoever claims to be a prophet challenges orthodoxy, a potentially dangerous act. Quite a few heterodox sects, however, have claimed this status for their founder or another leader, but usually the charismatic and inspired (or would-be inspired) leaders of prophetic movements avoided calling themselves '*rasul*' and chose (or were given) another title from the rather elaborate Islamic esoteric lexicon: *imam*, *qutb*, *ghawth*, *bab*, *mahdi*, etc. I know of few prophetic or messianistic movements in the strict sense in Kurdistan, but many political movements had a distinctly prophetic flavour to them. It is not an accident that most Kurdish nationalist revolts were led by shaikhs, who were also not the most orthodox ones.

### Sayyids

Besides claiming divine inspiration there is another, indirect way of associating oneself with God and deriving worldly influence and power from this association: that of claiming a special relation with Muhammad, the ultimate and supreme prophet, or with his

Companions (*ashab*). This is a much less risky affair than claiming prophetic status for oneself, but not necessarily an effective one, as is shown by the fact that the people most obviously associated with Muhammad, his descendants (*sayyid*, pl. *sada*) among the Kurds, are generally powerless and often despised individuals. They are despised precisely because they have nothing to boast of but their descent, the genuineness of which is sometimes doubtful, and on the strength of which they make a claim to financial support by the community.

It is, of course, the inverse relation of value and numbers that lies at the bottom of the sayyids' low prestige. They are to be found all over Kurdistan and, although Arab in descent, have been thoroughly kurdicized. There is a strong pressure towards endogamy; for a sayyid it is almost imperative to marry a *sayyida* (female sayyid), so that there are typical sayyid-lineages that exist among, but apart from the Kurdish lineages.

One of the sayyids whom I met told me he belonged to the *tayfe* of Maweloi sayyids, descendants of a certain Sayyid Ahmad Maweloi. The *tayfe* now consists of some 200 families, who mainly live near Mahabad (Persian Kurdistan) and are appallingly poor (due to the high concentration of sayyids, the contributions of pious Muslims are insufficient to improve their lot). My informant's father and another relative had left Mahabad for Iraqi Kurdistan, where they now live among the Mangur tribe. The sayyids were the poorest people of the village, owning neither land nor sheep; they made their living by collecting firewood in the hills and selling it in the nearby town of Qal'a Diza, and by doing odd jobs for the other villagers. When my informant wanted to marry, there was no sayyida available locally, and none of the villagers wanted to give him his daughter. He then eloped with a local girl and stayed in a neighbouring village until go-betweens (the elders of both villages) had pacified the girl's parents. His parents-in-law now help him occasionally: they give him foodstuffs etc. On the present condition of the Maweloi lineage near Mahabad I have no direct information. Once, in Saqqiz, I met two of them from a nearby village; they too were desperately poor. They told me there were three villages nearby that were exclusively inhabited by Maweloi sayyids, and that there were a few well-to-do families among them, but the majority were as poor as themselves.

There is a contradiction in the position of the poor sayyid. His poverty invites the contempt most societies bestow upon the unsuccessful, but his birth gives him a claim to the respect due to a descendant of the Perfect Man. Thus there is an ambiguity, an inner conflict in the attitude of most people towards him, a conflict that is often resolved in joking: the sayyid is a favourite — and usually very tolerant — object of jokes, as I noticed at several places.

Not all sayyids are poor and powerless, however; and for those who do have some power and prestige, their descent seems to add to it. The

obvious example in Kurdistan is the shaikhs of the Qadiri order, nearly all of whom are sayyids, and who, according to their followers, are superior to other shaikhs because of their blood-links with the Prophet.<sup>3</sup>

In a similar way, not a few Kurdish chieftains have tried to give a form of justification to their position by a (sometimes obviously spurious) genealogy that connects them with great men of Islam — mainly Arabs, of course. Although it is unclear how far any of these families originally acquired its position through the prestige of its descent — possibly it provided the leverage to mediate between quarrelling tribes or tribal sections, and ultimately impose its authority — it certainly helped such families to consolidate their positions once acquired. Many great chieftains claimed to belong to one of the following three lineages:

1. Omeri — the descendants of the second caliph, Omer (e.g. the Giravi lineage).
2. Khalidi — descendants of Khalid b. al-Walid (b. al Mughira al-Mukhzumi), one of the early great generals of Islam, who received from Muhammad himself the surname 'Sword of God'. The mirs of Botan claimed this descent, a claim which is already mentioned in the *Sharafname*. Another claimant is the family Zeydan, the leaders of the Pinyanish tribe of Hakkari.
3. Abbasi — descendants of the Abbasid caliphs. Both the mirs of Hakkari and of Badinan were said to belong to this illustrious family.

With the growth of Kurdish nationalism, the scions of these chiefly families tend to understate their real or putative Arabic descent. Thus the Bedirkhan family, descendants of the famous Bedir Khan Beg of Botan, derive much prestige now from this ancestor and his revolt against the Ottomans, which they like to present as the first major nationalist rising. Significantly, they now deny being Khalidi!

To resume: association through descent from the Prophet or other heroes of Islam is not sufficient in itself to acquire power and prestige in Kurdish society, but it may contribute to the further success of already successful people.

### Religious offices

Unlike Shiism, Sunni Islam does not have a clerical hierarchy; a framework for concerted action led by high clergymen — a well-known factor in Persian politics — is thus absent here. The highest religious dignitaries are the qadi and the mufti. The latter's duty is to execute religious law, the former's to preserve and develop it. In the Ottoman Empire there was a hierarchy of qadis, parallel to, and largely independent of, the civil administration. Until the reforms of the nineteenth century the entire jurisdiction was, theoretically at least, in their hands. Actual practice was sometimes different, especially in Kurdistan where, as we saw in the preceding chapter, it was often the semi-independent local rulers (mirs) and chieftains who exercised law.

The muftis' major task was to develop and apply the sharia religious law, when new situations arose. In answer to questions posed to him, he issued fatwas, *ex cathedra* statements derived from the principles of the divine law according to strict rules, and applying to the situation at hand. Fatwas of political import were usually, but not exclusively, the domain of the supreme mufti of the empire, the *shaikh al-islam*. Such fatwas could be of great influence, such as the well-known fatwa by the last Ottoman *shaikh al-islam* that proclaimed war against the Kemalists an obligation of all believers, and the counter-fatwa issued by 153 Anatolian muftis declaring the earlier fatwa invalid because it was given under duress (see Lewis 1968: 252). There is a similar case in Kurdish history: the defeat of the mir of Rowanduz (Miri Kor) at the hands of Ottoman troops was much facilitated because a local mufti opportunely issued a fatwa to the effect that anyone raising arms against the army of the Sultan-Caliph would prove himself *de facto* an unbeliever, and would therefore, according to the sharia, automatically be divorced from his wife (Jwaideh 1960: 171). As these examples show, a mufti might have influence, but it was usually exerted on behalf of the actually powerful, who needed him for legitimation. The authority of qadis and muftis, though based on divine law, depended in practice heavily on the Ottoman state apparatus, or powerful local rulers. Some of them acquired considerable riches and power through the shrewd execution of their offices, and joined the ranks of the landed notables in the towns of Kurdistan, but none of them, to my knowledge, ever built up a personal following or played a significant role in Kurdish tribal politics. That remained the domain of the shaikhs.

In the Young Turk period, the sharia courts came under close state supervision; in 1924 the new Republic of Turkey completely abolished them; herewith the function of qadi disappeared in Turkey. Muftis remain, but have lost whatever influence they ever held.

### The mulla

The only clerical office, in the Western sense of the word, in Sunni Islam is that of mulla (in Kurdish: *mela*).<sup>4</sup> The mulla leads all religious ceremonies at the village level, and instructs the village children in the Koran. Before the establishment of modern schools he was generally the village's best educated man, in religious as well as secular matters; he was also better travelled than most villagers, since the average mulla had studied at traditional Koran schools, in at least one or two other places. But nowadays in many villages, some of the young people have a better education than the mulla, and many villagers are aware that, outside the purely religious sphere, his knowledge and insights are painfully inadequate. In two of the villages where I stayed, their mulla was a powerful personality to whom many listened because he was really wise. In the other villages, however, many people considered the mulla an old fool. I do not know whether it is simply accidental, but in the two

villages mentioned the mullas were also ardent nationalists, and not very strict in orthodoxy. I never heard or read of a mulla who attained a politically important position.

### **Shaikh**

The last religious role to be discussed is the one with most frequent impact on politics, that of the shaikh. In fact, it is not one role, but a set of roles. All of the roles mentioned above have at one time or another been played by shaikhs. Their primary roles, however, are that of holy man, object of popular devotion, and that of leader-instructor in mystical brotherhoods (dervish or sufi orders). It is because they are the objects of a devotion that sometimes borders on worship that the roles of prophet, Mahdi and (in an extreme case) God were easily adopted by them, or even forced upon them by their followers. Because of the respect they enjoy they are ideal mediators in conflicts, which in turn gives them political leverage. Through the dervish orders they are in contact with devoted dervishes all over Kurdistan, and are therefore potentially capable of mobilizing large masses. Many dervish orders exist in the Islamic world, but in Kurdistan only two are present: the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders. All shaikhs belong to either of these. It is to these orders and to the shaikhs that the rest of this chapter is devoted.

### **Dervish and sufi orders**

Mulla Hesên Hishyar, who died in Syrian exile in 1985, had been one of the first to join the Kurdish nationalist rising of 1925 led by Shaikh Said. A strong young man with military experience in the Turkish army and a relative of the shaikh's, he became one of the latter's adjutants. I owe much of my information on this period of Kurdish history to him. His descriptions of the shaikh are quite different from those in the Turkish press of those days, which unanimously depict him as a reactionary religious fanatic and as mentally retarded. Mulla Hesên took care to stress other sides of the shaikh's personality: his nationalism and opposition to exploitation. The shaikh once said, criticizing other shaikhs of his own Naqshbandi order who would have no dealings with the nationalists and seemed only concerned with their own interests: 'That Shah-e Naqshband has established a gangster ring in our Kurdistan!'

Shah-e Naqshband, King Naqshband, is an honorific title of the fourteenth-century mystic who is reputed to have founded the order that still bears his name and that has become the most influential in Kurdistan. Together with the rival Qadiri order it was the only organization that cut through all tribal boundaries and was independent of, even defiant of the state. It formed a network that spread across the



whole of Kurdistan as well as the neighbouring parts of the Ottoman Empire. The comparison the shaikh made with a criminal gang<sup>5</sup> is rather to the point. As far as its organizational structure is concerned, the order resembles the mafia. There are hierarchical principles involved, but the entire organization is not well centralized; relatively independent regional centres exist and the extent of their influence fluctuates with the vicissitudes of the day. Both have a hard core of active members and a much larger clientele that contributes financially. It was not to these organizational features, however, that Shaikh Said referred when he called his confrérie a gang; it was the docility and submissiveness in which most shaikhs kept their countrymen, and the ruthlessness with which they exploited them. Fifteen years earlier, Bertram Dickson, British vice-consul at Van, had expressed a similar opinion: 'Some of [the shaikhs] are little less than brigands, but their power over the petty aghas is great, and they can usually force them to do their will' (Dickson 1910: 370). The same observer also noticed the intense rivalries between shaikhs of the same order: local centres in the same, decentralized network, who were all trying to increase their degree of centrality. In his time the Herki-Oramar district (in central Kurdistan) was in a state of disturbance because of the frictions between the followers of the shaikhs of Shemdinan, Barzan, and Bamarni — three Naqshbandi shaikhs residing in neighbouring districts, who were involved in a serious power struggle. While Shaikh Said was apparently critical of the order he belonged to (or at least of the other shaikhs of that order), he and the nationalist movement of which he was one of the leaders depended on this same order to gain a following. Without the Naqshbandi network he could not have mobilized so many warriors; without the belief in his sanctity they would not have fought so fanatically.

It was what I knew about Shaikh Said's revolt that first aroused my interest in the Naqshbandi and Qadiri orders. It seemed that they could — and maybe did — perform a function similar to the one the Sanusi order had had among the Beduin tribes of Cyrenaica: namely to provide the organizational framework that could transcend tribal boundaries and counteract the tendency of the tribes to split into mutually antagonistic sections. Here, as well as in Cyrenaica, it was a mystic order that made the tribes overrule their conflicts and act corporately, fighting a war for national independence. Later, after I had met several of the surviving participants in Shaikh Said's revolt and had studied contemporary documents, I discovered there were many differences as well as parallels between both movements: in Kurdistan the order as an organizational framework appeared less crucial than I had at first thought; it was more the role of the shaikh *as a holy man* that mattered. The revolt will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

There was something else about the orders that fascinated me. It had struck me (from casual observation on previous travels, and from the

literature) that the orders drew their following mainly from the lower strata of society. This is in contrast to many other orders which are rather aristocratic, even snobbish; therefore the Naqshbandi and Qadiri orders are sometimes labelled 'democratic' — hardly the most adequate term. These orders were often the only organizations open to the oppressed, and I expected that in some cases they might be used by them as an organizational framework in incipient class struggle. Reading Barth's monograph (1953), I found what seemed to be a partial confirmation of those expectations. Barth remarks that when he visited the Hamawand area, the *misken* were accused by the aghas of 'manipulating the religious brotherhood of dervishes for political purposes, so as to organize all the *misken* of the neighbouring villages in a movement of resistance' (Barth 1953: 59). Of course, such an accusation by aghas does not mean that the order (the Qadiri order in this case) was really developing into an instrument of class struggle; Barth unfortunately gives no further information or comment.

Incidentally, I never found out how far the *misken* of southern Kurdistan used the Qadiri order in the way feared by the aghas. Because of the political situation I could not visit the Hamawand area, and the people from there whom I interviewed did not remember any real involvement of the order in the few clashes that occurred between *misken* and aghas. True, after Qassem's coup (1958), when the Iraqi Communist Party emerged from clandestinity and landlords were attacked by the (partially ICP-controlled) popular resistance, the most influential Qadiri shaikh of the area, Shaikh Latif Barzinji, suddenly appeared to be close to the ICP — but this was obviously just a political manoeuvre that helped him salvage his lands from confiscation.

My expectations were rather disappointed during my research in that the orders seemed to play no appreciable role in nationalism now, and that in the cases where the orders took a position in class antagonisms they chose against the interests of the underprivileged, instead of serving as a medium for their protest. But then, my experience is very limited, while Kurdistan is large. The Qadiri order in Mahabad (Iran) is not the same as in Amud (Syria) or Meydan (Turkey), and differences among the Naqshbandis are even greater, from the strict orthodoxy of some branches in Turkish Kurdistan to the wild extravagances of the Heqqe sect in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> It is also conceivable that even at the places I visited some covert activity was going on without my noticing. I am therefore reluctant to extrapolate my findings and say that the orders do not (or not any more) anywhere in Kurdistan play a significant role in the mobilization and organization of people subjected to national and class oppression.

I shall describe below the functioning of the orders, and the activities of shaikhs and their *murids* (disciples) as I observed them or learned about them from interviews. By way of introduction, some more general information has to be given on dervish or Sufi orders in general, and on

the history of the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders and their coming to Kurdistan.

## Sufi and dervish orders: organized popular mysticism

Sufi orders represent a relatively late stage in the development, or rather, the institutionalization and routinization (Weber) of Sufism. It is only in the fourteenth century AD that something resembling the present orders first came into existence; in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries they spread across the whole Islamic world.<sup>7</sup> At that time Sufism (Islamic mysticism) had already undergone a long evolution. The earliest mystics were interested in nothing but the mystical experience itself, the experience of direct communion with God or Reality; theorizing about it, constructing speculative systems of interpretation for these experiences, did not concern them. Generally they lived ascetic lives in desolate places, where there was nothing to disturb their meditations. People gave them the name of Sufis probably because of the coarse woollen clothes they wore (Ar. *suf*: wool). Occasionally, they had one or a few disciples; they did not give these any kind of formal instruction but helped them to attain the same mystical experiences themselves. In later times the Sufi master became more and more of a teacher, until he ultimately came to be seen as an intermediary between his disciples (or man in general) and God. At the same time, there was a tendency to philosophize about the experience and explain it in terms acceptable to the orthodox. Theosophic systems were developed, and also more or less standardized methods and techniques of meditation and contemplation, so that disciples could, in a relatively short time, produce experiences that at least resembled the masters'.

### *Tariqa* (mystical path) and *silsila* (spiritual pedigree)

With many great masters a specific Way or Path (*tariqa*) became associated. Initially, this term referred to '... a practical method ... to guide a seeker by tracing a way of thought, feeling, and action, leading through a succession of "stages" ... to experience of divine Reality' (Trimingham 1971: 3-4). Originally '*tariqa*' simply meant this spiritual progress; later, in the thirteenth century AD, the term acquired the meaning of a school of thought and techniques associated with a certain mystic. After the death of a great Sufi, his *tariqa* remained and was transmitted by his disciples and disciples of disciples (or, rather, initiates, for by this time apparently the Ways had become initiatory: the knowledge and techniques transmitted were esoteric, not intended for general consumption). The chain of transmission of a *tariqa* was called (in Arabic) its *silsila* or *isnad*. A Sufi master's *silsila* is thus the spiritual pedigree linking him with the founder of his particular *tariqa*. It gives an indication of his status, and is, as it were, his visiting-card.

Later Sufis took care, therefore, to include as many acceptable orthodox Sufis in their *silsilas* as possible, and to exclude the less acceptable, association with whom might cause them problems with powerful representatives of orthodoxy (sultans, local rulers, etc.). Thus, many spurious links were introduced into these chains of transmission. Moreover, the *silsilas* were extended back in time from the founder of the *tariqa* to someone close to the Prophet, who could possibly have received some esoteric teaching from him.

### ***Murshid, murid and tayfe***

The Sufi teacher of the 9th–13th century AD, called shaikh ('old man') or *murshid* ('teacher'), generally lived in a retreat or resthouse (*zawiya*, *khanafa*), surrounded by his disciples (*murid*). Originally the *murids* were very mobile, and moved frequently from one shaikh to the other; in later stages the links with one particular shaikh became closer, and the *murids* had to swear an oath of allegiance to the founder of the *tariqa* and to his deputy, their shaikh. The relation *murshid-murid* thus became more central: the *murid* owed absolute obedience to his *murshid*, and it was thought that a *murshid* be indispensable for anyone on the mystical path. This close allegiance to the shaikh and to the reputed founder of the *tariqa* also bound followers of the same Path closer together: they became like one large family, as the name *tayfe* which came to be applied implies.<sup>8</sup>

Another consequence of the increasing veneration for the person of the shaikh was that his brothers and sons began to share in the holiness ascribed to him: the position became hereditary. Once the *tayfes* (out of which the present orders grew) were firmly established they more or less monopolized recognized mysticism. A person who did not belong to one of the *tayfes*, who did not subscribe to a particular *tariqa*, would find it hard to be recognized as a spiritual instructor. There is only one way to become a shaikh of one of the existing orders: another shaikh of that order has to lend one the authorization (*ijaza*) to act as an instructor of the particular *tariqa*. In the case of sons of a shaikh, it was generally taken for granted that at least one of them, generally the eldest, received his father's *ijaza*. Many *silsilas* therefore include father-son as well as teacher-disciple links.

### ***Khalifa***

Shaikhs who want to extend their personal or the order's influence over a wider area may appoint deputies (Ar. *khalifa*), whom they send to other places to spread the *tariqa* and organize the followers. It will be discussed later how a person may become a khalifa. In some orders khalifas may also become shaikhs in their own right: they may act as independent instructors and appoint their own khalifas. In other orders that is not the case. The Qadiri order in Kurdistan belongs to the latter category: with very few exceptions, only the sons of shaikhs become

shaikhs, khalifas never do. A khalifa's son may become a khalifa again, but he has to be invested anew by the shaikh. In the Naqshbandi order, on the other hand, it is quite common for khalifas to receive the *ijaza* to instruct independently. It is this factor that made its rapid growth in the nineteenth century possible (see below).

### Another interpretation of the *silsila*

At present, the *silsila* is also popularly understood as the chain by which God's blessing reaches the ordinary disciple: from God to Muhammad, along the chain of saints to the present shaikh, and from the shaikh through the khalifa to the *murid*. At the same time, the very existence of such *silsilas* that act as conductors or channels for divine blessing suggests that, in order to receive God's blessing, one has to plug in to a reliable *silsila*, that is, have at least a nominal contact with a shaikh. As it is still said in some parts of Kurdistan: 'Who does not have a shaikh, his shaikh is Satan'. This is an idea which, for obvious reasons, the shaikhs themselves encourage wholeheartedly.

### Karamat

Once it is accepted that one can only receive God's blessing through the intermediary of a shaikh, it becomes desirable to have independent confirmation that the shaikh one has chosen is indeed a favourite of God, so that he can really 'distribute' blessing. This possibility exists, for a really holy person, a beloved of God, is thought to have the power to perform miracles, which is the external proof that he is the recipient of 'special graces' (*karamat*, sg. *karama*). A great saint's *karama* is effective even after his death; physically it is present in his tomb, which may become a place of pilgrimage, especially when the saint's *karama* gives him the power to cure diseases or give divinatory dreams.<sup>9</sup> The miracles ascribed to a shaikh's *karama* are of many kinds; some of them no westerner would call miracles (like curing wounds that would have healed in the same amount of time without treatment, or converting a sinner to a pious life), others belong to the realm of traditional knowledge (such as herbal medicine), others again are based on suggestion or imagination, or even on trickery and deceit. A large number would be dismissed by most Westerners as pure accident (such as praying for rain; people tend to forget the many times the prayer was in vain, but remember the few times it was successful). A few remain that cannot easily be dismissed and belong to the category of paranormal (psychic) phenomena. Some shaikhs (very few, in fact) apparently are clairvoyants or have prognostic dreams or visions. Not unnaturally, once one has chosen a shaikh — choice is hardly the correct term, since usually entire tribes follow the same shaikh — one feels the need to convince oneself that this shaikh is a good one, in fact better than other shaikhs. This leads to a proliferation of stories about shaikhs' miracles, embellished every time they are retold, and also to a —

sometimes very intense — rivalry with the followers of other shaikhs. Examples of both will be given below.

### The history of the Qadiri order as an example

The developments in Sufism as sketched above took place very gradually, and not at all uniformly. It is not possible to give specific dates for any of the transitions. Dates of persons considered founders of the orders are very misleading, since often such a saint was considered the founder only posthumously, and for obscure reasons. Shaikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (or, in Persian and Kurdish: Gilani), after whom the Qadiri order names itself, is a case in point. What is known with certainty about his life contradicts virtually every legend current within the order and in popular lore (especially in Kurdistan numerous legends about his life and miracles still circulate; his tomb in Baghdad is one of the most frequently visited). Abd al-Qadir (1077–1166 AD) was born in Gilan<sup>10</sup> and moved early to Baghdad, where he became a doctor of Islamic law (of the Hanbali school). There is evidence (see Trimingham 1970: 41–42) that he was quite averse to Sufism in his early life and never really embraced it. However, in middle age he did receive a Sufi training, and for several years he lived in the desert as an ascetic; in his fifties he became a popular preacher – but not a Sufi master.<sup>11</sup> The first account that presented him as a popular saint and miracle worker was written a century and a half after his death, and only around 1300 AD is there evidence of a few Qadiri centres in Iraq and Syria. The spread of the Qadiri order across the whole Islamic world probably did not take place before the fifteenth century AD.<sup>12</sup> The connections between Abd al-Qadir and the order that bears his name in Kurdistan are obscure. An important shaikhly family, sometimes called the Sadate Nehri, of central Kurdistan (see the appendix, table II) claims descent from Abd al-Qadir through his son Abd al-Aziz, who is said to have come to central Kurdistan to teach the Qadiri Way — which is rather dubious. Somewhat more confirmation exists for the origins of the most important family of Qadiri shaikhs in Kurdistan, the Barzinji (Appendix, table I). Around 1360 AD, two sayyid brothers, Sayyid Musa and Sayyid Isa, came from Hamadan to Shahrzur, where they established themselves at Barzinj. They are said to have introduced the Qadiri order into southern Kurdistan. Sayyid Musa died childless, the Barzinji shaikhs descend from Sayyid Isa. In fact, except for the Sadate Nehri and the Talabant family all Qadiri shaikhs that I know of in Kurdistan have Sayyid Isa in their *silsilas*.

I reproduce below a typical example of a Qadiri *silsila*, of the khalifa Haj Sayyid Wafa Salami in Sanandaj (Iran). The *silsila* is recited in this form in the weekly rituals, and is also displayed on the walls of the *khanaga*. It is relatively short: only the most important persons in the

chain are mentioned. Moreover, as we shall see, it is not a linear chain: some of the saints mentioned were not even indirectly the *murids* of their predecessors.

The *silsila* begins with Allah, the origin of all things. Through the angel Jabrail, Allah revealed the Koran and its esoteric meaning to the Prophet, and the esoteric teachings were passed down as follows:

- 1 Muhammad
- 2 Ali
- 3 Hasan Basri
- 4 Habib-e Ajam
- 5 Daud Tai
- 6 Maruf Karkhi
- 7 Junaid Baghdadi
- 8 Abu Bakr Shibli
- 9 Ali Hakkari
- 10 Abu Yusuf Tarsusi
- 11 Abu Said Maghzuni'l-Mubaraka
- 12 Abd al-Qadir Gilani (*qutb*)
- 13 Abd al-Jabbar (son of Abd al-Qadir)
- 14 Ahmad Rifai (*qutb*)
- 15 Ahmad Badawi (*qutb*)
- 16 Ibrahim Dasuqi (*qutb*)
- 17 Isa Barzinji and Musa Barzinji
- 18 Ismail Wuliani
- 19 Ali Qos-e Dolpembe
- 20 Husayn (son of Ali Qos)
- 21 Haji Sulh Abd as-Salam (son of Husayn)
- 22 Haj Sayyid Wafa Salami

Unlike most Naqshbandi *silsilas*, which are, or credibly pretend to be, uninterrupted chains of transmission of the *tariqa*, this *silsila* shows gaps of several generations between some of the saints. One reason is that only the most important persons are mentioned, as is usually done in ordinary genealogies. This, for instance, is the case in the last part of the *silsila*, after the brothers Isa and Musa.

There may also be another reason for such a gap. A mystic may study with a contemporary shaikh and receive an *ijaza* from him, but there have been many cases of such mystics having a vision of a great shaikh of their *tariqa* from the distant past and receiving their initiation directly from him. This spiritual link is then considered more important than any other, and the persons physically and temporally intervening are no longer mentioned in the *silsila*. In the same way, one could evidently also absorb into one's *silsila* shaikhs who never had any real relation with the *tariqa*, but who have earned a great reputation or who were very orthodox, and with whom an association might be a useful protection, a façade behind which heterodox practice might safely hide.

The line between an honest conviction of a spiritual link because of a spontaneous or induced vision on the one hand, and conscious manipulation on the other, is very thin. The presence of Junaid of Baghdad in this *silsila* may be an example of early manipulation. Junaid, the master of sobriety and orthodoxy, figures in the *silsilas* of many orders, in contrast with his contemporary Abu Yazid of Bistam, the prototype of the ecstatic and intoxicated mystic who loudly gives vent to his experience in unorthodox, shocking language — and whose name is conspicuously absent from *silsilas*, although his influence was, and is, at least as great as Junaid's.<sup>13</sup> The *silsila* down as far as Junaid is identical with that given in quite a few other orders (see e.g. the early *silsila* reprinted in Trimmingham 1971: 262). Trimmingham, incidentally, notes that Ali was not included in *silsilas* until the eleventh century AD. According to the earliest preserved *silsila*, Hasan Basri received the *tariqa* from the traditionist Anas ibn Malik instead, who had received it from Muhammad (ibid.: 261).

In two other *khanaqas* (in the same town of Sanandaj, and in Mahabad) I elicited an alternative *silsila*, where Abd al-Qadir Gilani is linked with Ali, not through the above saints (whom Sunni and Shiite alike venerate), but through the first seven imams of Twelver Shiism. This in itself is not surprising, since the sayyids Isa and Musa are said to have been descendants of the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim; this *silsila* may thus be thought to represent the genealogical rather than spiritual ancestry of the two brothers.<sup>14</sup> For Shiites, however, the imams are the carriers of esoteric knowledge *par excellence*. It may well be for this reason, and out of political considerations (Iran is a Shiite state, and Sanandaj has a large Shiite population, though nearly all Kurds there are Sunnis) that some shaikhs have opted for this rather than that *silsila*. The Qadiri, especially those of Sanandaj, have the reputation of being very tolerant towards Shiism; they and dervishes of the Nematollahi order sometimes visit each other's meetings. They explain this tolerance, so contrasting with the prevailing mutual contempt of Sunni and Shiite, by saying that the differences between the two strands of Islam exist only on the superficial, exoteric (*zahiri*) level, but that on the esoteric (*batini*) level — the only level at which a dervish should consider matters — there is no difference at all.

In all *silsilas* that I collected, the two centuries between Abd al-Qadir's time and the introduction of the order into Kurdistan remain rather obscure. Abd al-Jabbar is Abd al-Qadir's son, on whom the literature is virtually silent. The reason why he is included may be that his tomb is so conspicuous: situated at the entrance to his father's mausoleum, it is like a guardian to this popular place of pilgrimage. The next three probably have nothing to do with the Qadiri order: Ahmad ar-Rifai, a contemporary of Abd al-Qadir (he lived 1106–1182) was a popular saint in southern Iraq who had a large following in his own time and can rightly be considered the founder of the Rifai order (called



'howling dervishes' because of their loud *dhikr* and extraordinary ecstatic states in which they walk on fire, cut themselves with skewers and knives, etc.<sup>15</sup>).

Tradition claims that there was a relationship between Abd al-Qadir and Ahmad ar-Rifai, who are sometimes called uncle and nephew (Brown 1868: 52). In Rifai legends Abd al-Qadir also figures as Ahmad's spiritual preceptor, but the historical evidence suggests that there was no relationship whatsoever between the two. Ahmad Badawi (15) and Ibrahim Dasuqi (16) were both founders of Egyptian orders that apparently remained restricted to Egypt. They are said to have been disciples of Rifai, although chronology makes this improbable.<sup>16</sup> Why the latter two are included in this *silsila* is a mystery to me; they are absent from the other Qadiri *silsilas* I collected. Ahmad ar-Rifai may have been included because of the similarity of Rifai and Kurdish Qadiri practices: a very loud *dhikr*, which is recited while standing, and is accentuated by violent jerks of the body; the cutting of oneself with skewers, knives and swords, the swallowing of broken glass, iron nails, poison, etc. (see the description of Qadiri meetings below). It is the Rifai order, and not the Qadiri, that is especially known for these practices. Brown, in his voluminous work on the dervish orders of the Ottoman Empire (1868) never mentioned such practices for the Qadiri order, nor have I ever heard or read of Qadiri dervishes indulging in them elsewhere than in Kurdistan. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that the Kurdish branch of the Qadiri order was (later) influenced by the Rifai order.<sup>17</sup> There are, to my knowledge, no Rifai *khanaqas* in Kurdistan proper, but there may have been in the past (as some people told me), and there still are a few not far from Kurdistan in Syria and Iraq.

This *silsila* (as well as all the others) thus leaves it a mystery as to the source and way in which the brothers Isa and Musa Barzinji received the *tariqa*. The Kurdish branch of the order is not mentioned in Trimmingham's elaborate list of Qadiri groups and offshoots (1971: 271-273), nor have I found clues elsewhere in the literature. This apparent isolation from the other Qadiri branches may also account for the peculiarities of the Kurdish Qadiris.

It seems that, at least from Sayyid Isa down, the *tariqa* was only transmitted from father to son (not from shaikh to any of his disciples). According to Edmonds (1957: 70), all Qadiri shaikhs of southern Kurdistan, except the Talabanis, trace their genealogical and spiritual descent from a certain Baba Rasul Gawra, who is in the ninth generation from Sayyid Isa. Baba Rasul had eighteen sons, through six of whom his line continued; all six arrogated the title of shaikh. The following generations also left considerable progeny, so that at present there are many branches of this family living all over Kurdistan, each of which can boast a number of practising shaikhs. The lower part of the *silsila* thus indicates how the shaikh is related to the other branches of the Barzinji family.

## Qadiri shaikhs in Kurdistan

There were then, around 1800, only two lasting shaikhly dynasties in Kurdistan, both of them associated with the Qadiri order: the Barzinji and the Sadate Nehri (sayyids of Nehri, a village in Hakkari). Several factors contributed to making the influence of these two families more lasting and widespread than that of others. In the first place, there was their association with the great Abd al-Qadir, who among the Kurds is considered the greatest saint who ever lived. He is popularly known as the *ghawth* or highest saint in the spiritual hierarchy, and it had become common practice for prospective hajis to stop in Baghdad on their way to Mecca in order to visit the shrine of Abd al-Qadir. Both shaikhly families shared in his prestige, not only because they taught the *tariqa* associated with Abd al-Qadir; the Sadate Nehri had credible claims to be his descendants (the Iranian branch of the family therefore calls itself Gilanizade), and some of the Barzinjis sometimes made the same claim. Both families also claim to be sayyids.

Secondly, the Barzinji family, and to a lesser extent the Sadate Nehri, had implanted itself as ulama and shaikhs in various parts of Kurdistan; from the seventeenth century onwards there were even Barzinjis in Mecca and Medina who acquired international renown as scholars. The family was thereby more than just another local family; its geographical expansion lent it a greater permanence. Moreover, members of the family owned considerable riches in land and animals, largely as a result of their successful religious-political roles; their riches in turn gave a great boost to their religious leadership.

Thirdly, in addition to the functions performed by other popular religious leaders, these two families led the only dervish order then existing in Kurdistan. The urban orders seem to have disappeared, for nothing is heard of them around 1800, and the Naqshbandi order was only to be re-introduced after 1811. They (or their khalifas) presided over the weekly meetings where dervishes performed a collective ritual. The dervishes proper constituted only a small proportion of their followers, but they were very devoted and excellent propagandists for their shaikhs. The practice of sending khalifas into areas where the order had not yet spread its influence covered at last the whole of Kurdistan with a Qadiri network that had a small number of local centres: the leading branches of the family. The network was not fully centralized; a number of branches refused to recognize the authority of the central branch at Barzinj. The Barzinji shaikhs managed to acquire tremendous amounts of land and considerable worldly power, if only because of their influence over tribal aghas and feudal lords.

Early this century, one of them, Shaikh Mahmud, gained world renown as a Kurdish nationalist leader and anti-British politician, who repeatedly rebelled against British rule and in 1922 even proclaimed himself king of Kurdistan.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the Jaf, who are not and never

were under the religious influence of the Barzinjis, all tribes of the Sulaymaniyah district as well as several tribes to the north supported the shaikh in these revolts.<sup>19</sup>

The revolts would have been more generalized and much more difficult, if not impossible, to put down if the Barzinjis' virtual monopoly of religio-political influence had not been broken a century earlier. In Kirkuk province the vast majority of the population (80%, according to an assistant political officer's report<sup>20</sup>) rejected the British proposal to bring the province under the authority of the shaikh, whom the British then had appointed governor of Sulaymaniyah. When the shaikh revolted, only a very small part of the population of Kirkuk (in a territory adjacent to Sulaymaniyah) supported him. An important reason was that in this province another dynasty of shaikhs had established itself, the Talabani, and most inhabitants of the province of Kirkuk owed religious and political allegiance to them rather than to the Barzinjis.

### The Talabani shaikhs

From British sources it is clear that at that time the Talabani family was the most influential of the province (e.g. Edmonds 1957: 267-271); they were rivals for power with the Barzinjis. Since the latter often took an anti-British stand, it is not surprising that the Talabani were rather pro-British. In the 1920s several districts of the province had a resident shaikh of this family, who lived surrounded by relatives and dependants, much in the style of a tribal chieftain.

A British report of the time<sup>21</sup> gives the strength of the family, including peasants attached to it, as follows:

- Shaikh Hamid: 700 houses, 300 horse, 400 foot
- Shaikh Muhammad Ra'uf: 200 houses, 50 horse
- Shaikh Tahir: 150 houses, 60 horse.

The family thus commanded some military strength as well. These three were not the only Talabani shaikhs. The most influential shaikh of the family is not even mentioned in this list: Shaikh Ali (succeeded later by his son Muhammad Ali), who resided in the town of Kirkuk, where he was the most influential notable.

Although most of the family's influence at this time seemed tribal rather than religious, it was due in the first place to the *religious* influence of past generations.<sup>22</sup> Their position was rather recent. Towards the end of the eighteenth century Mulla Mahmud, the founder of the dynasty, received an *ijaza* to teach and transmit the Qadiri *tariqa* from an Indian shaikh, Ahmad, who had travelled to these parts. Mulla Mahmud, who was a *commoner* of the Zangana tribe, then gained such fame as a shaikh that the paramount chief of his tribe gave him a daughter (or granddaughter) in marriage. Religious status was thus linked with tribal nobility, making it easy for his descendants to succeed to their ancestor's

position. It is not very clear whether the authority of the family ever went far beyond the large Zangana tribe, or whether they ever had their followers organized into a regular dervish order; the evidence seems rather negative here.

One member of the family, Jalal Talabani (of the Koi Sanjaq branch) rose to great prominence in the Kurdish nationalist movement of more recent times. From the 1950s he was a member of the political bureau of the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan and became a distinguished guerrilla strategist, and ultimately Barzani's chief rival for paramount leadership of the Kurdish nation. The successful start of his career was undoubtedly partly due to the fame of his family (apart from his undeniable personal qualities). Another member of the family, Mukarram Talabani, was a leading member of the Iraqi Communist Party and in the 1970s an Iraqi cabinet minister.

This family thus evidently curtailed the influence of the Barzinjis in Kirkuk province. There is in fact a branch of the Barzinji family in this province, at Kripchina, but apparently most of its *murids* are from other parts of Kurdistan; it has many khalifas in Persian Kurdistan!

A more severe blow was dealt to Qadiri — and therefore to Barzinji — influence when the Naqshbandi order was introduced into Kurdistan, early in the nineteenth century. This order spread in an amazingly short time all over Kurdistan. Some Qadiri shaikhs were converted to the Naqshbandi path, in other places new shaikhs appeared, who in turn were to send their khalifas into the surrounding areas. Soon a large proportion of the common people had transferred their pious respect and veneration — as well as their financial contributions — from the Qadiri to the Naqshbandi *tariqa*, or from Qadiri to Naqshbandi shaikhs. All this is attributed to the activities of one exceptional person, Mawlana Khalid. After being initiated into the Qadiri path, the Mawlana travelled to India where he received the *ijaza* to instruct and transmit the Naqshbandi path. Upon his return to Kurdistan he instated many shaikhs and sent them out to all corners of Kurdistan and the Islamic lands beyond.

### The Naqshbandi *tariqa* and the Naqshbandi order

The Naqshbandi *tariqa* finds its historical origin in central Asia. The shaikh from whom it derives its name, Baha ad-Din Naqshband (1318–1389, of Bukhara), was neither the inventor of the *tariqa* nor the first organizer of the order. The association of the path with him is, however, more justified than in the case of Abd al-Qadir, since he is known to have been an important reformer of this *tariqa*, which already existed in his time and the rules of which had been laid down for the first time by Abd al-Khaliq Ghujdawani (of Ghujdawan, near Bukhara, d. 1220). Baha ad-Din acknowledged this spiritual ancestry,<sup>23</sup> and in many

texts of the order Abd al-Khaliq and Baha ad-Din are considered its co-founders. The official *silsilas* of the order have to trace the *tariqa* back to Muhammad, of course, and they do this through the Caliph Abu Bakr. The person who brought the *tariqa* from the central Islamic lands to Central Asia is Yusuf Hamadani (1049–1140). Abd al-Khaliq is called Yusuf's fourth *khalifa*.<sup>24</sup> This official pedigree of the *tariqa* cannot conceal the undeniably central Asian (more specifically, Buddhist) influences in the mystical techniques used. Some of the eight basic rules formulated by Abd al-Khaliq, as well as the three Baha ad-Din later added to them, are nearly identical to some of the instructions given to Buddhist meditators, while they are not at all similar to that which I encountered in other Islamic orders.<sup>25</sup>

Baha ad-Din reformed the *tariqa*, but he did not organize it into an order. That seems to have been the work of a successor of the second generation after him, Nasir ad-Din Ubaidallah al-Ahrar (1404–1490), who was also the first Naqshbandi shaikh to acquire considerable secular powers. Ahrar's disciples spread the order to India and to Turkey, in both of which it flourished. The Indian, Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi, introduced further reforms in the order; his influence gradually spread west but was often strongly opposed by other Naqshbandis. Mawlana Khalid received his initiation into the order not in Turkey or in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which were the major centres of Naqshbandi propaganda, but in Delhi, from a shaikh of the reformed Indian branch, Abdullah Dihlawi (also known as Shah Ghulam Ali).<sup>26</sup>

Ziyaeddin Khalid — usually called Mawlana or Shaikh Khalid — was a Kurd of the Jaf tribe, belonging to the commoner stratum. After a traditional religious education in madrasas in Sanandaj, Sulaymaniyah and Baghdad he became a mulla in Sulaymaniyah. Intelligent and ambitious, he soon became one of the city's foremost teachers. In 1808, around thirty years old, he set out for India. The hagiographies give various reasons for this uncommon voyage: divine calls through mysterious encounters on his Meccan pilgrimage a few years before and through inspired dreams; the arrival in Sulaymaniyah of an Indian sufi who had apparently been sent out to find Khalid and lead him to his master. Khalid had no previous Naqshbandi connections, but, on his way to India or maybe shortly before, he spent a period at the feet of Shaikh Abdullah, the head of the Sadate Nehri (see Appendix, Table II), who initiated him in the Qadiri path. It is significant that it was with Shaikh Abdullah, and not in his hometown of Sulaymaniyah, where the leading Barzinji shaikh resided, that Khalid received the Qadiri *tariqa*. His tribe, the Jaf, was also in later times antagonistic to the Barzinji shaikhs, and the leading shaikh of this family, Shaikh Maruf of Node, was to become Mawlana Khalid's deadly enemy.

In Delhi, Khalid studied for a year with Shaikh Abdullah; after he had received the *ijaza* to transmit the Naqshbandi *tariqa* he returned to Iraq (1811), where he lived alternately in Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah

until in 1820 he had to flee from the latter city and established himself in Damascus.<sup>27</sup> He was an extremely effective missionary for the Naqshbandi *tariqa*: he even succeeded in converting some Qadiri shaikhs to it, among them his own former instructor Shaikh Abdullah, and Shaikh Ahmadi Sardar of the Sergelu branch of the Barzinji family; both lineages have remained Naqshbandis ever since. Moreover, he attracted large numbers of disciples,<sup>28</sup> some of whom he instated as shaikhs of the order.

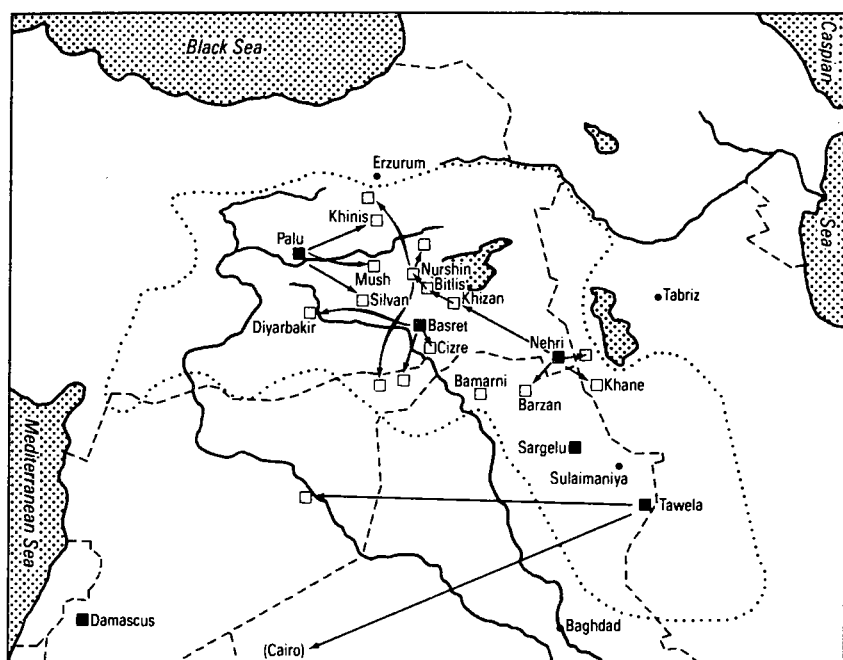
These new shaikhs in turn became secondary centres for the spreading of the order; they too appointed khalifas of whom some became shaikhs in their own right. Thus a rapidly expanding network was laid over Kurdistan (see map 9, where only those shaikhly families that became very well-known are drawn in the map; they represent but a fraction of all Naqshbandi shaikhs in Kurdistan). The influence acquired by these families later assured them key roles in Kurdish nationalism. Shaikh Ubeydullah of Nehri, Shaikh Said of Palu and Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the leaders of important nationalist movements, were the descendants of shaikhs who received the Naqshbandi *tariqa* through Mawlana Khalid.

As might be expected, the rapid growth of the Naqshbandi order caused much jealousy among Qadiri shaikhs, notably with those who had formerly been the most influential persons in Kurdistan and had now lost that position. Shaikh Maruf-e Node, the head of the Barzinji family at Sulaymaniyah, became Mawlana Khalid's sworn enemy. He was in league with the other ulama of that town, who themselves were unhappy with the great influence and superstitious veneration Khalid commanded. A certain amount of rivalry and mutual jealousy always remained between Naqshbandi and Qadiri shaikhs.

### **Why did the Naqshbandi order spread so rapidly?**

Nearly all authors who have written about the orders or about shaikhs in Kurdistan have commented on the rapid spread of the Naqshbandi order immediately after its introduction by Mawlana Khalid. None, however, have tried to give an explanation of this remarkable phenomenon, which was due to more than the extraordinary personality of the shaikh. Unsatisfactory as personality characteristics are as an explanation for any social phenomena, the shaikh's personality certainly becomes irrelevant when we try to understand why the order was to play such an outstanding political role in Kurdistan after his death. In my opinion, an explanation has to be sought in either or both of the following two factors:

1. the characteristics of the Naqshbandi order (distinguishing it, for instance, from the Qadiri order);
2. the particular social situation of Kurdistan at the time of the introduction of the order.



Map 9. Important centres of propagation of the Naqshbandi order.

- ..... approximate boundaries of Kurdistan
- residences of Mawlana Khalid's khalifas
- residences of other Naqshbandi shaikhs (khalifa of khalifa, etc.)
- shaikh-khalifa relationships

## 1. Relevant characteristics of the Naqshbandi order

In the opinion of many Naqshbandi, the rapid spread of their order is due to the spiritual superiority of the Naqshbandi *tariqa* and the moral superiority of their shaikhs. Although I personally share their conviction that the Naqshbandi meditations, especially when practised under the guidance of a wise and enlightened teacher, have greater spiritual value than the gross techniques of inducing ecstatic states as practised in the Qadiri order, this can never suffice as an explanation. There is no reason why worldly success might be due to moral or spiritual superiority. Moreover, I think that one should attempt to find a sociological explanation for social phenomena.

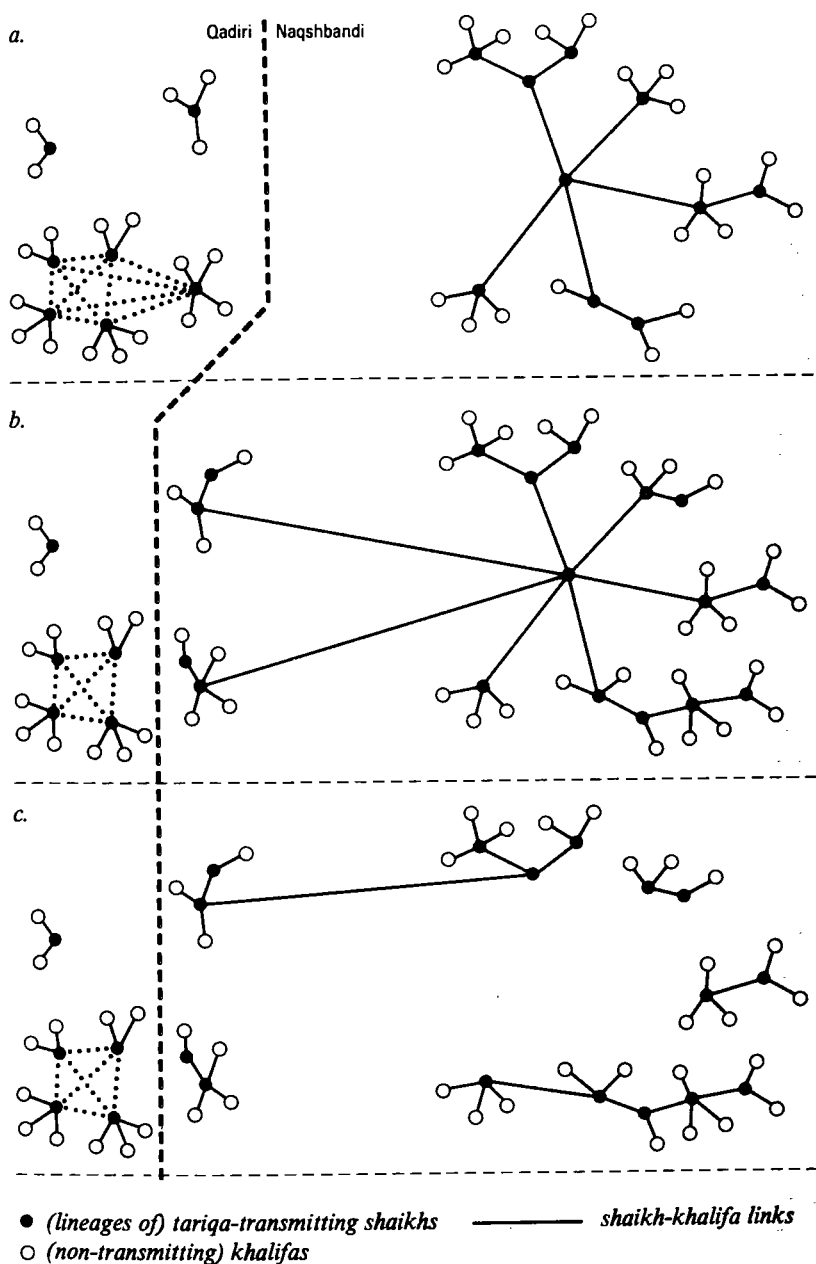
A factor of primary sociological importance is, evidently, the organizational pattern of the orders. It is conceivable that the Naqshbandiya is organizationally more efficient and more prone to autonomous growth than the Qadiri order. One relevant difference between the orders has, in fact, already been mentioned. The khalifas of Qadiri shaikhs do not, in general, become shaikhs themselves, nor do

their sons automatically become khalifas in their turn. Shaikhhood remained restricted to the Barzinji family and the Sadate Nehri; the founder of the Talabani family is the only Kurdish Qadiri shaikh known to me who did not inherit this position, but received the *ijaza* to teach from a teacher to whom he was not related (significantly, not a Kurd but an Indian). Several of Mawlana Khalid's khalifas, on the other hand, became shaikhs in their own right, appointing their own khalifas, some of whom in turn appointed khalifas again. Not all khalifas appointed by Mawlana Khalid and his successors actually became such 'tariqa-transmitting' shaikhs, and most of the latter appointed only a few khalifas. Even so, the shaikh-khalifa links formed a rapidly growing network which soon covered most of Kurdistan.

The difference between the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders, and the subsequent developments, are graphically represented in Fig. 7. The lineages of *tariqa*-transmitting shaikhs are represented by black dots, their khalifas by open circles. Shaikh-khalifa links are represented as lines. The three structures on the left represent the three families of Qadiri shaikhs in Kurdistan with their khalifas. Since one of these families, the Barzinji, has several branches, I have represented them by a number of black dots. The broken lines between them indicate that their connections are not strong ties of allegiance such as exist between khalifa and shaikh. The difference between the graphs of the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders is that, with the first, the dots on the periphery cannot become secondary growth centres, while the latter resembles a crystal that by its very presence precipitates further crystallization on its periphery and may swallow smaller crystals. This graph clarifies how the Naqshbandi order could pull some Qadiri shaikhs with their followers to its side and incorporate them into its structure (Fig. 7b). Although the principle of growth is adequately represented, these graphs suggest more integration than really exists, both for the Barzinji family and for the entire Naqshbandi order. Soon after Mawlana Khalid's death, conflicts between Naqshbandi shaikhs that lived too close to each other became apparent.<sup>29</sup> At present the links with the centre of the graph are virtually non-existent. There is no generally acknowledged head of the Kurdish branch of the Naqshbandi order; none is recognized as the successor to Mawlana Khalid. According to some, the shaikhs of Biyare and Tawela are Mawlana Khalid's successors; others recognize Shaikh Ahmad-e Kaftar at Damascus (Syria's supreme mufti) as the nominal head of the order. In neither case does this have any organizational consequences. *Murids* visit only their own shaikhs, and show respect to their shaikhs' *murshids* (or their descendants), not to any more central person. Thus, the order has broken into a number of regional clusters that continue to act as centres of propagation. The present situation is represented in Fig. 7c. Some parts of the network are completely unconnected with others. In fact, very antagonistic relations may prevail between shaikhly lineages. On the other hand, some lineages cemented



Fig. 7 Structure and phases of development of the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders in Kurdistan.



very intimate ties with others by sending their sons to study with them and by establishing marital ties.

The partial disintegration of the Naqshbandi network is one of the reasons why the order never achieved in Kurdistan what the Sanusi order did among the Beduin of Cyrenaica: unification of the segmentary tribal society by superimposing a centralized structure on it. But the fact remains that the Naqshbandi organization has an inherent capacity for more rapid growth than the Qadiri and that it permits — temporarily, at least — greater integration. Moreover, locally or regionally some Naqshbandi shaikhs did achieve what the order failed to do for the whole of Kurdistan: they provided a focus for less particularistic loyalties of tribesmen (see the discussion of Shaikh Said's revolt in chapter 5).

The organizational structure of the Naqshbandi order thus facilitated its rapid expansion, partly at the expense of the Qadiri order. The fact that Mawlana Khalid initiated an extraordinary number of khalifas further boosted the order's tendency to expand. Nevertheless, this by itself can hardly explain the rapid growth in the decades following Khalid's appearance.

The stated structural characteristic is not unique to the Naqshbandi order, but shared by many others. The Naqshbandiya as well as several other orders had been represented in Kurdistan in the preceding centuries (cf. van Bruinessen 1989b), but this had then never given rise to the development of a network encompassing all of, or considerable portions of, Kurdistan. Something must have changed in the region's social and political situation, facilitating the order's sudden and rapid expansion in the early and mid-nineteenth century.

## **2. Socio-political changes in Kurdistan in the early nineteenth century**

The first half of the nineteenth century was, in fact, a period of great upheaval and important political change in Kurdistan, especially in the parts belonging to the Ottoman Empire. Some aspects of these changes have been discussed in the preceding chapter. They will be reviewed here to see whether and how they may have contributed to the expansion of the Naqshbandi order.

Rich, whom I have had occasion to quote many times already, was an exponent of the most fundamental of these changes, which carried the others in its wake; the penetration of European imperialism. From 1808 to 1821 he was the resident (*balyoz*) of the British East India Company at Baghdad. It is of course no coincidence that he is our best contemporary source on the situation of Kurdistan during that period.

Rich was soon to be followed by a long series of European explorers of Kurdistan, most of whom, besides their missionary or scientific concerns, had the commercial and political interests of their respective countries on their minds. Of these, the Christian missionaries made the greatest impact. They stayed in general much longer than the others;

their activities (including the building of churches and schools) were more conspicuous and had a more direct effect on the local balance of power. Both the Kurds and their Christian neighbours were very much aware of the growing influence of the European powers, especially Britain, Russia and France, on the Ottoman government. They saw this in terms of a confrontation between Christendom and Islam, and perceived the possibility that the European powers might ally themselves with the local Christians against the Muslims; the missionaries were seen by many as the forerunners of direct military intervention.<sup>30</sup> This led inevitably to an exacerbation of the tension between the Kurds and the Christian groups of Kurdistan. It was only natural that in such circumstances religious leaders would ride to political prominence on the back of anti-foreign and anti-Christian feelings among the populace.

European imperialism was also a major factor in another important political change: the destruction of the semi-independent Kurdish emirates. In fact, it was *German* officers who, on a few occasions, assisted the Ottoman armies to accomplish this.<sup>31</sup> Since their incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, large parts of Kurdistan had been ruled indirectly through Kurdish dynasties that maintained a large degree of autonomy (see chapter 3). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries central control had weakened rather than increased, but Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) and his successors introduced — under European pressure — a series of military and administrative reforms aiming at centralization and the establishment of direct rule everywhere. The remaining *mirs* were deposed one by one and replaced by centrally-appointed governors. The result was a considerable increase of unrest and conflict; the emirates fell apart into quarrelling tribes led by chieftains who were all equally eager to grab as much power as the new situation allowed. The *mirs* had been able to keep these rivalries in check; their rule had been severe and sometimes even cruel, but effective and reliable. Several contemporary reports reveal that law and order prevailed and people's lives and possessions were secure.<sup>32</sup> The governors who had to replace the *mirs* had neither the latter's knowledge of local affairs nor their legitimacy. They were therefore incapable of keeping tribal conflicts and feuds in check. Several governors, in fact, further incited such conflicts, deliberately attempting to divide and rule. As a result, lawlessness and insecurity were rampant in the former emirates.

It was this state of affairs, I think, that suddenly propelled the shaikhs into the role of political leaders. Government officials did not have sufficient authority and legitimacy to negotiate the settlement of serious tribal conflicts, but shaikhs did, especially when they were not associated with any of the feuding tribes. By settling conflicts between tribes they also acquired *de facto* a political superiority over these (even

today, negotiating between two feuding tribes is recognized as a sure avenue to political ascendancy). Tribal conflicts having attained unprecedented and quite dangerous proportions, it is likely that many tribesmen welcomed the shaikhs (whose numbers had increased due to Mawlana Khalid's efforts) as trouble-shooters and thereby turned them into political leaders whose authority far transcended tribal boundaries.

Several shaikhs are known to have deliberately exploited the opportunities provided by the rivalries of tribal chieftains in order to impose their authority over them. The unrivalled description of a shaikh's manipulation of such conflict, written down by the scribe of the shaikh concerned (Shaikh Muhammad Siddiq of Nehri) is the tale of Suto and Tato (Nikitine and Soane 1923). Suto and Tato were the aghas of the Oramar and Rekani tribes respectively, and engaged in a violent conflict. Shaikh Muhammad Siddiq '[whose] desire was ever to get fine flour from between two hard millstones,' intervened in the conflict by offering Tato his protection (for a price) and intimidating Suto. The latter had to consent to a settlement on the shaikh's terms. Both chieftains lost a lot in the conflict, and the gains were all the shaikh's. Suto and Tato, fearing that the shaikh would end up owning all their belongings, then reconciled themselves and in order to be free of Shaikh Muhammad Siddiq placed themselves under the protection of a rival shaikh, Abdussalam of Barzan.

These events took place around the turn of the century. The shaikhs of Nehri and Barzan and several others had risen to positions that almost rivalled those of the mirs in the past. A closer look at the chronology of the developments shows that the emergence of such 'political' shaikhs closely followed the destruction of the emirates.

Mawlana Khalid's appearance came at a fortuitous time: he returned from India in 1811 and died in 1826. When he started his proselytizing, the power of most of the mirs was already on the wane, but some of the emirates were experiencing a last period of splendour: Botan, Hakkari, Baban and Soran had in fact very powerful rulers, while those of Badinan were weak but universally respected. Law and order prevailed, and as yet there was no need for shaikhs as peace-makers. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the first generation of shaikhs, appointed by Mawlana Khalid himself, did not yet acquire the enormous influence that their sons and successors were to wield.

In 1834 the last mir of Soran, Muhammad Pasha Miri Kor, was brought to heel by Ottoman troops under Rashid Muhammad Pasha and taken prisoner (see chapter 3). Both Soran and Badinan, which had been subjected by Miri Kor, were brought under the direct rule of the governor of Mosul province, the tyrannical but effective Muhammad Pasha (known as Inje Bayraqdar). From then on central Kurdistan was more easily accessible to European and American missionaries. Their activities led to a rapid deterioration of Muslim-Christian relations in central Kurdistan. In 1843 Kurds from the Botan emirate attacked the

Assyrian Christians of the Tiyari district, who had previously paid tribute to Botan's ally Hakkari, but had stopped paying their annual tributes. Around ten thousand men were killed, many women and children abducted as slaves.<sup>33</sup> Even Layard, who had no great sympathy for the mir of Botan, had to admit that the massacre was at least partly provoked by the construction of a fortress-like school and boarding-house by American missionaries.<sup>34</sup> However, he put the major blame for the violent anti-Christian feeling among local Kurds on a 'fanatical' shaikh living at the court of Botan, Shaikh Sayyid Taha, who already wielded great influence.<sup>35</sup> This is, incidentally, the earliest instance I have as yet come across of a shaikh with a considerable political influence.

British pressure on the Ottoman government, prompted by the massacre of Tiyari, resulted in a military campaign against Bedir Khan Beg of Botan and his ally, Nurullah Beg of Hakkari. In 1845 both were subdued and removed from the area. Two years later, the last remaining emirate, Baban, ended when its ruler, Ahmad Pasha Baban, was defeated by the governor of Baghdad. In the ensuing situation the shaikhs flourished; whereas previously none of the shaikhs known to us was an actual political leader, from this period on nearly all important political leaders in Kurdistan were shaikhs, or at least belonged to shaikhly families. A closer look at some important shaikhly families of Kurdistan shows that their political ascendancy closely followed the collapse of the emirates (see Appendix for more details).

1. The Sadate Nehri. By the mid-19th century, the shaikhs of Nehri and the mir of the minor emirate of Shemdinan had for some time exercised a form of double rule in this district (south of Hakkari).<sup>36</sup> Shaikh Sayyid Taha I became quite influential in the emirate of Botan by playing on the religious emotions of the Kurds and inciting them against the Christians. After the capture of Bedir Khan Beg he escaped to Nehri, the residence of the mir of Shemdinan, Musa Beg. In 1849, when Layard visited Nehri, Musa Beg was probably the last mir who had not formally given his allegiance to the Turks. His position was precarious however, and he was losing his influence to Sayyid Taha (Layard 1853, 1: 376). In the time of Taha's son Ubeydullah, all worldly power had passed into the hands of the shaikh,<sup>37</sup> who came to rule over a large territory.

2. *Barzan* is a village on the southern edge of the territory of the strong Zibari tribe, bordering also on that of other tribes. Sayyid Taha sent one of his khalifas, Abdurrahman, to this strategic village, an ideal spot for a shaikh to establish himself, physically between groups between which he might mediate to settle conflicts. Soon the Zibari aghas saw the Barzani shaikhs as their most dangerous rivals; the history of Barzan is largely one of wars between the shaikhs and the Zibari aghas. It is significant that by 1910, however, the main rivals of the then

shaikh of Barzan, Abdussallam II, were apparently not the Zibari aghas but two other *shaikhs*: Muhammad Siddiq of Nehri and Bahaeddin of Bamarni.<sup>38</sup> I have not been able to trace the latter's origins. He was also a Naqshbandi shaikh and (in the words of a British political officer) had 'a great spiritual influence throughout the hills, which he to a certain extent, and his son Rauf to a greater extent, have used to further their own private ends, and enrich themselves at the expense of the Christians'.<sup>39</sup> Badger, who writes extensively on the political intrigues in the Badinan district immediately following the dissolution of the emirate, does not mention any shaikh at all. This suggests that these rose to prominence only after some time had passed.

3. A strong point in favour of the hypothesis is that not only the Naqshbandi shaikhs but also the old Qadiri shaikhly family, Barzinji, achieved its most significant political power only after the eclipse of the Baban emirate. For, as Edmonds informs us (1957: 73-4), it was not Mawlana Khalid's jealous rival Shaikh Maruf but his son Kak Ahmad who achieved great prominence and from whom dates the leading role which the family played in the area's politics. Its ascendancy thus coincided closely with the decay and collapse of Baban rule.

A directly related fact is that all shaikhly families who achieved some political prominence in the past century resided, and had their followers in, the parts of Kurdistan with the highest degree of 'tribality', viz. areas inhabited by small tribes with a high incidence of blood feud and other tribal conflicts. Among large tribes with a strong leadership (such as the Jaf, who never came under the influence of the Barzinjis and most of the time even opposed them),<sup>40</sup> and in the purely feudal areas (such as the plains of Diyarbakir and Erbil), where tribal conflicts do not, or seldom, occur, no shaikhs of great influence ever emerged. This seems at odds with the observation that shaikhs often recruit their most devoted followers from the most exploited, the lowest strata of society, notably from among the non-tribal peasantry. The shaikhs of Barzan became the champions of the exploited, non-tribal peasantry against the Zibari (and other) aghas. As Barth noted, the Hamawand aghas were afraid the *miskén* might use the Qadiri order to organize themselves against them. I also found that the most active and devoted dervishes were generally minor or landless peasants, lumpen-proletarians or petty craftsmen. It might be thought, therefore, that the 'feudal' areas, with a large population of exploited peasants, would be ideal places for shaikhs to settle and mobilize a following. However, these low-class followers are of little importance in the rise to power of a shaikh (with the possible exception of the Barzani shaikhs). Virtually all shaikhs are rather aristocratic: they deal preferably with tribal chieftains. Manipulation of these chieftains and their conflicts is the most effective way of manipulating entire tribes, and this is the course usually taken. The great shaikh Ubeydullah of Nehri, for instance, wielded great power

because many chieftains (and therefore, entire tribes) owed him allegiance; the same was true of Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji. Frequently shaikhs marry daughters of tribal chieftains; for the shaikh this means a recognition of his high status, for both parties it is some guarantee (not a reliable one, however) that they will not treat each other too ruthlessly in power rivalries and will assist each other against third parties.

Once a shaikh's power has been established, and a network of local groups of followers who meet regularly has developed, this existing network may conceivably be used by members of the order for other purposes, even for class-based action. This is, however, not a factor in *establishing* the shaikh's power. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the shaikhs would allow their *murids* to transform the order into a means of class struggle. Shaikh Latif Barzinji himself, the *murshid* of Barth's revolutionary *miskén*, was one of the biggest land-owners of the province.

A third important socio-economic change that took place somewhat later was the consolidation of the position of a number of influential shaikhly families: the land registration (*tapu*). This was one of the major administrative reforms introduced in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 3). It was the aghas, shaikhs, rich merchants and local government officials who profited from this measure. They were the persons with whom the *tapu* officials came into contact, and they managed to have most land registered in their own names. The lands that shaikhs acquired in this way were supplemented by land grants from followers. It had been age-old practice to endow land for pious foundations (*waqf*): the proceeds of the land (or a part thereof) were to pay for the upkeep of a mosque, shrine, etc. Shaikhs who were granted waqf lands usually treated them as their privately owned lands. Thus the Barzinji shaikhs became some of the richest landowners in the Sulaymaniyah district. Their riches in turn increased their political power.

The argument of this section may be summarized as follows: due to Mawlana Khalid's proselytizing activities, the number of shaikhs in Kurdistan had increased during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Missionary activity and fears of Christian domination due to European influence made the Kurds especially susceptible to propaganda stressing their Muslim identity and directed against Christians. The general chaos and lack of security that followed the decay and collapse (or destruction) of the Kurdish emirates made many people turn to religion (i.e. to the shaikhs) to find the security and assurance that was so lacking in their daily lives. Thus the influence of shaikhs among the population at large increased. Due to the absence of the strong authority formerly provided by the mirs, there was a dramatic increase in the number and seriousness of tribal conflicts and of power

rivalries between competing petty chieftains. Shaikhs were the only authorities who, by virtue of their being outside the tribal organization, could bring such conflicts to an end. By doing so, they often managed to add to their own influence and riches at the expense of the rival parties. Shaikhs thus became the most influential indigenous leaders of Kurdistan, and the obvious focal points for nationalist sentiment. The land registration gave many shaikhs the opportunity to consolidate their worldly powers and become recognized landlords.

## Rituals of the Qadiri order

Up to this point, I have only dealt with the history of Sufism and of the dervish orders active in Kurdistan. In this and the following sections I shall describe how the orders operate at present in Kurdistan.

### A Qadiri majlis in Mahabad

My first contact with dervishes, on an earlier trip (in 1973), had been with a group of Qadiris in the town of Mahabad in Persian Kurdistan. Twice a week, on Thursday and Monday nights (for Muslims, who reckon the day from sunset to sunset, these are the nights of Friday and Tuesday), the Qadiri dervishes of Mahabad come together at their meeting place (*khanaqa* or *tekiye*) for a ritual meeting (*majlis*). There are two Qadiri *khanaqas* in town, one of the *murids* of Shaikh Abdulkarim of Kripchina, one of those of Shaikh Baba's descendants of Ghauthabad (see Appendix, Table I, nos 7 and 12 respectively).<sup>41</sup> Only on special occasions — such as a visit by a shaikh from another town — do the dervishes visit each other's *khanaqas*. Since both shaikhs reside elsewhere, the ceremonies here are led by their deputies (*khalifa*). I attended majlises in each of the *khanaqas* several times. I shall describe here the interior of the Kripchina *khanaqa* and the proceedings of one majlis there.

Inside it looks like a simple mosque: there is a *mihrab* (prayer niche, facing Mecca), but no *minbar* (pulpit, as in mosques where the Friday prayers are performed). On the same wall hangs a drawing representing the prophet Muhammad, and two other portraits: Shaikh Abdulkarim and his grandfather. There is a green flag embroidered with the names of Allah, Muhammad, and the four rightly-guided Caliphs Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali. All other *khanaqas* I visited looked more or less similar. Some have more portraits, flags and the *silsila* of their shaikh in writing on the wall. In theory a majlis can be held anywhere, even in a private room. But all Qadiri groups I met had a specially built *khanaqa* paid for from contributions by the dervishes and other disciples of the shaikh. Portraits of shaikhs, flags, frame- and kettle-drums, and the sharp objects used during the ceremonies (see below) distinguish the



*khanaqa* from an ordinary mosque. Naqshbandi *khanaqas* are generally more austere. Naqshbandis, moreover, quite often hold their majlis in ordinary mosques.

The majlis was to begin after *maghrib*, the sunset prayers. One by one the dervishes came in — those with lowest status first, those claiming a higher status by virtue of professional or financial position taking care to arrive somewhat later. When entering, everyone gave a 'salaam alaykum!' to those already present, went to the wall with the *mihrab* and kissed the *mihrab* and the green flag (a kiss with the lips, followed by a quick reverent touch with the forehead). Some also kissed the wall under the portraits of the shaikhs and of Muhammad. Then they sat down with the others, smoked a cigarette (!), drank a glass of tea (which had meanwhile been prepared by a boy), and talked quietly about the events of the day. When the khalifa entered all stood up, to sit down again only after he was seated. They were sitting roughly in a circle, the khalifa in front of the *mihrab*; the better-dressed people sat closest to the khalifa. After a while the khalifa gave a sign that he wished to start; cigarettes were extinguished, tea-glasses carried away. The khalifa opened with a short prayer (in Arabic): one of the standard prayers for the Prophet and his people, for his Companions and the early saints of Islam. He then continued to invoke divine blessings on the Ghawth-e Azam (Abd al-Qadir Gilani) and the entire *silsila* of the Qadiri order, as well as over the shaikhs of the Naqshbandi, Suhrawardi, Kubrawi and Chishti orders. During these prayers he left some moments of silence for everyone to whisper his own (but equally standardized) prayers. After these prayers all dervishes joined in the *zikr* (Ar. *dhikr*: 'remembering', recitation of the divine name).

A blind dervish with a strong and beautiful voice led the invocation, indicating which of the many formulas to recite, and how many times. I had seen this blind man every day, sitting and begging in the street opposite my hotel. It had struck me that he never indulged in the (moderate) self-humiliation so common among beggars, especially in Iran; here in the *khanaqa* he possessed undeniably a great dignity, as his strong and self-assured voice sang the *zikrs* in Arabic. He was the only one who seemed to have put on clean clothes for the occasion; the others wore their everyday working clothes. His white turban indicated that he had achieved a certain degree of formal, religious learning (it is one of the mulla's attributes). On a long *tasbeih* ('rosary') he counted the number of times each formula had to be recited (some ten different formulas, most of them recited seven times). Then followed the *silsila* of Shaikh Abdulkarim-e Kripchina, recited by the same blind dervish. The only irregularity in this *silsila* was that it also included Baha ad-Din Naqshband (which suggests that Shaikh Abdulkarim also has an *ijaza* to instruct in the Naqshbandi path, for in ordinary Qadiri *silsilas* Baha ad-Din is never mentioned).

Then again a *zikr* (called the '*zikr-i haqq*'): the dervishes recited the

*shahada* (confession of faith), *la illaha illa 'llah* ('there is no god but God'), several hundreds of times, standing up now, and swaying the upper part of the body in cadence with the incantation, bowing to the left on the *la illaha*, and on the *illa 'llah* to the right. The incantation alone had a hypnotic effect even on me; for the participants this effect must have been much stronger, combined as it was with rapid, rhythmical breathing and movements of the head and upper body. The '*la illaha illa 'llah*' gave way to the shorter '*Allah, Allah, Allah, ...*'. Drums joined in, the bodily movements became ever wilder. By now the dervishes had one by one pulled off their turbans and untied their long hair (Qadiri dervishes generally let their hair grow long; normally it is tied up and hidden under a turban, but during the *zīkr* they undo it, which adds a fierce look to an otherwise already quite impressive performance). Some now experienced (or feigned) a form of ecstasy, and uttered wild shrieks during this *zīkr*. When, after several hundred '*Allah, Allah*'s the recitation was stopped, the drums continued and the dervishes' movements became even wilder. Suddenly one jumped up, grabbed a skewer (some 40 cm long, 5 mm in diameter, with a wooden head to which short metal chains were attached) and, shouting loudly, carried it around the *khanaqa*, holding it up, so as to draw everybody's attention to it. Though he seemed to be in a state of trance he made sure the khalifa and I, the foreign visitor, took good notice. He then knelt down in front of me and, opening his mouth widely and pulling his head far backward, put the skewer with its sharp point on the back of his tongue. Pressing strongly he pushed the skewer through his lower jaw, so that its point came out under his chin. He got up and walked around the *khanaqa*. After some five minutes he pulled the skewer out again, and pressed the wound close with his thumb. There was not more than just one drop of blood. A few minutes later we shared a cup of tea.

Meanwhile others had taken similar skewers, bared their trunks and put the skewers through their sides. Another had taken a sword and started beating his bare chest with its sharp edge, inflicting upon himself superficial wounds. Again another swallowed a handful of iron nails, washing them down with a glass of water. All this, though spectacular enough in itself, was done rather artlessly, and it was evident that there was no trickery involved. Later, in other *khanaqas*, I was to see more such acts: glass was chewed and eaten, poisonous chemicals (insecticides) swallowed, bare electric wires touched — sparks showing that the wire was indeed live. Or two men would hold a sword horizontally, with its (very) sharp edge turned up; a third would, with bared torso, bend down over it and let a fourth climb on his back, so that the weight pressed his belly deep over the sword's sharp edge. The sword later had to be removed very carefully, and left a noticeable scar. The khalifa would then press the skin together again and put some of his saliva on the wound. Abd al-Qadir is said to have first applied this method of healing wounds. It was his *karamat* that made the method

work, and Qadiri khalifas may apply it successfully because Abd al-Qadir's *karamat* is transmitted along the Qadiri *silsila*.

Not all dervishes inflicted wounds upon themselves. Some only performed a hopping dance in front of the others. Others again did nothing special at all, and just continued their rhythmical movements and rapid breathing. When at last the drums stopped, all sat down and fastened their hair and turbans again. Tea was brought, and the atmosphere again became very informal and relaxed. After a while one of the dervishes took a frame-drum, and accompanying himself on it, sang a religious poem. After a few more poems, during which some dervishes showed again the signs of entering a trance, the khalifa ended the meeting with a short prayer and everyone went home.

### Trance states and self-mutilation

The Qadiri majlises I attended (Mahabad, Sanandaj and Bane in Iran, and in Amud in Syria) all followed more or less the same pattern. During the *zikr* the lights are usually subdued or completely extinguished, which probably facilitates entering a state of trance. Though the trance states seemed very genuine (in the few cases where they were not genuine this was quite obvious and people visibly suffered pain), the dervishes usually took care to attract as much attention to their acts as they could, uttering loud shrieks before starting. Many made sure that I, the outsider, saw every detail. The most important audience, however, was obviously the khalifa (who represents the shaikh, who represents Abd al-Qadir, who represents Muhammad, who represents God). The khalifa, on the other hand, made sure that the dervishes did not do themselves any serious harm under trance. If so, he told them to stop, touched their wounds, and smeared some saliva on them. None of the dervishes I saw ever inflicted any really serious wounds on themselves; vital organs were avoided. The only amazing thing is that no one seems to contract dangerous infections; the skewers, knives and swords used are never thoroughly cleaned, let alone disinfected.

The dervishes believe themselves protected from harmful consequences by the *karama* of the very holy Abd al-Qadir, which is transmitted to the present shaikh and khalifa. According to them it is only safe to perform these dangerous acts after one has received permission to do so from the shaikh or his khalifa. They believe that someone doing these acts without prior permission does not have the protection of Abd al-Qadir and is therefore likely to die.

The question why the Qadiri dervishes indulge in these self-mutilating practices can be approached on different levels. The historical origins of the practice are lost in darkness. It may have come from India or Central Asia, as some think, but there is no compelling reason to believe so. The dervishes do not inflict wounds on themselves as a form of self-torture or self-mortification, nor is this done with the intention of

inducing ecstatic states. This seems to distinguish the Kurdish practice from Central Asian or Indian practices, where such intentions are generally present (which of course does not prove that the practice is not borrowed). Among the Qadiris themselves, various rationales are current. One shaikh whom I asked why his *murids* pierced themselves with skewers answered that this very act represented a high mystical state (*hal*, which only few people can attain. He added — and I thought I noticed a malicious sparkle in his eyes — that he himself had never attained such a state, and that these states are signs of special divine grace. He did not seem to find this grace particularly desirable, nor even interesting to discuss, and was more eager to learn of the relative merits of Dutch and French nightclubs. I gathered that he meant that the dervishes' acts occur *involuntarily* and that it is believed to be divine compulsion that makes the dervishes pick up swords or skewers.

Most Qadiris whom I questioned agreed that there are two reasons why in their *tariqa* this practice is given such importance. On the one hand, it shows to adepts as well as to outsiders that Islam is the one true religion and that the Qadiri path especially is blessed with supernatural powers (for it was Abd al-Qadir who received the ability to miraculously heal such wounds). Indeed, after several spectacular performances I was invited to convert to Islam, having seen how God protects His faithful.

Once I even had difficulty escaping an involuntary circumcision: the khalifa believed the performance had been so convincing that I had no other choice but to become a Muslim. When I refused he wanted to help me do one of the sword-acts, in order to give me additional proof of the power of religion as ministered by his hand. This was not simply joking or teasing the outsider: he put similar pressure on local boys who had also come to see the majlis.

On the other hand, the dervish who dares to perform these acts shows thereby his trust in God and in his *tariqa*, and thus proves himself somehow spiritually superior. (Perfect trust in God, *tawakkul*, is, according to classical Sufi literature, a stage on the mystical path.)

### **The gratifications of ecstasy**

This point brings us to another level on which the question ('why') can be partially answered. Not all enter a state of trance, and not all who are in trance go for skewers or sword. Invariably those who do so are the poorest people, those with lowest status in everyday life: unemployed, or seasonal workers, petty craftsmen, petty traders. Here in the *khanaqa* they can compensate for their low status, and be superior to others, with a superiority that is mainly other-worldly, but in their perception not exclusively so.

One of the dervishes I know well is a newspaper-seller — not a very lucrative job in a place where very few read newspapers. He is not very bright, and whenever he appears people tease and mock him. Once when I sat talking with some young people he came by and greeted me.

One of my companions, to my embarrassment, made a mocking, rather insulting, remark, which visibly hurt him. I ignored this remark, answered his greeting as normally as I could, and made some small talk with him. He then invited me to come to the *khanaqa* that night: 'If you come I'll show you something really good. They [indicating my companions] don't understand anything of those matters.'

The dervish believes that he does these things for God, ultimately, but he wants the other dervishes, and especially the khalifa, to see them too. For what good is it to know oneself superior if one cannot share that knowledge with others? This is also a reason why I, an outsider, never had any difficulty in being admitted to the majlis.

Twice I attended a majlis to which the khalifa could not come. The dervishes performed the *zikr*, and sang and recited a lot of poetry, but skewers and sword remained in a corner,<sup>42</sup> and even the signs of ecstasy were very modest. On the other hand, one day when two shaikhs from Iraqi Kurdistan were guests in the Ghauthabad *khanaqa* in Mahabad, many dervishes of both local Qadiri groups came to the majlis, and the *zikr* was the most ecstatic I have seen. Many performed their most spectacular acts, including a feeble old man who was not properly in a trance and well nigh fainted with pain after the sword was removed from his belly.

Shaikhs and khalifas stress this aspect of compensation for worldly inferiority in their instruction to the disciples. My presence was often the occasion for lengthy discussions before and after the majlis proper, between the khalifa or shaikh, myself and those dervishes who stayed. I was repeatedly told (and the dervishes reassured) that, certainly, there are worldly riches and worldly knowledge and science, but that these have only ephemeral value. What really counts are spiritual treasures and the science of the heart, which are to be found in the *khanaqa* only.

The order thus provides an outlet for frustrations, induces a quietistic attitude, and has in general a counter-revolutionary function. This is not necessarily so: a number of messianistic movements — about which our knowledge is unfortunately very scanty — were associated with the orders (see below). Most of these movements, however, can only be called 'revolutionary' by stretching the meaning of this term. They were all characterized by the absolute obedience of followers to the shaikh, for whom they would happily have themselves killed: an attitude basically identical to that of the dervish who thrusts skewers through his body.

### Who goes into a trance?

A final remark on trance states: entering such a state is not so easy for everyone, most people have to *learn* how to do it. Some have strong inhibitions or fears and never succeed. Possibly common belief is correct in assuming that 'simple' people enter trance states relatively easily and 'educated' people only with difficulty or not at all. My impressions, at

any rate, confirm this. This might be another reason why it is always the 'simplest' people who perform the skewer and sword acts. Entering trance becomes easier with experience, so much so that trained dervishes can apparently enter trance at will whenever they want, and frequently even do so involuntarily; trance may be 'triggered' by a drum rhythm alone, or by a religious poem, as I have witnessed several times. The sword-and-skewer acts seem to become equally 'automatic'. Sometimes I saw dervishes who had apparently unexpectedly entered a trance make movements as if they were cutting or piercing their bodies.

A Nematollahi dervish told me a rather amusing story concerning this seemingly involuntary inclination to hurt oneself when in trance. The Nematollahi are a Shiite, aristocratic dervish order that also has a *khanaqa* in Sanandaj; one of the Qadiri khalifas there has very good relations with these Nematollahi dervishes. He and his *murids* sometimes visit the central Nematollahi *khanaqa* in Tehran, where they find an enthusiastic audience for their singing of Sufi poetry. One of these Qadiri dervishes had become a Nematollahi, and participated in their weekly majlises in Sanandaj. Once he suddenly entered a trance during a recitation of poetry; he looked around him for something sharp, but since the Nematollahi order frowns upon self-mutilation, nothing of the kind was available. He then jumped up and thrust his head violently against the wall; the frightened Nematollahi dervishes were too slow to stop him. When he fell back they feared for his life since the collision made a sound as if his skull had burst. When he came to, he appeared unharmed, however; the sound had been that of a crack appearing in the wall.

I witnessed something similar during a *zikr* in Amud (Syria), but I am not sure whether what I saw was not an attack of epilepsy. A young man suddenly started rolling spasmodically over the ground and beating his head against the wall. His strength was extraordinary; it took three strong men besides myself to keep him from knocking his brains out. It was quite clear that there was nothing voluntary in his behaviour; it was completely compulsive.

Some dervishes are probably 'real' epileptics, i.e. their sudden loss of conscious body control is due to some biological malfunctioning. Most have learned to go into trance easily, and their behaviour in these states is often similar to or identical with that of an epileptic during an attack. It is probably due to the external similarity of these two different states that epileptics are often held in high esteem by dervishes and pious people.

### **The Naqshbandi ritual**

The Naqshbandi majlis is quite different from that of the Qadiri order, the most conspicuous difference being that the *zikr* is silent and ecstasy

is discouraged. I shall first describe the rituals as I observed them in Doru, the village where Shaikh Osman of Tawela was living in the mid-1970s.

The *khanaqa* in Doru functioned at the same time as the village mosque. The *zikrs* were performed here twice daily, following the morning and the sunset prayers. This is rather atypical; at most places there are one or two majlises a week, on the eves of Friday and sometimes Tuesday, between the sunset and night prayers. There is another peculiarity: Shaikh Osman combines the Naqshbandi with the Qadiri *tariqa*, and the Naqshbandi rituals (usually called *khatma*, a name that properly only refers to a part of the rituals) are followed here by a loud Qadiri *zikr*. There are other shaikhs who hold a Qadiri *ijaza* beside their Naqshbandi *ijaza*, but Shaikh Osman is the only Kurdish shaikh known to me who actually combines both *zikrs*.

Towards sunset, the villagers and the shaikh's visiting *murids* would assemble in the mosque for the maghrib prayers, which were usually led by one of the several mullas who were, permanently or temporarily, staying with the shaikh. After the prayers, during which everyone had as usual been lined up in parallel rows facing the *qibla* (the direction of Mecca), people sat down in a circle, the lights were extinguished and the *khatma* started. The shaikh himself was not always present; in fact, most of the times he was not, and even when he did attend, he did not play a leading part in the ritual. However, his very presence makes the inner experience of those attending incomparably more intense, as all claimed.

One of the mullas, or several of them in turns, recited prayers for the Prophet and verses from the Koran that seemed to have been chosen arbitrarily. These recitations were interrupted by silences during which the *murids* were expected to recite silently ('with the inner voice') the verses indicated by the mulla, each of these verses to be repeated a number of times. This was followed by a meditative part, the contemplation on death (*rabitat al-qabr*, 'connection with the grave'). The participants imagined having died and being washed and buried, and thus having lost all worldly attachments. During the five or ten minutes this meditation lasted nothing was said, but loud sighs and sobs seemed to indicate how vivid the imagination was, how painful the prospect of having to give account of all one's misdeeds and shortcomings. The loud cries, much louder than ordinary weeping, created an emotional atmosphere that reduced almost all present to tears.

Next the mulla who led the rituals announced the *rabita* (or *rabita bi'sh-shaikh*, 'connection with the shaikh'), in which the participants attempted to establish a spiritual link with the shaikh and through him ultimately with the Prophet Muhammad. This *rabita* involves a technique of visualization. Closing his eyes, the *murid* creates in his mind's eye the image of the shaikh. A ray of divine light is then

imagined to reflect from the shaikh into the *murid*'s heart. The *rabita* is immediately followed by the silent *zikr*. The name of Allah is silently recited, the *murid* locating this recitation in various parts of the body, primarily in the heart, but according to his level of advancement also at other 'subtle points'. The recitation of Allah's name is followed by the first part of the shahada, which is also silently recited. The *rabita* and *zikr* would take ten to fifteen minutes. The Naqshbandi rituals were concluded with the *khatma* proper, a recitation of the *silsila* with prayers for the saints of this illustrious chain.

A Qadiri *zikr* followed immediately, but not loud and ecstatic as I had witnessed among the Qadiris proper. The first half of the shahada (*la ilaha illa 'llah*) was recited some hundred times, not silently but not too loudly either, and without violent bodily movements. Then followed a drawn out and wailing '*Aaallaaah, allaaaah, ...*' some two hundred times and again the same name but shouted in a staccato '*allah, allah, ...*', another two hundred times. No swords and skewers here, of course; those were said to belong to a vulgar and reprehensible misconception of Sufism, and were strongly rejected.

By the time both *zikrs*, had been performed it would be time for the night prayers. Lamps were lighted and the call for prayer given. A few more villagers would join for the communal night prayers, after which everyone would retire and go to sleep.

The only other place where I was present at a *khatma*<sup>43</sup> was in Syria, in the village of Helwa of Shaikh Alwan. This shaikh led the ritual himself, assisted by the *khadim* (a sexton, responsible for the upkeep of the *khanaqa*). After the prayers for the Prophet, everyone was to recite (silently) some koranic verses. The shaikh would say, for instance, '*Ikhlass ash-sharifa*' (*al-Ikhlass*, sura 112), and then the *murids* would recite this sura thirty three times, counting the numbers on their *tasbihs* (rosaries). Thus a number of verses were recited. Since the *khatma* started well after sunset, the time for the night prayer arrived after this. The shaikh led the participants in prayer. Then everyone sat down in a circle again and the shaikh delivered a sermon, fulminating against radio and television and all the Devil's other inventions to weaken people's religious zeal. After the sermon the meditations started, beginning with the meditation on death; then the *khadim* ordered everybody to close his eyes for the *rabita* and *zikr*. These lasted a very long time but did not have the intensity that is so apparent, even to outsiders, with Shaikh Osman. Several of the *murids* tried to induce a trance by hyperventilating or making rapid shaking movements with head or hands. Towards the end, the shaikh's assistant told two of the *murids* to get up, and the three of them walked around the *khanaqa*, singing monotonous hymns (in Arabic, which I did not understand). The shaikh also went around the circle, whispering in each *murid*'s ear '*Allahu akbar*' ('God is the greatest'), upon which they stopped their meditations and movements, and opened their eyes. The shaikh sat



down in front of the *mihrab* and recited his *silsila*. The *khatma* was over, the *murids* flocked around the shaikh to kiss his hands and ask some private questions, or just to take their leave.

### Variant meditational practices

The main elements of the Naqshbandi ritual are the same everywhere; they may also be found prescribed in many Naqshbandi writings, such as for instance the *Tanwir al-qulub* by Muhammad Amin Kurdi, one of the most widely read treatises: recitation of koranic verses (notably the *Fatiha* and the *Sura al-Ikhlass*), *rabitat al-qabr*, *rabita bi 'sh-shaikh*, silent *zikr* and reading of the *silsila*. But I found that there is no unanimity as to the precise way in which the meditation, especially the two *rabitas*, have to be performed. The Naqshbandis whom I asked about the *rabitat al-qabr*, for instance, differed in the aspect of death they thought should be stressed: being cut off from worldly existence or being confronted with one's sins and imperfections. An old and unsophisticated *murid* told me how he meditated:

I imagine how, after I have died, my body is being washed, wrapped in a shroud and placed into its grave. When all my relatives have left the grave, an angel comes and starts questioning me: 'Who is your God?' I give the answer I know to be the correct one: 'Your God is also mine.' He then asks: 'What is your religion?' and I answer: 'Islam'. 'Who is your prophet?' 'Your prophet and mine is Muhammad.' 'In what do you believe?' 'In the Holy Koran.' After these questions the account of my life is made. The two angels who have written all my good and evil deeds now balance them against each other. If the balance is negative I shall burn in my grave until the day of resurrection.<sup>44</sup> On that day the decision shall be made as to whether I shall go to Hell or Paradise. I visualize all these events vividly, and that makes me reflect on my daily life.

Even among the *murids* of the same shaikh there is no complete agreement as to this meditation; the teachings of different shaikhs may differ even more. Some relatively educated *murids* told me that they meditate only on the four questions (about God, religion, prophet and book; the answers to these questions are among the first things any Muslim is taught) and on the esoteric significance of the answers. A shaikh in Turkey (Shaikh Seyfeddin Aydin of Inkapi, near Siirt), on the other hand, told me that both these ways of meditating are incorrect. According to him, one has to imagine how in the grave one is completely alone, all worldly links having been cut, so that one is completely dependent on God, the only One with whom a relation is still possible. The few words Muhammad Amin Kurdi devotes to this contemplation in his treatise *Tanwir al-qulub* amount to more or less the same: complete loneliness and a sense of being lost to the world.

In the *rabita bi 'sh-shaikh* the *murid* visualizes his shaikh and attempts to experience the establishment, through the intermediary of the shaikh, of a contact with the Divine. Opinions differ again as to how one should imagine this to happen. In the vision of some, the shaikh brings his *murid* into the presence of the Prophet or even before God. More commonly, there is a visualization of God's grace descending upon the shaikh and being reflected on to the *murid*. Many see this as a ray of light originating from God and shining upon the shaikh's forehead; some claim that the light first touches all the saints of the *silsila* before reaching the present shaikh. From the shaikh's forehead this ray is reflected so that it hits the *murid's* heart, which starts vibrating. This is when the *murid* makes his heart recite God's name hundreds of times and he should experience nearness to God. Besides this imagined ray of divine light beating the *zikr* into the heart, some physical techniques may be used to produce ecstatic states: hyperventilating, rapid-shaking of the hands, the head or even the entire body (some Naqshbandi shaikhs are more tolerant of such physical techniques than others). These two meditational techniques, the *rabitat al-qabr* and the *rabita bi'sh-shaikh*, seem to be unique to the Naqshbandi order.<sup>45</sup> If properly practised, these meditations are likely to produce in the *murid* a strong psychological dependence on the shaikh. The meditation on death has a cathartic effect: the *murid* is, temporarily at least, aware of the vanity of ordinary human affairs and experiences his existential loneliness. In the visualization of the shaikh the *murid* feels aware of how his master establishes a direct contact between him and God, the only one that still matters. In no other order is the shaikh so clearly the intermediary between mankind and God; the *rabita* makes this mediating role of the shaikh not just a theological assertion but a reality experienced. Some of the 'excesses' for which unsophisticated Kurdish Naqshbandis are known, such as the near deification of certain shaikhs, probably find their origins in, or are at least confirmed by, these *murids'* experiences during the *rabita*.

When Shaikh Ahmad Barzani was proclaimed God incarnate, his *murids* did not protest but actually venerated him as such. Other Kurdish Naqshbandi shaikhs have, in periods of crisis, been proclaimed prophets or the Mahdi (Messiah) by their followers. Certain shaikhs became known for the blind obedience with which their *murids* followed their every order. It was often said that the followers of the shaikhs of Barzan would, without questioning, throw themselves off a cliff if the shaikh told them to do so.<sup>46</sup> The same blind obedience could be observed in several of the Kurdish rebellions led by shaikhs.

### **Shaikh and khalifa; relations with other shaikhs**

A shaikh may appoint one (or more) of the most zealous and loyal of his disciples as his khalifa and send him to another area to spread the *tariqa*,

or rather the shaikh's influence. The formal requirements for becoming a khalifa are not many: one has to have a certain degree of scholarly religious education (like a mulla's) and one has to perform a *chilla* or *khalwat*, a forty days' period of seclusion, passed in worship and meditation, fasting in the daytime, and eating and drinking minimal amounts at night.

It depends on the shaikh, apparently, whether anything more is required. He may, after the *murid* has performed a *chilla*, give him the *ijaza* (permission) to teach the *tariqa*, and to lead the majlis. Among Qadiris this includes permission to let dervishes cut themselves etc., and the competence to cure their wounds. The khalifa continues to owe obedience to his shaikh. As aforementioned, among the Qadiris khalifas do not, in general, become shaikhs in their own right, and cannot appoint their own khalifas. Among the Naqshbandis this is possible, but it is not at all clear to me under which circumstances a Naqshbandi shaikh allows his khalifa to become a shaikh. It seems to be against the shaikh's economic and political interests, for when the khalifa becomes a shaikh in his own right, he becomes more independent and a competitor of his *murshid*. In the loyalties of the *murids* (which find financial expression), he takes preponderance over the *original* shaikh, who continues to exert indirect influence only.

I am aware of two instances where a khalifa declared himself a shaikh against the wish of his *murshid*. One was Abdussalam I of Barzan. His elder brother Abdurrahman (Tajuddin) had been the khalifa of Sayyid Taha of Nehri, and when he died Abdussalam simply succeeded his brother, and even declared himself a shaikh in his own right, much to the annoyance of Taha's successor Ubeydullah. The other instance is from the Haqqa sect: leadership here had first belonged to shaikh Mame Riza but was usurped by one of the latter's khalifas, Hama Sur. In these two cases the actual power balance was decisive: the khalifas had their own power bases and could thereby make themselves independent of their shaikhs.

These two cases are exceptional; those shaikhs who have not simply inherited their positions have usually been appointed as such by their own preceptors. Although they are shaikhs in their own right, relations of respect, allegiance and even obedience continue to exist between their families and those of their masters. Thus some shaikhly families are socially superior to others because an ancestor of one family was the *murshid* of an ancestor of the other.

One of the shaikhs of my acquaintance told me that the intelligence service of a Middle Eastern country once attempted to enlist his services through the son of his father's *murshid*, who was on its payroll. My informant said he experienced a serious crisis of conscience, because he found it almost impossible to refuse what this superior shaikh asked him to do, while at the same time he felt revolted by it.

The relations between shaikhs whose families are not thus related

may be much less respectful, or even antagonistic. Where two or more unrelated shaikhs live so close to each other that they have to compete for *murids* among the same population of the same districts, rivalries between them are the rule rather than the exception. At the beginning of this century, there were fierce conflicts between three Naqshbandi shaikhs who were trying to expand their influence in Badinan, the shaikhs of Nehri, Barzan and Bamarni.<sup>47</sup> From the 1920s on, Shaikh Ahmad Barzani was often involved in violent clashes with another shaikh, Rashid Lolan, who lived too close for comfort. In the 1960s these continuing clashes became a disturbing factor in the Kurdish war, as Shaikh Rashid took the side of Baghdad and actively fought the Kurdish nationalists.<sup>48</sup>

Most shaikhs are mild in their attitude to their rivals; they can afford to be, for their *murids* are much more fanatical in denouncing other shaikhs and extolling the virtues of their own. It is they who inflate rivalries to serious proportions.

### The shaikh and his followers

The following of a shaikh is much wider than the group of people who regularly visit his or his khalifas' *khanaqas* and participate in the majlis. Often an entire tribe considers itself the *murids* of a certain shaikh. Thus, of two important tribes around Mahabad, the Mamash and the Mangur, the former are *murids* of Ghauthabad (i.e. of Shaikh Baba Said and his successors), and the latter of Khanaqa (a village belonging to another local Qadiri shaikh). As far as I ascertained, no tribe of this area is entirely *murid* of Kripchina; the Kripchina *khanqa* in Mahabad draws only poor townsmen.

The relation of most tribesmen to their shaikh is a rather shallow one: if the shaikh does not live too far away most will visit him once or twice a year and bring him a gift in money or in kind. If a child is ill, a woman barren, or when a long voyage has to be made (e.g. on entering military service), they visit the shaikh and ask him for a prayer and/or an amulet. Again, in case of conflict (from minor quarrels over inheritance up to full-blown blood feuds involving a number of murders) they may go to the shaikh for mediation or arbitration. Many shaikhs have their followers among several tribes, so that they can play a role in settling inter-tribal disputes (not infrequently they choose a strategic spot for their residence, on the boundary of two or three tribal territories).

In spite of the use of the term '*murid*' (which implies a *spiritual* relation with the shaikh) the relation of the common tribesmen with their shaikh is almost entirely devoid of spiritual content — among Qadiri even more so, it would seem, than among Naqshbandi. People do not visit the shaikh in order to receive spiritual instruction but to get an amulet that might protect them or their children from danger and

disease, or to receive other benefits ('blessing') from contact with the shaikh. For this reason, it is important for shaikhs to have a reputation for miracle-working. Some shaikhs are successful practitioners of herbal medicine, some are clairvoyants, many are accomplished practical psychologists who know how to make an impression on people; these may attract visitors from far away.

*Murid* in a stricter sense are those followers who practise a spiritual discipline. 'Sufi' and 'dervish' are the terms used throughout the Islamic world for such people; the terms largely overlap. In Kurdistan, however, the term '*derwish*' is used for the followers of the Qadiri *tariqa* and the vagrant 'begging monks', whilst the term '*sufi*' denotes followers of the Naqshbandi path (the latter term is also generally used to address old and pious men). Naqshbandis are quite outspoken in refusing the title '*derwish*', which to them has negative connotations of backwardness and superstition.

A person who wishes to become a dervish or Sufi has first to do penance (*tobe*, Ar. *tawba*). This is a conversion to a purer life and a forswearing of all sins. *Tobe* has to be done in the presence of a shaikh or khalifa, to whom one becomes *murid* from then on. In the Qadiri order it is usual for the dervish to receive permission after his *tobe* to use sword and skewers without risk of harm; from that moment on Abd al-Qadir's *karama* protects him.

Some shaikhs allow only those *murids* to do *tobe* who are ready to devote their further lives to a spiritual discipline (in general, elderly men). Other shaikhs allow everyone to do *tobe*, regardless of age; I suspect they do this to consolidate the flock of followers. Where there is much competition among shaikhs in particular, such as in the Syrian Cizre, they spend much time and energy travelling around and taking *tobe* from as many people as possible. The original conception of *tobe* as a one-time conversion, a turning away from the world, such as is to be expected from older people only, has been changed there. Five- or six-year-old children are forced to do *tobe*, and not just once, but every year thereafter — apparently a confirmation of their allegiance to the shaikh. In the perception of the common believers, *tobe* here has become a periodic ritual purification. It is a common sight to see a shaikh and his most intimate followers, most of them with long black beards and wearing impeccably white clothes, tour the countryside in a row of automobiles. They stop in every village and the shaikh invites people to come and do *tobe* — also receiving financial contributions from them.

Doing *tobe* is here very much matter-of-fact. I saw a group of people do *tobe* in a Qadiri *khanaka* in Amud. The shaikh stood with arms outstretched, five *murids* (among whom an eight-year old boy) put their hands on him and repeated word for word a prayer spoken by the shaikh. The shaikh paid scant attention to these *murids*; after the prayer he immediately continued joking with others present, although the

ceremony was not yet over. A can of water was brought, which the shaikh consecrated by saying a prayer over it, sipping some water, saying a second prayer and blowing or spitting in it. Then the shaikh and the five *murids* each took a sip from the can, whereupon the can was passed around to the others present, each of whom also took a sip.

For some ceremonies here, such as the rain prayer (which is only rarely performed nowadays), it is said that the participants have to be *tobedar*, i.e. in the state of purity resulting from penitence, not yet broken by new sins. The shaikhs who led these ceremonies used to take *tobe* from all the participants beforehand.

### **The economic power of shaikhs**

Many shaikhs combine a reputation of piety and holiness with a shrewd commercial and political insight. A reputation of having much *karamat* (special graces, the ability to work miracles) is in fact one of the surest ways to become rich: the holier one is said to be, the more *murids* one has and the more daily visitors, who, on the one hand, have to be served tea and food, but on the other bring gifts in money and in kind. Many shaikhs have inherited landed property from rich *murids* who were grateful for their intercession with God.

Because working for a shaikh is said to be especially meritorious, shaikhs can afford to exploit their peasants even more than other landlords do, and continue to demand 'seigneurial' services while tribal aghas can no longer do so. Sons of peasants have to work in the household of the shaikh and the resident *murids*, wait on the guests etc., generally without any reward other than the blessing of being in the shaikh's presence.

Shaikhs may own other economic resources as well. The shaikhs of Khizan, for instance, own many grain mills in a wide area north of Lake Van (far from their own village). Some of these are still water-run, but most of them are motor-driven — shaikhs only object to modernization when it conflicts with their interests. Villagers take turns working in the shaikh's mills, without payment (for who would dare to demand payment for a service to the shaikh?). And there are many paying customers: people prefer a shaikh's mill to any other because it is thought to confer a certain *baraka* (blessing). The network of khalifas the shaikh has in this area also provides him with supervisors whom he can trust.

The economic power of a shaikh and his political influence reinforce each other. Shaikhs who had political leverage at the time when the first land registrations took place (see chapter 3) succeeded in having large tracts of land registered in their names and thus became wealthy landowners. Rich shaikhs, on the other hand, find that they are welcome in the homes of both the tribal and the urban elites, and they tend to marry into both strata (the possibility of marrying up to four wives allows them to diversify their affinal relationships). These marital

relations in turn add to their political leverage. Once a shaikh is known and respected in the tribal chiefly milieu, he may be called upon in cases of tribal conflict, especially if he manages to avoid being exclusively associated with any one tribe. The shrewder shaikhs may even deliberately stir up conflicts between two chieftains in order to get the upper hand both politically and economically — a not uncommon event until the early twentieth century, but a more rare occurrence now because of more effective state intervention.

Most shaikhs, even in Turkish Kurdistan where they suffered a severe blow when the orders were banned, belong to the landed élite and cultivate good relations with the local state apparatus, which enables them to continue exploiting the peasantry and in some cases even to usurp more villagers' lands. Aghas, shaikhs and the local or regional representatives of the state are often connected with each other through ties of mutual benefit and parallel interests, both political and economic. Fierce conflicts between individual members of these three categories may occur, but the relations between the categories as such are symbiotic, each supporting and reinforcing the other's position.

## **Millenarianism**

Long before people rise in revolt against a state of affairs that they experience as oppressive or exploitative, protest against it is expressed symbolically, e.g. in myths, folk-tales, jokes, and the like. Wertheim (1971) called such cultural elements 'counterpoints'; they form an undercurrent that runs counter to the dominant system of values. Some of these counterpoints have a greater potential than others for leading ultimately to collective action by the exploited segments of society. Especially potent are the religious expectations of a millennium, a Utopian state, to be brought about by the collective action of believers, usually led by a Messiah-like figure. In many cases, messianistic movements can be interpreted as proto-revolutionary.<sup>49</sup>

As protest movements were one of the focal points of my interest, I searched for messianistic/millenarian ideas and for the occurrence of past movements of a messianistic character. In an Islamic context one would expect messianism to be associated with the concept of the Mahdi, and I started, therefore, by questioning people on this and related concepts. To my surprise, relatively few people knew at all what the Mahdi is, and even fewer had concrete ideas as to when the Mahdi would arrive and what the millennium would be like. Nevertheless, during the past century several mahdist revolts have occurred in Kurdistan — as I discovered later from the literature. The role of the Mahdi was in all these cases played by shaikhs (see below). Only much later did I become aware that also a number of movements of which the leader was never called Mahdi had distinctly messianistic aspects. For

instance, the quaint behaviour of the Haqqa sect, with its reversal of norms and values, recalls some other messianistic movements. The new leader of this sect established a 'Utopian' community in his village, where everything was shared collectively, including women. My informants called the village a 'kolkhoz', and were fascinated by the free sexual relations said to exist there.

Several of the early proto-nationalist rebellions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries showed distinctly millenarian features. Typically led by shaikhs, they hoped for the establishment of a radically different society, expected to come about as a result of largely symbolic action. They were reactions against the penetration of Western influence and to the challenge to traditional values that this represented. Protest was couched in religious terms, and the participants acted in blind obedience to the shaikhs, whose charisma was apparently believed to make strategic considerations unnecessary. The largest of these early rebellions was perhaps that led by Shaikh Ubeydullah, scion of Nehri's famous family of sayyids.

In 1880, the shaikh, who by that time was the most respected Kurdish spiritual leader on both sides of the Persian-Ottoman frontier, sent tribal troops from Hakkari into northwestern Iran with the stated aim of establishing an independent state there. The direct reason, as attested by missionaries working in the area, was an acutely felt neglect and oppression of the Kurds at the hands of Ottoman and especially Persian officials; the recent defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the war with Russia (1877-78) must have caused apocalyptic visions of a terminal threat to Islam and traditional society. The Hakkari tribes were immediately joined by various Persian Kurdish tribes (the Mamash, Mangur, Zarza, Gawrik, Bane, Herki and Begzade). The shaikh himself, with 8000 men, laid siege to the town of Orumiyeh (Rezaye), his son Abdulqadir with 15,000 men took Mahabad. The ulama of the latter town gave the movement another turn by issuing a fatwa declaring jihad against Shiism; the neighbouring town of Miandoab, inhabited by Shiite Azeris, was attacked and 3000 massacred. Other tribal troops marched on towards Tabriz, the major administrative centre. The rebels soon proved unprepared for any real military confrontations. Persian army units and tribal militias easily broke the siege of Orumiyeh and dispersed those marching towards Tabriz. In a few weeks time, all rebels were put to flight. The shaikh and the Hakkari tribes retreated into Hakkari, and thousands of Persian Kurdish families followed them. Many more were massacred by the Persian troops pursuing them. The Ottomans then sent the shaikh into exile to Mecca, where he died a few years later.<sup>50</sup>

Millenarian ideas were more explicitly present, alongside an incipient nationalism, in the various rebellions by the shaikhs of Barzan and their peasant followers.

The village of Barzan had long been a Utopian community of sorts,



where land was held in common as collective property, and where dispossessed refugees from elsewhere, whether Christians or Muslims, were always welcome. This contributed to its becoming a centre of Kurdish nationalism, as activists from various parts of Kurdistan temporarily settled under the protection of the shaikhs. Nearly all shaikhs of this family were considered as saintly, even semi-divine beings by their followers, and two of them were actually proclaimed Mahdi (Messiah). In a period of social turmoil and tribal wars, the followers of Shaikh Abdussalam I of Barzan, a contemporary and political rival of Shaikh Ubeydullah, started calling their shaikh the Mahdi, and invited him to march with them to Istanbul to occupy the seat of the Caliphate. When the shaikh proved reluctant to join his followers in their enthusiasm, he was severely beaten up. According to some accounts he was even killed by his disappointed flock, who threw him out of a window to see whether he could fly, as they expected the Mahdi to do. His son Muhammad meekly proffered his allegiance to Shaikh Ubeydullah and requested from him the *ijaza* to teach the *tariqa*. This restoration of cordial relations with the major Naqshbandi centre in the area proved useful when Shaikh Ubeydullah, after his failed rebellion, was sent into exile. All the tribes from then on looked on Muhammad Barzani as the chief spiritual authority. Not much later, he too was proclaimed Mahdi, and thousands of armed men, of the bellicose Zibari, Shirwani and Mizuri tribes, collected around him for a new assault on the centres of Ottoman power and an attempt to place the Mahdi on the caliphal throne. The district towns of Rowanduz and Aqra were taken, two large Kurdish columns marched against the administrative centre of Mosul, whose governor could only by a ruse arrest the shaikh and his closest followers.<sup>51</sup>

The information we have about these early movements is extremely scarce, but it would seem that they were triggered by the perceived subjection of the Ottoman Empire to the European, i.e. *kafir* powers. Frustration at the defeat of Ubeydullah's rebellion and his forced exile may have added fuel to the zeal of Muhammad Barzani's followers.

The defeat and carving up of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War sent shock waves through Kurdistan, that in various places instigated revivalist movements with millenarian overtones. In British occupied southern Kurdistan, a British political officer observed:

At this time, an active missionary campaign was being conducted by the Qadiri shaikhs in most part of Sulaimania liwa [province]; it was quite common in any village after dark to hear the rapid padding of some convert racing about between the houses shouting the words of the *zikr like one possessed*, and several cases came to my notice of *hardened scoundrels who suddenly made declarations of repentance and turned into model citizens* (Edmonds 1957: 237, emphasis added).

Ataturk's rapid secularizing reforms in Turkey provoked fiercer

reactions. Many conservative believers saw in him the Dajjal, the Fiend whose coming is believed to precede that of the Mahdi; and, not surprisingly, several shaikhs, Turkish as well as Kurdish, led explicitly mahdist rebellions. There is, unfortunately, very little published information on these rebellions, and most of it is heavily biased. The following account by an unsympathetic Turkish writer on one of these uprisings is typical:

In 1935, a certain Khalid from the village of Kayintar in the Beshiri district of Siirt province proclaimed himself [sic!] a Naqshbandi shaikh. In December 1935, Shaikh Khalid, who sent his *murids* to the district of Erüh and environs, demanded that people accept him as the Mahdi. Shaikh Khalid's men involved themselves in a popular uprising and started shedding blood. When they were dispersed and punished by the government, Khalid's place was taken by his son Shaikh Qudus. Shaikh Qudus took to the mountains, from where he engaged in propaganda for shaikhdом and the *tariqa*. After heavy-handed government intervention, Shaikh Qudus fled to Syria, with which the incidents found an end (Özek 1968: 160).

The only one of these rebellions on which more information is available is the nationalist revolt led by Shaikh Said in 1925, which will be discussed extensively in chapter 5. Some aspects of this rebellion are strongly reminiscent of Shaikh Khalid's messianistic rebellion; however, it had also other aspects that turned it into a more purely political movement with distinctly nationalist overtones.

### **Decline of the shaikhs' influence**

During the past half century the influence of shaikhs in Kurdistan has very much declined, although they still represent a force to be reckoned with. Among the factors contributing to this decline, the closure of the *tekiyes* in Turkey in 1925 and the persecutions of shaikhs in the following years were of major importance, even if they did not have the lasting effect sometimes ascribed to them. These measures were the Turkish republic's reactions against Kurdish nationalist and anti-secularist movements that were perceived as threats to Atatürk's ambition of welding the country into a viable unitary and secular state. They were carried out with Atatürk's customary drive. As early as March 1926 a British consul observed: 'Tekkiés and zaviés, being hotbeds of corruption, ignorance and superstition, are being demolished, shaikhs have been so exterminated that the very word is a term of reproach'.<sup>52</sup> Several shaikhs were actually executed: at first Shaikh Said and his collaborators, later also others, some of whom were not associated with any revolt at all.<sup>53</sup> Others were sent into exile and

had to live outside Kurdistan under permanent surveillance. Many other shaikhs took refuge in Syria or Iraq. To all appearances, the influence of the orders in Turkey was soon reduced to virtually nothing.

Only in later years did it become clear that the orders' activities had covertly continued. And even if the mystical exercises were discontinued or drew much smaller numbers than before, these had always attracted only a small minority of the shaikhs' political followers. The political influence of the shaikhs among the wider group of followers did not suffer a setback comparable to the virtual disappearance of religion from public life. Multi-party politics, established after the Second World War, made an end to the more rigid and élitist Kemalist policies. The Democratic Party (DP) governments of the 1950s gradually allowed the open expression of religious sentiment again. Certain shaikhs were cast into the role of vote-getters for this party, which even allowed them to appeal — covertly and very moderately — to Kurdish national sentiment.<sup>54</sup> A military coup by young Kemalist officers overthrew the DP government in 1960, and temporarily the shaikhs had to keep a low profile again. In the 1965 and later elections, nevertheless, several shaikhs or their relatives managed to be elected into parliament, while at provincial and local levels their influence in the state apparatus is even more conspicuous. Certain shaikhs have even been able to increase the traditional influence they already had through collaboration with political parties or governors, police officers etc., which allowed them to dispense more patronage than before. The parties obviously work through these shaikhs, not because they share the parties' ideological stand, but because of their influence among the population and the number of votes they thereby control. Even the Republican People's Party, ideologically committed to the struggle against landlords and religious reaction, depended in the Kurdish provinces strongly on aghas and shaikhs.

It is therefore not in the first place state intervention to which the shaikh's gradual loss of influence may be ascribed. Socio-economic developments and improving education are more important factors. The mechanization of agriculture, the sharpening of class contradictions, mass migration to the cities, improved communications and educational opportunities had a dual consequence for the shaikh and his followers: many of the latter were physically removed from the shaikh or at least were less in need of him as a broker; and increasing numbers started perceiving the shaikhs as exploiters and ordinary crooks instead of the most knowledgeable and saintly men around. Religion lost much of its influence among both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. On the other hand, however, revivalist movements (see the next section) are gaining influence among other strata of the population, especially the small-town petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry. Some shaikhs seem to be riding the wave of this revivalism.

On the whole, the influence of shaikhs in Turkish Kurdistan has

considerably decreased. There are fewer of them than before, and with few exceptions these tend to have fewer followers. Several shaikhs of the last generation died without appointing a successor. I met several sons of such shaikhs, who contented themselves with the modest position of village mullas.

The decline of the shaikhs' influence in Syria (where many shaikhs from Turkey had fled during the twenties and thirties) has been even more dramatic. Initially, as some of my informants claimed, the influx of shaikhs had strengthened the grip of religion on people there. the Kurds became more pious, even bigoted, than they had been before the 1920s.

The small town of Amud alone was in the 1930s the home of more than thirty shaikhs. The vast majority of the population (some 80 to 90%, my informants estimated) were in those days the *murids* of one shaikh or another. On Fridays the shaikhs and their followers would walk to the town's major mosque in stately processions, some to the beating of hand-drums. In the mosque, the shaikhs took the first row, the *murids* lining up behind their own shaikhs. During prayer the *murids* would not immediately follow the movements of the imam but wait for their shaikh to bend or stretch. The Friday prayers thus always provided the occasion for competitive shows of strength between the shaikhs.

It was precisely in this shaikh-ridden town that the French mandate authorities obliged the members of the Kurdish National League Khoybun (founded in 1927, and consisting mainly of intellectuals of aristocratic backgrounds) to live. The shaikhs made activities of this organization among the town population well-nigh impossible, condemning both their nationalism and their irreligiosity. The Qadiri shaikhs especially, who all were sayyids and therefore considered themselves as Arabs rather than Kurds, repeated time and again that Islam knows only two nations, the believers and the unbelievers. Kurdish nationalism was a devilish plan to divide the Islamic nation, and nationalists were by implication heathens: One of my informants summarized the shaikhs' tirades: 'those are heathens, it is permissible to kill them.'

The members of Khoybun were not killed, but they never won the struggle with the shaikhs for popular support. It was not through Khoybun's efforts but as a result of socio-economic developments that the shaikhs lost the control over their followers. There were in 1976 only two practising shaikhs left in Amud, and their *murids* belonged to the least educated people of the town.

The 1950s and 1960s brought rapid change to the Syrian Jazira: new roads, schools, agricultural machinery, new employment opportunities in the towns. Radios brought to all Kurdish villages a greater awareness of the wider world, and from 1958 on, when Syria joined the United Arab Republic, also the voice of Nasser. Nasser's Arab nationalism also indirectly strengthened Kurdish national awareness, which received further boosts from news of the Kurdish war in neighbouring Iraq. The

shaikhs, who in Syria more than elsewhere were identified with anti-nationalism, rapidly lost influence as Kurdish nationalism gained ground. Economic change, education and nationalism combined to make the shaikhs fall from grace within a few decades. Ahmad Ghiznawi, the most influential of the shaikhs in the Syrian Jazira, has few *murids* left in this area. His major influence is now in Turkish Kurdistan, where developments have been less rapid. Some other shaikhs have become ordinary landlords, whose economic power no longer has much religious legitimation.

Among the followers and dependants of a shaikh, those who are directly exploited by him, such as the peasants working on his land, are always a category apart. As long as they believe in the shaikh's religious and moral superiority, he may exploit them even more than other landlords do. They accept, even if grudgingly, their exploitation as part of a God-given order of things. But once the shaikh loses his religious legitimacy in their eyes, they may become his most committed opponents. Several shaikhs here lost much of their influence as a result of a rebellion by their peasants. Such rebellions are rarely spontaneous; in all cases of which I know they were triggered by strong external causes.

One such case involves the peasants and shaikh of Bamarni.<sup>55</sup> As long as the highly-respected Shaikh Bahauddin had been alive here, the peasants had unquestioningly paid him their contributions, but after Bahauddin's death in the early 1950s they refused to let his son Masud, who was less respected, exploit them.

Shaikh Bahauddin had, until his death, wielded great influence even beyond Kurdistan. The Iraqi monarch and the then Prime Minister Nuri Said were among his disciples. The king had an airstrip constructed near the village in order to facilitate his visits to the shaikh. The shaikh, incidentally, had more than one iron in the fire: when the monarchy was overthrown in 1958 by Qassem, one of the shaikh's relatives, Khalid Naqshbandi, appeared to be among the officers who had planned the coup and taken control.

The shaikh and a part of his large family (some 200 persons), together with a number of *murids*, lived permanently in the village. Besides gifts, the shaikh's income derived mainly from three villages (Serseng, Kedish and Bebet) where he owned all the land, which was share-cropped by the villagers. In Bamarni itself the shaikh owned about half the land; the rest was the property of independent small-holders. It was this latter category who were to revolt against the shaikh and refused to comply with his unreasonable economic claims. The share-croppers of Bamarni and the three other villages never participated.

After Bahauddin's death and the succession of his son, Masud, protest rose on two issues:

1. *The airstrip*. Money for its construction had been paid to the shaikh, but most of it remained in the family, and the amount paid as wages to

the actual workers (villagers of Bamarni) was ridiculously low. The villagers demanded back payments from Masud, and when he refused they went to court (in 1958, after the fall of the monarchy).

2. *Irrigation*. The water in Bamarni is not sufficient for all the village lands. The shaikh always took care that his land was watered first, so that it was always the independent small-holders who bore the entire burden of water shortage. They became increasingly vocal in their protests.

The events that now followed were closely connected with the development of Kurdish nationalism in northern Iraq. In March 1959 the Nasserist military commander of Mosul, Abd al-Wahhab Shawwaf, revolted against President Qassem. Many pro-Qassem Kurds, *among them peasants from Bamarni*, went to Mosul and assisted loyal troops in putting down the revolt (at that time Qassem still kept promising the Kurds recognition of their national rights). Shortly after the return of the victors to Bamarni, a group of young men, armed with sickles, axes, etc., attacked the shaikh's fortified quarters, loudly shouting abuse and insults. All of them belonged to the group of independent small-holders; some had been to Mosul. Elderly, pious peasants tried to stop them. A shot was fired, and everybody returned to their houses. Some days later shots were fired at the shaikh, from a hill opposite the *khanaqa*.

There had been signs of discontent before, and once even a few peasants had fought with a number of *murids* (both parties armed with sticks), but this was a serious escalation. On another occasion (also shortly after Shawwaf's revolt), peasants showed their contempt of the shaikh by playing the *zurna* and dancing to its tune right in front of the shaikh's residence. To appreciate the seriousness of this affront, one should be aware that the *zurna*, a type of shawm with a penetrating sound, is considered a sinful instrument by many pious people, probably for its association with wild dances. I have heard it called *deve Sheytan*, 'Satan's mouth'. The shaikhs of Bamarni had always forbidden this instrument to be played anywhere near their village.

Clashes between the peasants and the shaikh's men continued and became ever more violent. By early 1960, two of the peasants and three of the *murids* had been killed. The central government sent a large unit of gendarmerie to restore order. Nevertheless, the shaikh did not feel safe in the village anymore, and he took refuge in Mosul. After the conflict between the nationalist Kurds (led by Barzani and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan) and the Qassem government had come into the open, many villagers joined Barzani's guerrillas, while Shaikh Masud and his relatives sided with the government (the old conflict between the shaikhs of Barzan and Bamarni may have influenced this alignment). Peasants of Bamarni now also attacked the gendarmes stationed in their village. A number of peasants were arrested and sent to jail in Duhok, but the gendarmes ultimately evacuated Bamarni. The shaikh, far away, had no means of exacting a share of the village's crops.

For the peasantry the nationalist case thus coincided with their liberation from exploitation. Members of the shaikh's family, not unnaturally, actively joined pro-government troops, in the hope of regaining their lands.

As nearly always and everywhere, it was not the most exploited and destitute peasantry who revolted, but the middle peasantry, who had a certain degree of independence but also felt oppressed by the shaikh.<sup>56</sup> They did not protest when Shaikh Bahauddin still lived; he was respected, and apparently deemed to merit the privileges he claimed. When he was succeeded by a less worthy son it was easier to question the legitimacy of these claims. Protest grew into open revolt only after an external crisis in which the peasants proved that they could play a decisive role in politics, even at state level.

One more thing should be mentioned on the shaikh's loss of influence; it is especially noticeable in the more de-tribalized areas (where there are fewer tribal conflicts) and in those places where the government (or the nationalist movement, as in Iraq) has sufficient authority to resolve conflicts. Where this is not the case (as in southeastern Turkey), shaikhs continue to exert power. This indicates how important the role of conflict-solver is for the shaikh's position.

### Islamic revival: the *Nurcu* movement

One of the Islamic revivalist movements in Turkey — probably the strongest, and certainly the most original — originated in Kurdistan and has close connections with the Naqshbandi order, even though it proclaims itself *anti-tariqa*. A short note on this movement therefore concludes this chapter.

The movement is known in Turkey as *nurculuk* or the *nurcu* movement; '*nurcu*', as its followers are called, means 'follower of *Nur*, the (divine) Light'. This name is derived from the voluminous writings of Said Nursi, the spiritual founder of the movement, which are collectively known as the *Risale-i Nur* (Treatise on the Divine Light). Both the author and his work are in many respects extraordinary. I have heard fervent opponents of the Nurju movement speak admiringly of Said Nursi's courage, honesty and respectable character. For his followers he is nothing less than a great saint, who could appear at different places simultaneously and perform other miracles, who was the greatest scholar of his time and who was the most inspired interpreter of the Koran.

Said was born in 1873 in the village of Nurs, in the province of Bitlis. He received his first education at various madrasas in that province, some of them associated with the Naqshbandi order.<sup>57</sup> Highly intelligent and obstinate, even rebellious, he impressed his teachers and challenged them in debate. At a very young age he established a reputation as a

very learned scholar, and apparently nobody raised objections when he started calling himself Bediuzzaman, 'the unique of the age'. In 1907 he went to Istanbul, where he proposed to the Sultan the establishment of a university in Kurdistan. Said was much committed to the education of his people. He was to pursue this ideal of a university (which he envisaged as attached to the al-Azhar) throughout his life, but was also involved in the less ambitious project of a primary school for the Kurds living in Istanbul. After the Young Turk coup of 1908 (which he supported) he was active in the first Kurdish society that was established in Istanbul, but also became a leading member of the Society of Muhammadan Union, whose aim was to protect the existence of the Sharia, and which played a major role in a rebellion of reactionary elements against the Young Turk constitutional regime in early 1909.<sup>58</sup> In 1911 Said took part, as a militia commander, in the Balkan War, and a few years later commanded militia troops in the east against the Russians. He distinguished himself by his bravery and also, it is said, by saving the lives of some 1,500 Armenians whom he was ordered to kill but sent across the Russian lines into safety. Later he was made a prisoner of war by the Russians, escaped from Russia to Germany in 1918 and returned to Istanbul that same year. He was active again in the Kurdish nationalist organization there, being more interested in the education and moral uplifting of his fellow Kurds than in separatism. Strongly opposed to the occupation of Ottoman lands by the European powers, he sympathized with Mustafa Kemal's movement, and was invited to Ankara by the latter in 1922. He soon fell out with Mustafa Kemal because their ideas on the role of religion in the new Turkey were almost diametrically opposed. He seems not to have had any association with Shaikh Said's Kurdish rebellion, but was nevertheless exiled to western Turkey in the wave of repression following that revolt.

This exile was a turning point in his life; he finally turned away from direct involvement in politics and devoted the rest of his life to interpreting and preaching the Koran. He seems never to have attacked Mustafa Kemal's secularism directly, and certainly did not propagate the idea of an Islamic state as an alternative; his attitude was quietistic, not activist any more. Similarly, he had lost all interest in Kurdish nationalism, although he was not afraid of calling himself Saidi Kurdi ('Kurdish Said') in the years when everything Kurdish was banned. The Kemalist press depicted him as a dangerous reactionary, a threat to Turkey's secular constitutional order. He was often brought to court for his sermons and writings, and even after his death in 1960 he was still considered so dangerous that the authorities dug up his body from its grave and re-buried it at an unknown place.

The numerous books and shorter treatises he wrote after 1925, collectively called *Risale-i Nur*, purport to give an interpretation of the Koran that is appropriate to the twentieth century. The interpretations are often based on Said's dreams and visions, and are written in an



opaque, nineteenth-century Ottoman Turkish that few people can fully understand. Said strove after a synthesis of modern science and reformist Islamic learning, and the whole work is pervaded by a strong mystical attitude. It is worth noting, given his early contacts with Naqshbandi circles, that Said, in spite of his mystical inclinations, explicitly rejected the *tariqa*, the Sufi order, as no longer appropriate to the times.<sup>59</sup>

The Nurcu movement gradually emerged when Said's personal followers began copying his writings (initially by hand), and organized reading sessions in small groups. In the course of years a network spanning the entire country was built up. Under Democratic Party rule (1950–60) Said Nursi and his followers were, like other Islamic groups, allowed a greater freedom of expression, and the Nurcu movement experienced rapid growth. It has no clear regional centre of gravity, but Kurds seem to be slightly over-represented among the Nurchus. There is a very well-established Nurcu network in Turkish Kurdistan, and even many of the Nurchus I met in western Turkey appeared to be Kurds. The total number of Nurchus in Turkey is hard to estimate, but there are probably well over a million.<sup>60</sup> There is a publishing house and a newspaper in Istanbul associated with the movement, but that does not mean that the movement is centralized or even unitary. In the Kurdish province a part of the movement is associated with a Naqshbandi network, which is rather astonishing given Said's explicit rejection of the orders.<sup>61</sup> And in spite of Said's rejection of Kurdish nationalism in his later life, many traditionally-minded Kurdish nationalists seem to feel attracted to the Nurcu movement because Said was a very *Kurdish* mulla.<sup>62</sup> According to hearsay there is among the Kurdish Nurchus a minority group that nurtures Kurdish nationalist ideas and that is more interested in the 'old Said', i.e. his pre-1925 activities and writings, than in the quietist 'new Said'.

The Nurcu movement is by far the most important religious movement among the Kurds of Turkey. It seems to attract different kinds of people for different reasons: the mystically inclined for the visionary and mystical quality of the *Risale-i Nur*, the religious intellectual for the movement's positive attitude towards modern science, the Kurdish nationalist because of the 'old Said', and the conservative for the movement's anti-communism. More recently, it gained wider sympathy because of its opposition to military rule; the movement's paper was banned because it openly rejected the military-made constitution of 1982.

## Notes

1. Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj was crucified in Baghdad in 922 for having exclaimed repeatedly '*ana 'l-haqq*', 'I am God' (lit: 'the Truth', 'Reality'), and reciting verse in which

he stated in no uncertain terms that the distinction between himself and God had ceased to exist. After his crucifixion Mansur was considered a saint by many. Some Qadiri shaikhs (spuriously) include him in their *silsila* (spiritual pedigree). Qadiri dervishes in Sanandaj, uneducated people, sang for me a religious poem about Hallaj, and gave me a perfectly orthodox explanation of the '*ana 'l-haqq*'. Still, those who would seriously repeat Hallaj's claim would probably be treated as blasphemers and be ostracized — or worse.

2. In the mid-twenties, Shaikh Ahmad Barzani, the elder brother of Mulla Mustafa, the nationalist leader, was proclaimed God by a local mulla, and allowed his followers to honour him as such and direct their faces during prayer towards him rather than towards Mecca. He declared the eating of pork lawful, and was even said to have ordered the destruction of all copies of the Koran that could be found (Wilson 1937: 291–92; Longrigg, 1953; 194. The British sources do not even attempt to hide their prejudice and loathing of Shaikh Ahmad, but they find confirmation in the accounts of my Kurdish informants). In 1931 the British Royal Air Force chased the rebellious God of Barzan from his village. He was not allowed to return, and the Barzanis reverted to a more orthodox Islam.

3. These Qadiri sayyids, who belong to but a few families, respecting the law of value and scarcity, do not allow anyone but their sons to become shaikhs. The monopoly they thus hold has led many people to believe that only sayyids may become shaikhs in this order (thus many of my informants, and also Garnett 1912: 120). But in fact there is at least one family of Qadiri shaikhs in Kurdistan who are not sayyids: the Talabanis (see chapter 4).

4. Within the group of mullas there is a certain gradation as to the amount of learning and ritual competences. The *imam* is the prayer-leader, the *khatib* is the mulla who is allowed to say the *khuṭba* in the Friday prayer. The latter function requires more learning.

5. It may seem strange that the shaikh in 1925 knew the term 'gangster', and maybe Mulla Hesén projected it back from a later period; but it is well possible. The shaikh was in regular contact with nationalist circles in Istanbul, who in turn had frequent contacts with all kinds of Europeans and American representatives, and had quite accurate knowledge of what was happening abroad.

6. Heqqe is the name given to the followers of the heterodox Naqshbandi Shaikh Abdulkarim of Sergelu (in Iraq) and his successors. See the notes to Table 1, no 4 of the Appendix.

7. A good survey is to be found in Trimingham 1971, ch. 3: 'The formation of Ta'ifas'.

8. Trimingham found the term 'ta'ifa' applied as early as A.H. 200 (ca. 800 A.D.) in Egypt (1971: 5). Orders proper, however, did not really develop until the 15th century A.D. (1971: 67ff).

9. Obviously, popular mysticism, with the importance it gives to saint worship and miracle-working, has absorbed much from pre-Islamic religious practices. This is especially clear in central Asia, where the shrines of Muslim saints, planted with flagpoles, are distinguishable from Buddhist shrines only by the writing on the flags; something similar is true for Kurdistan. Here one still finds strangely shaped trees or rocks covered with rags tied on by people seeking to find a cure for a disease or such like. Such rags are tied to the shrines of saints, or to a tree near the shrine; in some cases, however, there is no sign of a grave, which suggests traces of some primitive nature worship.

10. Most authors assume that this is the Caspian province of Gilan; there is, however, another district Gilan, in southern Kurdistan (south of the Baghdad–Kermanshah road). Most Kurds take it for granted that this is Abd al-Qadir's birthplace.

11. About Abd al-Qadir and the myths surrounding his person the best account I have found is Trimingham 1971: 40–44. See also: Schimmel 1975: 247–248 and Brown 1868: 100–116 (very uncritical, but based on first-hand oral and written information from dervishes, and therefore valuable).

12. According to Gibb and Bowen (1957: vol II: 196) the order was founded in Baghdad around 1200 A.D. but not introduced into Asia Minor and Europe until the sixteenth century.

13. Similarly, Mansur al-Hallaj is never mentioned in *silsilas*, although most Sufis have a great respect and admiration for him. In fact, several Qadiris told me that Mansur is in their *silsila*, although when they recited the *silsila*, he was never mentioned.

14. Trimingham (1971: 262) mentions this same double *silsila* for Ma'rif of Karkh, who besides having the *silsila* given above, was also associated with the eighth imam, Musa ar-Riza.

15. The classic description of Rifai séances of north Africa is by E.W. Lane in his excellent *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1836).

16. Schimmel 1975: 248–249; Trimingham 1971; 38.

17. It is worth noting that Rifai dervishes associate the specific traits of their order with Abd al-Qadir, from whom Ahmad ar-Rifai is said to have received the power to heal the wounds inflicted by swords and other sharp objects during their performances (e.g. Brown 1868: 281).

18. The history of Shaikh Muhammad's revolts is told from the British point of view by Edmonds (1957), Lees (1928) and Elphinstone (1948). More sympathetic to the shaikh are Rambout (1947: ch.3), Jwaideh (1969: ch 10 and 11), Kutschera (1979: 56–77).

19. The shaikh succeeded in winning the support of a section of the Jaf tribe, thanks to a conflict in the leading family (Lees 1928: 257 ff). Similarly, minor sections of some tribes took the side of the British. The shaikh also received strong support from the hardy Haurami tribesmen, among whom his family had always had much influence, and even — according to a surviving participant whom I met — from some Bakhtiyari, a tribal group living far southeast of Kurdistan proper, in Iran.

20. 'Progress report A.P.O. Kirkuk for period ending Dec. 29, 1918' (Public Record Office, FO 371 files 1919: 44A/122190/144).

21. 'Notes on the tribes of southern Kurdistan', Baghdad, 1919.

22. Edmonds, who knew many members of the family, calls them 'an excellent example of a house which in quite modern times rose to a position of wealth and worldly power by virtue of the religious influence of its dervish founder' (1957: 269–270).

23. An early biography of Baha ad-Din, partially translated by Molé, (1959: 38–40), relates an initiatory dream of Baha ad-Din, in which he appeared before Abd al-Khalīq.

24. Molé (1959): 36, 37; a full *silsila* of Baha ad-Din, compiled from a number of manuscripts, is given by Molé on p. 65. Cf. Algar (1976).

25. These rules are quoted in Trimingham (1971); 203–204 and Subhan (1970): 191–192. Among Abd al-Khalīq's eight rules are the following:

— 'hosh dar dam', 'awareness while breathing'. Not a breath may be inhaled or exhaled in a state of forgetfulness of the Divine Presence. (Baha ad-Din later said 'the external basis of this  *тариقا*  is the breath');

— 'nazar bar qadam', 'watching one's steps'. A Sufi in walking should always have his eyes on his footsteps. This he is directed to do in order to restrain his mind from wandering, and to be able to concentrate his attention on the Divine Presence;

— 'khalwat dar anjuman', 'solitude in a crowd'. The aim is to achieve such power of concentration that, while busy in the affairs of the world, one may be able to meditate upon God. Baha ad-Din added three rules, among which were:

— 'wuquf-e zamani', 'temporal pause': keeping account of how one is spending one's time, whether rightly or wrongly;

— 'wuquf-e qalbi', 'heart pause': to form in the mind a picture of one's heart with the word Allah engraved upon it in Arabic letters.

These instructions are very similar to those given to Buddhist meditators of various schools (they reminded me strongly of those I was given when studying  *vipassana*  meditation).

Another distinctive Naqshbandi practice, the  *rabita*  (see below), in which the  *murid*  visualizes the shaikh and thus establishes a spiritual link with him — a practice reputedly introduced by the Indian reformer of the order, Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi — is highly reminiscent of the visualizing techniques in Tibetan Buddhism.

26. My Kurdish Naqshbandi informants were not very informative about the part of the  *silsila*  preceding Mawlana Khalid. Between Baha ad-Din and Mawlana they commonly insert only the names of Baqi bi'llah and of Imam Rabbani (Ahmad Faruq Sirhindi), the two greatest shaikhs of the order's Indian phase. For the developments during this Indian phase, see Rizvi (1983); cf. Algar (1976).

27. Several authors have written of Mawlana Khalid's reputation and of his sudden

night time departure from Sulaymaniyah; first of all Rich, who happened to be in Sulaymaniyah at the time of the incident. Important secondary works are: Edmonds (1957: 72-73, 77-78); Nikitine (1925: 156-157; 1956: 212-215); MacKenzie (1962); Hourani (1972); Mudarris (1979); and Hakim (1983).

28. According to Rich, many people put Mawlana Khalid on nearly the same level as the Prophet, and called his words 'inspired' (Rich 1: 140). He was said to have 12,000 disciples, 'in various parts of Turkey and Arabia' (ibid: 141), and to have appointed more than sixty-five khalifas, half of them Kurdish (Hakim 1983: 142).

29. The three shaikhs whose rivalries disturbed the peace in the Oramar district so much around 1910 (Dickson 1910) were all Naqshbandis. Perpetual power conflicts between Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan and Shaikh Rashid Lolan, spiritual leader of the Bradost tribe, played an important role in the Kurdish national movement, and were eagerly exploited by the Iraqi government. See also the notes to Chart II of the Appendix for earlier conflicts between the Sadate Nehri and the shaikhs of Barzan.

30. Kurds and local Christians had identical expectations of the presence of the missionaries. Armenian, Jacobite and Nestorian Christians who converted to the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches never made it a secret that they did so to obtain French or British (later American) protection. Many British missionaries and other agents complained that the Kurds 'misunderstood' their motives and invariably considered them as forerunners of British conquest. Rich experienced difficulties in explaining to his hosts that his country had such a large and powerful army only because other states had them, and that it waged wars of conquest in India only because it was attacked by enemies there. Rich laughed away the suggestion by a relative of the Baban prince that the British might have designs on Iraq (Rich 1836, I: 98ff). One year later the same Rich, in conflict with the vali of Baghdad on the commercial liberties the British were to receive, sent warships up the Tigris! It was, however, another century before the British finally occupied Iraq militarily.

Ainsworth, another British agent, relates a similar incident. In 1840 he travelled in central Kurdistan, accompanied by a group of Assyrian Christians (Chaldaeans). The party met a Kurdish chieftain who addressed them: 'What do you do here? Are you not aware that Franks are not allowed in this country? No dissimulation! I must know who you are, and what is your business. Who brought these people here?' 'One of the Chaldaeans turned around 'in a haughty peremptory way' and said 'I'. The Kurdish chieftain, who was all alone, looked at the members of the group and said, quietly and deliberately: 'You are the forerunners of those who come to take this country; therefore it is best that we should first take what you have, as you will afterwards have our property.' (Ainsworth 1842, II: 242).

31. Moltke (1841), *passim*. Von Moltke was one of the German officers who acted as military advisers to the Ottoman army. He participated in the siege of the castle of the Kurdish ruler, Said Beg, and in the pacification of northern Kurdistan.

32. As soon as Miri Kor had established himself he managed to put an end to criminality, especially robbery, in his dominions. The British traveller Fraser passed through in 1834. 'The whole craft and practice of robbery,' he wrote, 'has been cut short by a summary process: whoever is caught possessing himself of the goods of others is punished on the spot, or put to death, without mercy ...' and again: '... were any man in the countries where the sway of the Meer is fully established, to see a purse of gold on the road, he would not touch it, but report the fact to the head of the next village, whose duty it would be to send for it and keep it, until properly claimed'. (Fraser 1840, I: 65-166.)

33. Layard (1849), I: 173.

34. Ibid., 179.

35. Ibid., 228. Shaikh Taha '... exercises an immense influence over the Kurdish population, who look upon him as a saint and worker of miracles'; he 'was urging Beder Khan Beg to prove his religious zeal by shedding anew the blood of the Chaldaeans! — which the mir was to do that very year. This shaikh thought so highly of himself that, when he rode into town, he veiled his face in order not to be polluted by the mere sight of Christians and other impurities (ibid.). From an observation in a later book by Layard

(1853, I: 376) it is possible to identify him as Shaikh Sayyid Taha I of the Sadate Nehri (see Appendix, Table II).

36. See article 'Shamdinan' in E.I.<sup>1</sup> (by B. Nikitine).

37. Ubeydullah extended his rule over a very large territory, and had ambitions to found an independent Kurdish state. In 1880 he marched at the head of tribal troops into Persian Kurdistan, which he wanted to become the first nucleus of his Kurdish state. See the notes to Table II of the Appendix.

38. Dickson 1910: 370.

39. Report of A.P.O. Amadia, March 1919, FO 371 files, 1919: 44A/147629/3050.

40. Except in 1920, when a section of this tribe, because of a conflict within the leading family, temporarily took the side of the shaikh — without, however, becoming his followers (Lees 1928).

41. *Murids* often refer to the residence of their shaikh rather than to his personal name; they are attached to a dynasty of shaikhs rather than to the present incumbent of the office, apparently. They describe themselves as, e.g., *murids* of Ghauthabad or *murids* of Kripchina.

42. Only later did I realize that this may have another reason: maybe dervishes are not allowed to do their sword-and-skewer acts when the khalifa is not present. I never thought of asking this so explicitly. Some statements by dervishes suggest, in retrospect, this interpretation. It was often said that the dervishes could perform these acts only by permission of the khalifa, but I never understood whether this permission has to be given each time anew.

43. I stayed with two Naqshbandi shaikhs in Turkey, but since the *khanaqas* are officially closed there (since 1927, by order of Atatürk), *khatmas* are held infrequently and in secret only).

44. This is more or less what is expected generally of life after death, although it differs slightly from orthodoxy's view. The belief is quite general that already before the day of resurrection the deceased undergo some form of punishment or reward. A current hadith says that 'grave is a garden of Paradise or a pit of Hell'. The religiously educated add that after death the soul of the deceased remains in one of two abodes: the *sijin* (for the unbelievers) or the *elliya* (for the believers). From those abodes they can see or experience some of the atmosphere of Hell and Paradise, respectively. Sometimes it seems that these abodes are spatially identified with the grave. It is in the physical grave, at any rate, that the angel is said to come and question the soul.

45. The *rabita* is however also mentioned in the literature of other orders, such as the North African Rahmaniya and Sanusiya. A Rahmani author, Bash Tarzi, writes: 'Il est ... fortement conseillé de garder les yeux clos et de se représenter mentalement son maître spirituel, son shaykh: de façon à actualiser le lien du disciple au maître, et à recevoir l'influence bénéfique de ce dernier, qui la reçoit lui-même directement du Prophète Muhammed'. (quoted by R. Gardet in the *Revue Thomiste* 52, 1952: 653). Trimmingham (1971: 212-3) concludes from as-Sanusi's reference to the *rabita* that it was quite widespread among the eastern orders. I have, however, never found a reference to the *rabita* being actually practiced among orders other than the Naqshbandiya. Authors mentioning it, such as the above, may have borrowed it from Naqshbandi usage. The shaikh credited with introducing this particular technique is Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi, the great Indian reformer of the Naqshbandiya.

46. Jiyawuk, *Ma'sat Barzan al-mazluma*, p. 54; and Brifkani, *Haqa'iq tarikhiya an al-qadiya al-Barzaniya*, both quoted in Jwaideh (1960): 140.

47. Dickson (1910).

48. Shaikh Rashid and his Lolan (popularly known as Sufiyan, 'the Sufis') fought as irregulars in government service against the Barzanis and the Kurdish movement during most of the sixties. Shaikh Rashid has since died, and I do not know whether he had a successor. The Lolan fought on the government side again during 1974-75, and are reported to have continued this tradition since 1985.

49. It is especially Lanternari (1963) and Worsley (1957) who forcefully defend this interpretation of messianic movements.

50. A balanced account of Ubeydullah's revolt is to be found in Joseph (1961) and in Jwaideh (1960: 212–289). Useful additional information in Arfa (1966): 23–4 and Halfin (1976): 95–113.

51. An unsympathetic Kurdish account of the events is to be found in Nikitine 1925a; the American journalist Dana Adams Schmidt (1964) recorded a similar account from the mouths of the Barzanis themselves.

52. FO 371 files, 1926: E 2188/288/65 (Constantinople to London, March 30, 1926).

53. On the persecution of shaikhs (and other religious figures) in Kemalist Turkey, see: Kisakurek (1969); Albayrak (1979).

54. One of these shaikhs was Salahaddin of Khizan (see Appendix, Chart V, no. 5). He was so influential that the DP very much desired his support; his position as a member of parliament gave him so much patronage to dispense that he could not only consolidate but considerably expand his traditional influence.

55. Most of what follows is based on information from a friend who grew up in the village, Ahmad Bamarni.

56. Cf. Wolf (1969a; 1969b).

57. Notably the medrese of Shaikh Nur Muhammad in Khizan (see Appendix, Chart V).

58. On this rebellion, the so-called 31 Mart-incident, see Lewis (1968): 214–6 and Farhi (1971). It seems, however, that, contrary to many accusations later made against him, Said did not support this rebellion. In an appeal he published in the paper *Serbesti* on the fifth day of the uprising, he called upon the rebellious soldiers to respect their westernized superiors. Said's associations with Kurdish nationalism are discussed in Bruinessen (1985).

59. For two, rather different, evaluations of the *Risale-i Nur*, see Algar (1978), Mardin (1985).

60. On the organization of the Nurcu movement see Spuler (1981). Estimates of the number of Nurcus vary widely, some sympathizers claiming as many as 4 million (e.g. Kisakurek in Laş et al. 1968). A vague indication of their number may be inferred from the results of the general elections of 1973 and 1977. In the former year the Nurcu movement supported the Islamic National Salvation Party (MSP) of Necmettin Erbakan, while in the latter elections the Nurcu newspaper *Yeni Asya* had turned against the MSP and supported the Justice Party (AP) instead. The MSP gained 11.8% of the vote in 1973 and fell back to 8.6% in 1977. To my knowledge, the Nurcus were the only group who as a block turned away from the MSP in that year. This suggests that the number of Nurcus was then at most around 3% of the population.

61. One of the Naqshbandi shaikhs associated with the Nurcu movement, Shaikh Nurullah of Cizre (the son of Shaikh Sayda), wrote a short treatise in which he refutes, point by point, Said Nursi's objections to the *tariqa* and defends the position that one may very well be both a Nurcu and a Naqshbandi (Muhammed Nurullah Seyda el Cezeri, *Tasavvufun sirlari ve dokuz nukte risalesi*, n.p., 1981).

62. One of a group of Kurdish aghas who were exiled from Kurdistan in 1960 (for nationalist activities) in a public statement said: 'Saidi Kurdi was a great scholar. His looks were very imposing. Whoever saw him, felt respect for the majesty in his looks. He would get very angry with shaikhs who exploited and robbed the people. Saidi Kurdi was not a miracle-worker. Because he was very angry with the shaikhs of Eastern Turkey and struggled with them, he came rarely to the East. The shaikhs were sore with him because he threw stones at their mechanism of exploitation. The Kurds love him as Saidi Kurdi even more than as Saidi Nursi, because he is one of those men who sign with their Kurdish name' (quoted in Beşikçi 1969: 260).

## 5. Shaikh Said's Revolt

### Introduction

In February 1925 a large area of Turkish Kurdistan rose in revolt. Towns, the seats of Turkish republican administration, were taken and Turkish officials expelled or taken prisoner. The charismatic leader of this revolt was a Naqshbandi shaikh with great local influence, Shaikh Said; the explicit aim of the rebellion was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, where the Islamic principles, violated in modern Turkey, were to be respected.

At first sight, this nationalist revolt does not seem much different from the preceding ones, such as that led by Shaikh Ubeydullah of Nehri in 1880. On closer inspection, however, it appears that some elements were present to distinguish this movement from earlier ones. The revolt had been prepared by a *political organization*, exploiting the shaikh's charisma in order to mobilize a mass following that it itself lacked. The shaikh was, nevertheless, much more than a mere figure-head; he assumed supreme leadership of the military operations.

There is a parallel here with the Kurdish war in Iraq (1961–1975), where Barzani (not a shaikh himself, but of a shaikhly family) had a similarly ambivalent relationship with the Democratic Party of Kurdistan. It was largely due to the existence of a *party* and the dissemination of *political propaganda* that these movements, unlike Ubeydullah's, did not die with the removal of their leaders.

Shaikh Said was captured two months after his revolt broke out, and hanged some months later. Guerrilla activity by his followers was, however, to continue for a few years. A later revolt, the so-called Ararat revolt (culminating in 1929–1930) may be seen as the direct continuation of Shaikh Said's revolt.

In my opinion Shaikh Said's revolt heralded a new stage in the history of Kurdish nationalism, a stage that has not yet been superseded. Because the revolt also exemplifies the roles of shaikhs and aghas in interaction with the state, I have chosen it as the subject matter for this concluding chapter.

A few words should perhaps be said about my sources for the account

of this rebellion. My sketch of the historical context largely follows the standard works on Turkish history, Lewis (1961), Shaw and Shaw (1977), Avcioglu (1974) and Aydemir's works; these are not further referred to in the notes, but all other additional sources are. For the rebellion itself, I owe much to the oral accounts of a number of key informants, the most important of whom was Mulla Hasan Hishyar, an active participant in the rebellion. He was a young subaltern officer in the Turkish army when the rebellion broke out, stationed in Silvan (Meyyafarqin). A distant relative of Shaikh Said, he was one of the earlier participants, and during most of the revolt he stayed close to the shaikh. His account of the events — perhaps much informed by his own anticlerical attitude — emphasizes that the shaikh was motivated primarily by nationalism, and used religion instrumentally. Another important informant was Mamduh Salim, one of the founders of the first Kurdish students' union, *Hevi*, in 1912, and active in various Kurdish political organizations since. Arif Beg, a Zaza Kurd from the area of the rebellion, was in 1925 an agricultural engineer in government service in Diyarbakir; to him I owe some background information on the socio-economic situation in the countryside at that time. Several others gave me important second-hand information, that they themselves had gathered from participants in the rebellion. The books by Silopi (1969), Firat (1970) and Dersimi (1952) also are important primary sources, because their authors were directly involved in at least some of the events. Silopi (pseudonym of the late Qadri Beg Jamil Pasha) was a leading member of the Diyarbakir Kurd Taali Jamiyati and later of Khoybun; he gives an insider's view of the Kurdish political organizations. Firat belonged to the Kurdish Alevi tribe, Khormek, which actively fought the Sunni shaikh's rebellion. His account of the rebellion (which was first published in 1945) appears to be accurate, in spite of its heavy Kemalist bias.<sup>1</sup> Dersimi was a young veterinarian at the time of the revolt, was involved in various Kurdish nationalist organizations, and had taken active part in an earlier rising in 1920–21. He remained in close contact with other nationalists ever since. His account of Shaikh Said's rebellion, however, seems to lean heavily on Firat. Three other booklets, published not long after the rebellion by the Kurdish organization Khoybun (Bedr Khan 1928, Hoyboun 1928 and Chirguh 1930) are more propagandistic in nature but nevertheless provide useful insights, if carefully used.

The problem with these Kurdish sources, especially the oral ones, is that the rebellion has become a legendary event in Kurdish nationalist history. All of my informants had told their stories numerous times before, undoubtedly ever polishing and embellishing them, and bringing them more into line with what they thought *should* have happened. The same is probably true of the written sources. I had to carefully check their accounts with whatever independent information I could find. For this purpose I used contemporary Turkish newspapers (especially the



daily *Cumhuriyet*) and the Turkey and Iraq files of the British Foreign Office, which contain lengthy and apparently well-informed reports on the rebellion. There are numerous secondary and tertiary sources, both in Turkish and other languages; where I have used these, they are referred to in the notes.<sup>2</sup>

## History of Kurdish national consciousness

Kurdish nationalism as a socially significant force is a recent phenomenon. That is not to say that, in the past, no Kurdish 'national' awareness existed. The linguistic differences between the Kurds and their neighbours were obvious, and there are quite early indications that Kurds saw themselves as different from Turks, Arabs and Persians (not to mention their non-Muslim neighbours) in another sense. Thus the seventeenth-century Kurdish poet Ahmad-i Khani prefaced his epic poem *Mem u Zin* with a section entitled '*Derde me*', ('our ills'), in which he lamented the Kurds' division, which caused them to be under the rule of the Ottomans and Safavids, or previous empires. His hopes were for a king to arise from amidst the Kurds:

If only there were harmony among us,  
if we were to obey a single one of us,  
he would reduce to vassalage  
Turks, Arabs and Persians, all of them.  
We would perfect our religion, our state,  
and would educate ourselves in learning and wisdom ...<sup>3</sup>

Khani was, and is, widely read in Kurdistan. Manuscripts were copied and kept by mullas (village priests); students would learn fragments of Khani by heart along with Koranic suras, and verse by Hafez, Saadi and others. *Mem u Zin* is universally considered *the* national epic of the Kurds. It is likely therefore that Khani's lament adequately reflects the national feelings of educated Kurds in the past few centuries.

Although Khani's longing for Kurdish grandeur may have been shared by many, one would be wrong in assuming that it ever led to a strong solidarity among Kurds *vis-à-vis* others. It never made contending chieftains refrain from allying themselves with non-Kurdish outsiders against their fellow Kurds, it never made them unite against a foreign enemy. And this is, in fact, the essence of Khani's complaint. Only a strong king would be able to make the Kurds stop fighting each other, liberate them from foreign domination, and bring them progress and prosperity. With Khani we do not yet find an idea capable of inspiring a popular movement. He did not preach abstract ideals like love for or loyalty to the nation. The strong and wise leader is of overriding importance. At least until the 1920s, popular support for movements of a more or less nationalistic character was motivated by

loyalty towards their leaders rather than by nationalist sentiment. Since then, nationalism has become a very significant motivating force, but, nevertheless, loyalty to one of the nationalist or other leaders often overrides the ulterior interests of the nation.

### The Kurds: a nation?

The concept of 'Kurdishness' has never had an unambiguous denotation. Depending on the context and the speaker, it could refer to groups differently demarcated. The name 'Kurmanj' could refer to Kurdish tribesmen as opposed to, for instance, Turkish tribesmen, Ottoman townspeople or Christian subject peasantry; it could refer to speakers of the Kurmanji dialect as opposed to speakers of Zaza or the southern dialects; or it could refer to the (Kurdish) peasantry as opposed to their own aghas or the Ottoman administration. The Yezidis, speakers of the same dialect, but despised as 'devil-worshippers', were often considered not to be Kurds by the Muslim Kurds. On the other hand, many tribal chieftains, and sometimes entire tribes, prided themselves on real or fictitious Arab descent. Kurds who entered the civil service and other town-dwellers often preferred to call themselves *Osmanli* (Ottoman); to them the very name of Kurd (as that of Turk!) implied backwardness and boorishness.

The concept of the *nation* as we know it in Europe was foreign to the Middle East. The only solidarity group wider than the family or tribe that is recognized in Islamic doctrine is the *umma*, the community of Muslims. In the Ottoman Empire one's juridical position depended on the religious community to which one belonged: Muslim, Greek (orthodox), Armenian (Gregorian) or Jew. The latter three communities had a certain autonomy in juridical and administrative matters. Within the Muslim community there was a strict division between the Sunni majority and the Alevis, who were considered heretics. The Ottoman sultans, from the mid-sixteenth century onward, boasted the title of Caliph, leader of all true believers. As such they commanded the religiously sanctioned loyalty of all Sunni Muslims, no matter which language they spoke. Both the ulama and Ottoman officials stressed the unity of Sunni Kurds with Sunni Turks, Sunni Arabs and the other Sunni ethnic groups. Differences between Sunni and Alevi Muslims (c.q. between Sunni Kurds and Alevi Kurds) were fanned into enmity by the same authorities, because of Ottoman-Safavid rivalries.

Sultan Abdulhamid II (who ruled from 1876 to 1909 and who stimulated pan-Islamic propaganda at home and abroad) was especially successful in consolidating the strong loyalties of all his Sunni subjects. The Hamidiye militias were another effective means of binding Sunni Kurds to the sultan. The Kurdish tribesmen's loyalties to the Sultan-Caliph (though not to the empire) overrode their national loyalties, even when (around the turn of the century) nationalism in the modern sense had started to move people.

This is illustrated by a passage from the memoirs of the Kurdish nationalist Qadri Beg. His nationalism had been awakened or strengthened during his study in Istanbul, where the first nationalist organizations flourished. In 1914 he was drafted into the army and assigned to a brigade that, to his great pleasure, consisted almost entirely of Kurdish tribesmen of the Hesinan and Jibran tribes). He expected to be able to discuss Kurdish national ideals with the Kurdish officers, but was disappointed: 'Alas! These tribal officers, because they had strong ties of loyalty to the Caliph of Islam, did not want to hear anything about the national problems of the Kurds.'<sup>4</sup>

Not all tribal chieftains were averse to nationalism in this period, but it was not until the caliphate was abolished by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) in 1924 that a wave of more or less nationalist-inspired revolts erupted in Kurdistan.

More foreign even than the concept of the nation was that of the nation-state. All Middle Eastern states were multi-ethnic, while several peoples, such as the Kurds and the Armenians (and the Jews, if these may properly be called a nation) were represented in more than one state. Another characteristic of the Middle East was that often more than one ethnic group inhabited the same territory. Ethnic groups all had their own occupational specializations, and depended on each other to a certain extent. Thus, the areas of settlement of Kurds and Armenians largely coincided. Cynical as this may sound, it was the Armenian massacres that made a Kurdish state feasible.

### Nationalist currents in the Ottoman Empire

It was from Europe that these concepts hailed; it was Europe, too, that fanned nationalism. This is not the place to write the history of nationalism among the Empire's nations;<sup>5</sup> I shall sketch the basic outlines only.

Greek and Slavic nationalism were quite actively stimulated by Europeans. Russia also took a keen interest in the Armenians, its obvious potential allies in its confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. As a reaction to these threats, a number of new, and partly conflicting ideologies took root in leading intellectual circles of the Empire during the last decades of the nineteenth century. *Ottomanism* was a kind of patriotism based on citizenship in the Ottoman state. It stressed the common interests of all Ottoman citizens, independent of language or religion. *Pan-Islamism* found its strongest champion in Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1909) himself. It had a definite *anti-colonialist* tinge. *Pan-Turkism*, the romantic idea of uniting all Turkic peoples in a single political unit, may originally have been a reaction to, and imitation of the Czar's Pan-Slavism. These ideologies came to fruition within the same social stratum: the military and civil officials and urban-based landlords. The *Young Turk* movement originated in the 1880s among the most enlightened and best educated of this stratum. It was a political

movement, strongly influenced by French liberalism and positivist philosophy. The Young Turks embraced a programme of constitutionalism (as against the sultan's absolutism), *Ottomanism*, and political freedom (initially, the movement called itself 'New Ottomans'; the name of 'Young Turks' was a label foreigners attached to it and which became generally accepted). Significantly, many of its first protagonists were non-Turkish Muslims. Two Kurdish intellectuals, Abdullah Jevdet and Ishaq Sukuti, played important roles.<sup>6</sup> The sultan's loyal subjects embraced Pan-Islamism, which was rejected by the Young Turks: it denied the equality of all Ottoman citizens and provided a justification for the sultan's absolutism. Gradually, however, the Young Turk movement came under the charm of (Pan-) Turkist ideas. As the Christian nationalities seemed to reject Ottomanism, their and the Turkish nationalism mutually reinforced each other's development. After the Young Turk revolution (1908) the Committee of Unity and Progress, which remained in the background but possessed the real power, did little to hide its increasingly chauvinistic Turkish nationalism. It seems that the nationalism of the other Muslim nationalities emerged largely as a response and reaction to the increasing prominence of Turkish nationalism and Pan-Turk aspirations.

In order to place the Kurdish nationalist movement of those days in its proper historical context, a few words have to be said about the upheavals of the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence.

## **The End of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Republic of Turkey**

In 1908 Young Turk officers of the Committee of Union and Progress forced Sultan Abdulhamid to restore the constitution and accept elections for parliament.<sup>7</sup> The (slightly revised) constitution promised legal equality for all citizens, independent of religion or language, and considerable civil liberties. For a short time, optimism and Ottoman patriotism prevailed. Soon, however, it became only too clear that the empire's ills were not to be healed by the mere existence of a constitution. Within half a year, it lost more territory than in all the preceding thirty years. These external problems, and an abortive counter-revolution in the spring of 1909, gave the Committee of Union and Progress the excuse for an increasingly authoritarian rule: three members (Enver, Talaat, and Mehmed Javid, as Ministers of War, Interior and Finance, respectively) assumed ever more dictatorial powers. In 1914 this triumvirate sent Turkey into the First World War as an ally of Germany and Austria, hoping to reconquer lost territories and to 'liberate' Turkish peoples under Russian rule (in the Caucasus and central Asia).

**The Armenian massacres and the Russian invasion**

In May 1915, orders were issued that all Armenians were to be evacuated from Eastern Anatolia, as it was feared that they would take the side of the Russians and attack the Turkish armies from behind. Some Armenians reached the camps in northern Iraq and central Syria where they were to be concentrated; many perished on the way, or were killed outright by Turkish gendarmes or jealous Kurdish neighbours. Many more were killed when a short-lived Armenian uprising in Van, apparently provoked by the anti-Armenian measures elsewhere, and supported by the Russians, was violently suppressed by Ottoman reinforcements (July 1915). Early in 1916 Russian armies invaded Eastern Anatolia, forcing many Muslims to flee south and westward. During that year the Russians advanced beyond Erzincan. From the south British troops from India advanced into Mesopotamia. The Ottoman defence was more effective there, and at first the British were repelled. In February 1917 they recaptured Kut al-Amara (400 km south of Baghdad), which had been taken and evacuated in their first campaign. Then they advanced further north, in order to capture the oil wells of Kirkuk and Mosul and to join forces with the Russians in the north. The Bolshevik revolution, however, temporarily reversed the situation. Russian troops were withdrawn from the occupied territories. They left most of their arms in the hands of the remaining Anatolian Armenians. In the southern Caucasus, Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis established an independent Transcaucasian Republic (December 1917), which was recognized by the Ottomans. Armenian paramilitary units, either penetrating from this republic or formed among the Anatolian Armenians, now took revenge on the Muslims living among them, and massacred many. Early in 1918 Ottoman armies pushed eastward from Diyarbakir and Erzincan, forcing many Armenians as refugees into the southern Caucasus. Kurdish militia played their part in these operations.

**The armistice and the partition of the Empire**

These advances on the eastern front (even oil-rich Baku, on the Caspian Sea, was temporarily taken) could not compensate for losses in the south and west. On 31 October 1918, the Ottoman government saw itself forced to accept an armistice and tolerate occupation by allied troops. Partitioning of the empire, as previously agreed upon by the British and French representatives Sykes and Picot, went into force. France took Syria (including the Lebanon) and Cilicia, Britain Palestine and Iraq. Istanbul and the straits had formerly been claimed by the Russians, for whom they were of vital importance. As the new Soviet regime, however, had renounced all imperialist claims, Britain was quick to occupy these strategic locations. Italy occupied parts of southwestern Anatolia, and mixed allied contingents (Greek, Italian, French and British) occupied Izmir and its hinterland. In north-central

Anatolia, with its considerable Greek population, attempts were made to establish a Greek state (Pontus), while the British proceeded to prepare the establishment of an independent Armenia encompassing not only the so-called 'six provinces' (*vilayet-i sitte*: Van, Erzurum, Sivas, Mamuret al-Aziz, Bitlis and Diyarbakir) that had for some time been associated with the Armenian claims, but also the provinces of Kars, Ardahan and Batum, only recently ceded to Turkey by Moscow's revolutionary government. At the Peace Conference, which started early in 1919 in Paris, not only Britain, France and Italy, but also Greek, Armenian, Zionist, Arab and Kurdish representatives pressed their territorial claims. The Treaty of Sèvres that resulted from this conference (1920) provided for an Armenian state to be formed out of the vilayets of Trabzon, Erzurum, Van and Bitlis, and explicitly left room for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan (Art. 62 and 64).

### **The Turkish War of Independence**

The Treaty of Sèvres was, however, rendered out of date before it was signed. The new government that had been established at Istanbul after the Armistice was little more than a tool in the hands of the Allies. Large sections of the population were extremely dissatisfied with this state of affairs. Religious conservatives and Turkish nationalists of all shades resented the foreign infidel occupation; liberals saw with regret how this government undid most of the remaining democratic achievements of the Young Turk period. All over the country irregular resistance groups emerged spontaneously, and started guerrilla warfare against the occupying forces. In May 1919 a Greek army invaded western Anatolia, with British, French and American connivance. There was much killing and pillaging of Muslims. Turkish defences were swept away and a large territory was occupied. News of these events fanned Turkish nationalist sentiment and desire for revenge. Nothing was to be expected from the Istanbul government. When a new alternative offered itself, it could therefore rapidly gain ground. The capable and popular general Mustafa Kemal, who had been sent on an inspection tour of the east in May 1919, applied himself to the self-imposed task of co-ordinating the local resistance groups and organizing a military and civil command that could liberate Turkey from foreign occupation. He secured the cooperation of the most able and popular military commanders, and convened two congresses where the foundations for a new government and representative parliament were laid. The first was held in Erzurum (July–August 1919), with only representatives of the eastern provinces attending. The congress elected a representative committee including Kurdish members which was to act as a provisional government.<sup>8</sup> A second congress was held a month later at Sivas (September 1919); here representatives from all over Turkey were present. Resolutions passed at these congresses affirmed the

strong demand for the *preservation of the integrity of the Islamic parts of the Ottoman Empire* and of national independence, and the determination to defend these if the Istanbul government were forced to cede territory. Later that year there were elections for the parliament in Istanbul. Nearly everywhere, including in Kurdistan, Kemalist candidates were elected. In February 1920 this parliament accepted the slightly modified declarations of Sivas, now called the National Pact. The pact demanded self-determination (by plebiscite) for those occupied parts of the Ottoman Empire with an Arab population majority; *all other parts of the Empire inhabited by a Muslim majority were to remain an undivided whole*. Thereupon the British forced the government to arrest leading parliamentarians and to dissolve parliament. The break between the nationalists and the collaborationist government was complete. The former declared themselves the sole representatives of popular will. In April 1920 the Grand National Assembly, which claimed both legislative and executive functions (a parliament-cum-government), was convened in Ankara. It consisted of members of the Istanbul parliament who had been able to escape, in addition to deputies from the local resistance groups. Mustafa Kemal, elected its president, imposed central control on all guerrilla bands and prepared for war. The first successes were won on the eastern front. In 1919 an Armenian republic had been constituted in the southern Caucasus. In the spring of 1920, armed Armenian bands started raiding eastern Anatolia from this base, in an attempt to take by force the provinces promised at Sèvres, now that it became clear that the Turks would never cede them voluntarily. Due to the upheavals of the preceding years the Armenians had become a rather small minority in the eastern provinces,<sup>9</sup> and it seems that all military activity originated from across the border.<sup>10</sup> In October 1920, Kazim Karabekir, the commander of the eastern front, advanced against the Armenians, pushed them back behind their border and forced the republic's government to accept a peace treaty in which it renounced all claims to Anatolian territory and accepted a borderline that, apart from a few minor revisions, still stands.

On the western front victory was not so easily won. The Greeks continued their offensives and advanced further into Anatolia. Not until September 1921 could the Greek offensive be broken and the Greek troops put to flight. In the summer of 1922, the Turks completely destroyed the Greek armies in Anatolia. The Allies had to accept the new Turkey as a fact. The Treaty of Sèvres became meaningless. In November 1922, a new peace conference started at Lausanne. In the resulting treaty (signed 24 July 1923), the territorial integrity of Turkey, as defined in the National Pact, was recognized, with the sole exception of Mosul province. This province, roughly comprising southern Kurdistan, contained the important oil deposits of Mosul and Kirkuk. The British, whose northward advance had been largely motivated by

the presence of these deposits, were unwilling to abandon their control of them. The Lausanne Treaty left the future of the province to be decided in bilateral talks between Turkey and Britain.<sup>11</sup> Armenians and Kurds were not mentioned in the treaty; Turkish sovereignty of the eastern provinces was implicitly acknowledged.

### **The Republic of Turkey**

Turkey's independence was won. No efforts were spared to weld it rapidly into a viable modern state. On 29 October 1923, the Grand National Assembly accepted a new constitution which declared Turkey a republic. Mustafa Kemal was elected its president. The ex-sultan Abdulmajid, who had been put on the throne less than a year previously, retained the office of caliph, but Mustafa Kemal made him understand that this had no political content. The following March the caliphate was entirely abolished. Many more measures reducing the role of Islam in public life followed: clerics were pensioned off, the traditional religious schools (madrassas) replaced by a modern secular education system, and the Sharia courts abolished (1924). As a reaction there were a number of minor revolts by Muslim conservatives, which did not, in general, present any real threat to the new regime.

Next to nationalism and secularism, populism (*halkçılık*) became another cornerstone of the new regime. The basic idea was that all citizens of the republic were equal regardless of class, rank, religion or occupation. Religious discrimination was abolished and conflicting class interests denied, with the ultimate consequence that socialist parties and trade unions were banned. Populism became the ideological justification for a policy of nation-building that denied the existence of a separate Kurdish (or Laz, Circassian, etc.) culture, and made the Kurds into Turks by decree. Historians were ordered to produce 'scientific proof' of the identity of the two nations. Under the guise of the struggle against 'feudalism', a law was passed giving the government authority to expropriate large landholdings in the eastern provinces — a weapon against aghas and shaikhs. The expropriated lands were to be given, not to the local landless Kurds, but to Turkish or turkicized settlers from elsewhere (mainly muhajirs, Muslims from the Balkans who came to Turkey after 1923). In fact, as early as 1923/24 several influential shaikhs and aghas were removed from the area.<sup>12</sup> Until 1925 this policy, which later was to develop into its logical consequence of forced assimilation, was visible in outline only. The Turkish government did not yet wish to alienate the Kurds, because of the Mosul question.

### **The Mosul question**

Britain and Turkey did not reach an agreement on the status of this oil-rich province and the delineating of the Turkish-Iraqi border within the stipulated time. The matter was therefore referred to the League of Nations, which appointed a three-man commission of investigation.



Turkey proposed a referendum among the population of the province. Agents were active all over southern Kurdistan making anti-British, pro-Turkish propaganda. The British rejected the referendum; they considered the question one of border delimitation only. They tried, meanwhile, to buy Kurdish good-will with vague promises of autonomy or independence. The investigating commission visited the disputed province in February 1925, to probe the local situation and the population's wishes. While they were investigating in Mosul, Shaikh Said's revolt broke out in Turkey, and was soon followed by severe repressive measures. Understandably, there were Turkish suspicions that this revolt was a British machination, intended to prejudice the commission's findings.

The commission, incidentally, concluded that the Kurds constituted a majority of Mosul's population, and that there were strong arguments for the creation of an independent Kurdish state.<sup>13</sup> Oil, however, carries more weight than most arguments. Britain did not intend to part with it. In June 1926 Turkey and Great Britain signed a treaty in which Turkey surrendered all rights to Mosul in exchange for ten per cent of the oil produced in the area, and the British promise to refrain from agitation on behalf of the Kurds and Armenians in the future.<sup>14</sup>

The British occupation of Iraq had given rise to significant social and political developments in southern Kurdistan. Kurdish national consciousness was more developed here than in the north. The present chapter, however, is confined to the developments in northern Kurdistan. Events in Iraqi and Persian Kurdistan are omitted, except insofar as they had direct relevance for the situation in northern Kurdistan.

## The first Kurdish political organizations

Not unnaturally, the first Kurdish nationalist organizations were formed in Istanbul, by Kurds of prominent families who occupied official positions in the empire and were influenced by the nationalist ideologies originating from Europe. The first organization,<sup>15</sup> the *Kurd Teavun ve Teraqqi Jamiyati* (Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress), appeared on the scene in 1908 in the liberal atmosphere following the Young Turk revolution. Among its founding members we encounter representatives of the foremost Kurdish families, such as Muhammad Sharif Pasha (of the Baban family, a former Ottoman envoy to Stockholm, and a staunch supporter of Sultan Abdulhamid, opposed to the Young Turks), Emin Ali Bedirkhan (leader of the Bedirkhan clan in Istanbul), and Shaikh Sayyid Abdulqadir (son of Shaikh Ubeydullah of Nehri, later to become the president of the Council of State). These aristocrats shared the Ottomanist ideals of the Young Turk movement, but not its liberal ideas. Their attitude towards the common Kurdish

people was extremely paternalistic. They had no serious contacts with Kurdistan. For all three, what Major Noel, in 1919, reported on the Bedirkhan family was valid: they were 'only a name in [western] Kurdistan, but a name that commands respect; ... the family can still command fidelity and services in ... the region of their origins.'<sup>16</sup>

Three less well-known co-founders of the organization established a Kurdish school and publishing house that published a magazine. Another great name associated with the school is that of Saidi Kurdi (Said Nursi), who already enjoyed fame as a religious scholar, and was later to become an influential Islamic revivalist. He contributed articles to the society's journal. The Kurdish population of Istanbul consisted not only of such notables and students: there was a large number of Kurdish migrants in menial jobs, especially that of porter (*hammal*). Most of them lived in one quarter, the Gedikpasha Mahallesi, where many tribes had their own *hans* (warehouses, offering primitive lodgings). Apparently, these migrant labourers never participated in the society, which remained an exclusively upper-class concern.

Soon the Young Turks closed down the society, either because of the anti-Union and Progress attitudes of its leading members, or because it was a Kurdish (rather than Turkish or Ottoman) society, or for both reasons. Rivalries between the Bedirkhans and Sayyid Abdulqadir made suppression of the society very easy. As an organization it was succeeded by the Kurdish students' union Hevi ('Hope', founded in 1912), which was a slightly less aristocratic club. A leading role in it was played by members of the family of Jamil Pasha — a family of Diyarbakir that owed its greatness to high Ottoman offices rather than to a more traditional leading role in Kurdish society. Most other members were also sons of urban, ottomanized notables. They belonged to the same social stratum as most Young Turks; their romantic nationalism paralleled that of the Turkish nationalists of their time. Their contacts with common Kurds, again, were quite superficial. In 1914, with the outbreak of the war, Hevi fell apart because its members were drafted into the army and widely dispersed. Qadri Beg's disappointment at his discovery that Kurdish tribesmen did not at all share his nationalist ideals (see the quotation above) is illustrative of the isolation of the nationalist intellectuals before the war.

Organizations such as the Kurd Teavun ve Teraqqi Jamiyati (and to a lesser extent, Hevi) could not and would not lead a mass movement. Politics, to them, was a gentlemen's game. People associated with the former organization tried to attain independence for Kurdistan (under their rulership, of course) by intriguing with the Allies. In December 1914 Muhammad Sharif Pasha offered his services to the British Expeditionary forces in Mesopotamia (who declined the offer).<sup>17</sup> Members of the Bedirkhan family contacted the Russians. Two of them, Kamil and Abdurrazzaq, seem to have been appointed governors of Erzurum and Bitlis, respectively, during the Russian occupation.<sup>18</sup> As is

usual for such families, they did not put all their eggs into one basket: in 1919 we find another member of the Bedirkhan family, Khalid, as the (Ottoman) governor of Malatya.<sup>19</sup>

The war brought not only young urban Kurdish nationalists into contact with Kurdistan, it also brought great changes in Kurdistan itself. The old Hamidiye was (under the name of 'tribal regiments' or 'militias') mobilized again. Many more tribes were enlisted now than in the past. As a consequence of the Russian invasion, many Kurds (hundreds of thousands) fled to the west. When, after the October revolution, Russian soldiers were withdrawn and left the remaining Armenians to defend themselves, the Kurdish tribal units drove nearly all of these towards the Caucasus.<sup>20</sup> With the disappearance of the Armenians, most of eastern Anatolia became almost exclusively Kurdish territory.<sup>21</sup> A Kurdish nation state was now feasible. Kurds of Iraq and those in exile, later also those in Istanbul, discussed Kurdish territorial claims with the Allies, who took them seriously. News of this came back to Kurdistan, and stimulated Kurdish nationalism there. Also, many Kurds, who at the beginning of the war were still completely under the influence of pan-Islamic propaganda, started suspecting Young Turk intentions with respect to the Kurds. There were rumours that the Kurdish refugees in the west had been intentionally dispersed, so that they would nowhere constitute more than five per cent of the total population,<sup>22</sup> and these created much apprehension.

After the war was over, the caliphate lost most of its claims to the Kurds' loyalty since the caliph became but an instrument in the hands of the Allies, especially the British. In fact, Kemalist propaganda claimed that he was a prisoner and that he therefore could say nothing authoritative. Rumours that an Armenian state was to be established in eastern Anatolia agitated the Kurds and no doubt contributed to the vehemence with which they helped the Turks expel Armenian militants. According to British sources (which may be biased or give a wrong interpretation), immediately after the Armistice, Turks close to the Committee of Union and Progress *stimulated Kurdish nationalism* as a weapon against the British, and promised a form of autonomy within a Turkish-Kurdish state.<sup>23</sup> The idea of Kurdish independence suddenly appeared widespread (although few of the contemporary witnesses are reliable — all had their own reasons to present the Kurds as less or as more nationalistic than they really were). What Kurdish independence (or autonomy) was to mean, however, was a point on which opinions widely diverged. It was not just the old aristocrats with high official careers and the urban 'middle class' who wanted independence; many tribal chieftains and shaikhs also clamoured for it. All wanted to play leading roles in the independent Kurdistan, none wished to be subordinate to any of the others. To improve their chances, many established contacts with one or more of the relevant external powers: the government of Istanbul, the Allies (e.g. the British), or the

Kemalists. After the revolution, the Russians could no longer be counted upon to create and protect a Kurdish vassal state, but even they were approached.

### **Nationalist organizations after the war, and the Kemalists**

On the whole, it may be said that after the war the urban nationalists had better contact with the Kurdish village population than a decade previously, although the contacts were with chieftains rather than with commoners. The Kurdistan Taali Jamiyati (Society for the Elevation of Kurdistan), founded in Istanbul in 1918, with parallel organizations in Diyarbakir and a number of other towns in Kurdistan, counted among its members not only representatives of the older generation of nationalists (the former *Kurd Teavun ve Teraqqi Jamiyati*) and of the urban middle class, but also representatives of the tribal milieu.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the society claimed to represent 10,000, later even 15,000 of Istanbul's Kurdish population (which is about 50% of the total). British observers in Istanbul took this claim seriously, especially after the Kurdish guilds of that town had declared their allegiance to Sayyid Abdulqadir.<sup>25</sup> The Kurdish students' union *Hevi* was also revived; its members included many young intellectuals as well as several prominent tribesmen. After a split in the KTJ, the *Hevi* group merged with the younger and more radical elements of the former organization in the *Teshkilat-i Ijtima'iyye* ('Organization for Social Welfare').<sup>26</sup>

A salient point is that, although most leading members of these organizations were Kurmanji-speaking Sunnis, they also attracted Alevis and Zaza-speaking Kurds. In 1920, young members of the Kurdistan Taali Jamiyati fomented a rising in western Dersim and Sivas, among the Alevi Kurds. A large number of tribal chieftains united behind the demand of autonomy for Kurdistan. They sent telegraphic ultimatums to the Grand Assembly demanding the release of Kurdish prisoners, the withdrawal of non-Kurdish officials from Kurdistan, the recognition of autonomy, and later even complete independence.<sup>27</sup> The demands of these chieftains (no doubt inspired, if not dictated by the members of KTJ in their midst) went beyond narrow provincial or sectarian interests. Their Kurdistan included Sunnis and Alevis, Kurmanji- and Zaza-speakers. Support from other parts of Kurdistan was, however, not forthcoming, and Kemalist troops could suppress the movement without great trouble. One of the reasons for the failure was the lack of inter-regional coordination, due to bad communication and poor organization. The uprising had not been centrally planned and there had been no previous contacts with influential persons in other parts of Kurdistan. Moreover, most Sunni Kurds saw it at the time as an Alevi uprising; they saw no reason to spontaneously support it.

A third important reason for the failure of the uprising is that many other chieftains of Dersim, as well as of other parts of Kurdistan, had confidence in Mustafa Kemal and supported him. They perceived that

they needed him to consolidate or increase their power. Many aghas knew Mustafa Kemal personally, for he had been appointed the commander of the 16th army corps at Diyarbakir in 1916. He had stopped Russian advances and many, not unnaturally, considered him their protector. He had made friends with many chieftains, and assured them of his love for the Kurds. He had invited prominent Kurds, even Kurdish nationalists to the Erzurum and Sivas congresses, and he promised that Kurds and Turks would have fully equal rights in independent Turkey. In the first Representative Committee (Hayat-i Temsiliye, formed at the Erzurum congress) a few Kurds were appointed, and in the Grand National Assembly the Kurds were proportionally represented.<sup>28</sup> At the beginning of the first unrest in Dersim, Mustafa Kemal invited the instigators for talks. The only one who went, Alishan (chieftain of the Qochgiri tribe), was made a candidate for the Assembly.<sup>29</sup>

In the years 1919–21 Mustafa Kemal's contacts with Kurdish chieftains appeared to be better than those of the Kurdish nationalist organizations. As the Kurd Taali Jamiyati of Diyarbakir told Major Noel, in spite of a general nationalist feeling, they had been deterred from proclaiming an independent Kurdistan, 'owing to the Turks having won over two of the principal local notables who are influential among surrounding tribes ...'<sup>30</sup>

Even apart from the confidence that Mustafa Kemal inspired, it is not surprising that many Kurdish chieftains turned to him: he had power that he might delegate to them, whereas the nationalist organizations did not. The latter might count on the Allies' good-will and on the provisions of Sèvres, but most chieftains correctly perceived that the Allies were in the first place the Armenians' friends, not the Kurds'. Mustafa Kemal was the most likely person to protect Kurdish lands from Armenian claims. Thus, in November 1919, it happened that the Kurdish delegation at the Peace Conference saw its efforts to convey the demands for Kurdish independence crossed by a series of telegrams to the Peace Conference from Kurdish chieftains protesting that they did *not* want separation from the Turks.<sup>31</sup>

### **Azadi**

After the definitive victory of Mustafa Kemal's nationalists, the Kurdish nationalist organizations in Istanbul ceased their activities. In fact, they had virtually dissipated before that date. Prominent members, compromised by too close contact with the Allies, fled. A number of them were to establish in Syria, in 1927, a new nationalist organization, Khoybun, which, due to its close cooperation with the Armenian Dashnak, enjoyed some British and French good-will. In Khoybun the old aristocratic and paternalistic atmosphere prevailed. It was later to play some part in the Ararat rebellion (1928–30), and even claimed to be its organizer.

In Turkey itself, however, a new, clandestine, Kurdish organization was founded in 1923. It was called Azadi ('Freedom')<sup>32</sup> and had a different composition from the preceding organizations. It was not urban notables (except a few with much personal influence), but mainly experienced military men who formed the nucleus of this organization. Significantly, its headquarters were not in Istanbul or Ankara, but in Erzurum, the seat of the Eighth army corps. The central persons of Azadi were Khalid Beg (one of the aghas of the Jibran tribe) and Yusuf Ziya Beg (a descendant of the mirs of Bitlis). The former was one of the few chieftains' sons who had attended the tribal military school founded for his Hamidiye cadres by Sultan Abdulhamid II; he enjoyed the respect of most tribal militia commanders and was himself a colonel in the regular army. It was probably due to his urban education that he was much more of a nationalist than the other tribal officers. Yusuf Ziya Beg was a person of great influence in Bitlis, and he had been elected its deputy to the Grand National Assembly.

The first steps towards the establishment of this new organization had been taken by a few officers in Erzurum. These then approached influential persons all over northern Kurdistan. The campaign for the 1923 elections to the Assembly gave Yusuf Ziya the opportunity to see many chieftains, without arousing suspicions. In 1924 Azadi convened its first congress. Of those attending, one of the most fervent nationalists was Shaikh Said, a Naqshbandi shaikh who was related by marriage to Khalid Beg, and who had been invited because he had great influence among the Zaza-speaking tribes of the districts northeast of Diyarbakir. The militia (Hamidiye) commanders who were present were more reserved, but the shaikh convinced them of the need to fight for Kurdish independence, since the Ankara government's policies had become increasingly threatening to the Kurds.<sup>33</sup> The congress took two important decisions:

1. A general uprising of Kurdistan was to take place, followed by a declaration of independence. The rising had to be planned in detail, and every participant was to have full instructions on the actions expected from him. As this was to take much time, May 1925 was set as the tentative date for the uprising.

2. It was generally felt that foreign assistance was necessary. There were three possibilities: the French (in Syria), the British (in Iraq), and the Russians. Many of the militia commanders, who had always seen Russia as their chief enemy and felt, for religious reasons, much closer to the Turks than to the anti-religious Bolsheviks, refused even to consider the latter possibility. It is said that it was again Shaikh Said who turned the tide and convinced the others that it was better to receive aid from the unbelievers than to suffer the same fate as the Armenians. A courier was sent to Georgia. The Soviets allegedly answered that they were fully aware of the oppression of the Kurds, but were not in a position to help them. They promised, however, not to assist the Turks

in suppressing any Kurdish uprising. The British, too, were contacted but seem to have remained non-committal as usual.<sup>34</sup>

## **Shaikh Said's revolt**

### **The religious factor**

Throughout 1924 preparations for the uprising continued. The circumstances were favourable for nationalist propaganda: with the abolition of the caliphate (March 1924) the most important symbol of Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood disappeared. It became possible to condemn the Ankara government as irreligious, an accusation that seemed to be confirmed by other measures it took. This argument carried more weight than any other with many of the Kurds, who were strongly committed to Islam. There were other grievances as well. If Kurdish accusations are correct, the fear of Kurdish nationalism led the Ankara government to take measures that could only make Kurdish nationalist sentiments more general. In the name of populism, the Kurdish language was forbidden in public places (1924); in the name of the abolition of feudalism, Kurdish aghas, but also intellectuals, were sent into exile to western Turkey. A new law (Nr.1505) made it possible to expropriate the land of Kurdish big landlords and give it to Turkish-speakers who were to be settled in Kurdistan.<sup>35</sup> Azadi's propagandists took up the grievances resulting from this, and found many willing ears.

It does not seem, however, that any concrete strategic plans were laid down. Most efforts were directed towards securing the support of influential persons in all parts of Kurdistan. A general uprising in all of Kurdistan and the proclamation of a Kurdish government were apparently deemed sufficient for the establishment of an independent state. It was known that the Turkish camp was divided internally, and that there was a strong current of conservative, in part religiously inspired, opposition to Mustafa Kemal. It would therefore be doubly advantageous to give the coming revolt a religious appearance as well. In the first place, many Kurds who would not otherwise join, would do so for religious reasons, while the government and the Grand National Assembly would not be a single monolithic bloc in opposition to the rising. An attempt was therefore made to establish contact with the exiled ex-Sultan Vahideddin.<sup>36</sup> If this sultan-caliph were to give public support to the uprising, the chances of its success would be better.

For similar reasons, Shaikh Said and the other co-operating shaikhs were given important parts to play. Azadi preferred the shaikhs to be the overt leaders of the rebellion for several reasons:

— The shaikhs had large personal followings, and most of them disposed of considerable financial means. Shaikh Said was very wealthy: his sons traded in animals on a large scale and regularly brought large flocks from their mountainous districts to Aleppo and other far-away

places. The shaikhs' followers could, moreover, be expected to obey them unquestioningly. The shaikhs thus seemed to hold the keys to success.

— By their very participation the shaikhs would give the rebellion a religious appearance, and it was expected that they would thereby attract support or even participation from much wider circles than their personal followings alone.

— In order to ensure unity and co-operation amongst many different tribes, the shaikhs would have to act out their traditional roles of mediators and conflict-solvers.

It is probably due to their role as mediators and to the respect transcending tribal boundaries enjoyed by the shaikhs, that during the revolt four of the five fronts established by the rebels were commanded by shaikhs, while Shaikh Said himself had supreme command of all operations.

### **A contemporary view of the state of affairs in 1924**

Most sources on the events of this period are rather biased. They are partisan and, in the case of written memoirs and oral informants, coloured by hindsight, later interpretations and wishful thinking. It is interesting, therefore, to find an account of the situation as it was given to British intelligence interrogators by a number of Azadi members in September 1924. The Azadi members were officers in the Turkish army; the story of their desertion from it follows below.

These officers presented their British interrogators with a long list of complaints about the treatment of the Kurds by the Turkish government:

1. A new law on minorities aroused suspicion. Fears were that the Turks planned to disperse the Kurds over western Turkey, and settle Turks in their stead in the east.
2. The caliphate, one of the last ties binding Kurds and Turks together, had been abolished.
3. Use of the Kurdish language in schools and law courts was restricted. Kurdish education was forbidden, with the result that education among the Kurds was virtually non-existent.
4. The word 'Kurdistan' (used previously as a geographical term) was deleted from all geography books.
5. All senior government officials in Kurdistan were Turks. Only at lower levels, were carefully selected Kurds appointed.
6. Relative to the taxes paid, there were no comparable benefits received from the government.
7. The government interfered in the eastern provinces in the 1923 elections for the Grand National Assembly.
8. The government pursued the policy of continuously setting one tribe against another.



9. Turkish soldiers frequently raided Kurdish villages, taking away animals; requisitioned food supplies were often not or insufficiently paid for.

10. In the army the Kurdish rank-and-file were discriminated against, and generally selected for rough and unpleasant duties.

11. The Turkish government attempted to exploit Kurdish mineral wealth, with the aid of German capital.<sup>37</sup>

These grievances, they assured their interlocutors, were widely shared by the Kurds; there was strong potential support for the Kurdish national movement. Many of the Kurdish officers in the Turkish army had nationalist sympathies. In the Seventh army corps, stationed at Diyarbakir, no less than fifty per cent of the officers as well as the rank-and-file were Kurds, while even many of the Turkish officers were said to be sympathetic to the Kurdish cause.<sup>38</sup> The officers also claimed to have contacts with the Turkish anti-Kemalist opposition but these claims remained so vague that their interrogators refused to believe them. When asked what the concrete objectives of their movement were, they stated nothing more definite than the following:

- to organize a series of immediate, simultaneous rebellions throughout Turkish Kurdistan;
- to establish a national government (after some pressing for the name of a likely leader, the Bedirkhan family was mentioned);<sup>39</sup>
- to develop education, agriculture and mineral resources as an independent state.

According to these informants, Azadi had no fewer than eighteen local branches, most of which had army or militia officers as leading members. Apart from this party organization, they gave a list of influential aghas in the southeastern provinces who would support a nationalist movement. Their interrogators commented that they gathered 'little impression of real organization, or definite plans of action'.

### **Ihsan Nuri's mutiny and desertion**

The names of the deserters who gave the British all this information are not mentioned in the documents, but there cannot be any doubt that they were Ihsan Nuri and his comrades, whose escape to Iraq is connected with the first of a series of mistakes and setbacks that ended in the failure of the revolt.<sup>40</sup> A regiment of the Seventh army corps, in which a number of prominent Azadi members were officers (including Ihsan Nuri and a brother of Yusuf Ziya Beg, Riza), was, in August 1924, sent on a punitive expedition against the Nestorian Assyrians of Hakkari, who had shown themselves disobedient to the government. While they were at Baytushabab they received a cipher telegram from Yusuf Ziya (who, through Azadi contacts, could use the military telegraph). Yusuf Ziya had been in Istanbul to sound out Turkish

opposition circles. His telegram contained a report of his findings. His brother Riza and the other Kurdish officers, however, misunderstood it for a sign that the general uprising had started. They mutinied and, taking many arms, went into the mountains, followed by four companies consisting almost entirely of Kurds. They tried, in vain, to persuade local Kurdish tribes to join in the revolt. When they realized that there was no general uprising, and that their position was very precarious, they destroyed the heavy arms and fled to Iraq. Here they were hospitably entertained. In 1929–1930 Ihsan Nuri was to reappear as the great military leader of the Ararat revolt, the tactical genius of Kurdish resistance.<sup>41</sup>

This mutiny led to reprisals. The Turkish government realized the seriousness of the Kurdish nationalist threat. Searching for the deserters' allies, it rolled up part of Azadi. Yusuf Ziya Beg, Khalid Beg (Jibran) and a number of associates were arrested. The rebellious Haji Musa Beg was also caught and sent to jail. Yusuf Ziya and Khalid were later killed in prison; Haji Musa Beg was released.<sup>42</sup> Lists of names had been found; nevertheless only a few more arrests took place. Shaikh Said, along with several other leading people, was called up as a witness in Khalid Beg's trial. Fearing his own arrest, he refused to come to court, and instead left the Khinis district, where he otherwise resided, for Chabaqchur (Bingol), where the government had as yet little power.<sup>43</sup>

### **New plans for the revolt**

With the arrest of Azadi's leading minds, the plans had to be modified. The impression one gets of the months following the arrests is one of great confusion. Many contradictory plans were put forward, hardly any accepted for execution. Several plans were made to liberate Khalid Beg and Yusuf Ziya Beg from their Bitlis cells, none of which materialized. Many of the chieftains who had at first promised their participation were frightened and avoided contact with the others. Even those who wanted to continue were uncertain and did not agree on what should be done.

In this situation Shaikh Said, whose influence had been substantial until then, emerged as the paramount leader. He knew what he wanted, had the capacity to convince others, and a great reputation for piety, which was useful when his other arguments were insufficient. He had left Khinis for the Chabaqchur–Palu–Lice–Hani area, both in order to avoid arrest and to coordinate preparations for the uprising that he wanted to take place as previously planned. It was among the small, poor, Zaza-speaking tribes of this area that his family had for generations had many faithful followers (*murids*). Here he could feel safe to meet whomever he wished. The small towns had only relatively small gendarmerie contingents, and outside them government had as yet little power. Nor would it arouse much suspicion if the shaikh travelled through this area, as this is the annual habit of many shaikhs. In making

such a tour they give their *murids* an easy opportunity to see them, to do *tobe* and to make financial contributions; they resolve conflicts and counsel people (cf. chapter 4). Resolving conflicts was an especially important task this time: if the revolt were to succeed, inter-tribal conflicts should be resolved first; otherwise some tribes could be expected to turn against the revolt for the mere reason that their enemies participated.

The first important conflict that was brought to the shaikh's attention is a case in point. Before reaching the Zaza-speaking area Shaikh Said conferred with leaders of the Kurmanji-speaking Jibran tribe, relatives of Khalid Beg. This formerly nomadic tribe shares its habitat (Karliova, Varto, Bulanik) with a number of (Kurdish) Alevi tribes, of which the Khormek and Lolan are the most important. Formerly these sedentary tribes had been subject to the Jibran, and only in recent decades had they gradually been emancipated themselves. After they had become militias in the World War, they resolutely resisted all attempts by the Jibran to reimpose their dominance. This feud could substantially impede the Jibran's actions if it were to persist during the revolt. Shaikh Said wrote a letter to the Khormek chieftains, inviting them in the name of religion to join the other Kurdish tribes in a *jihad* ('holy war') against the Ankara government. Since the Khormek are Alevis, however, the shaikh's word did not carry any special weight with them, and he did not succeed in making them join the revolt or even in ending the feud between the Khormek and the Jibran. Indeed, immediately after the revolt broke out, the two tribes attacked each other. The Khormek and Lolan fought the rebellion much more effectively than the gendarmerie and army.<sup>44</sup> This negative example is atypical, however. According to my informants, the shaikh resolved many petty conflicts on this tour.

The tour also gave him ample opportunity to give instructions on the approaching revolt to trusted men. Other leaders also came to see the shaikh and discussed strategic problems with him. My informant Mulla Hasan even claims that there was an Azadi congress during, or immediately preceding the shaikh's tour, followed by a council of war, where strategic plans were worked out.<sup>45</sup> At the congress only chieftains of the districts astride the Murad river (the eastern branch of the upper Euphrates) were present, mainly representatives of the Zaza-speaking tribes. Many were quite hesitant, but it was decided to go on with the revolt in March.<sup>46</sup>

The plans worked out during the subsequent meeting were extremely simple. All tribes were to participate under the leadership of their own chieftains. They were to take full control of their areas of residence and chase away Turkish officials and gendarmes or take them prisoner. Then they were to join one of the 'fronts' that were to be formed. On these fronts, the rebels were then to take towns, and persuade local tribes to join their rebellion; the government's counter-attacks were also to be warded off on these fronts. The fronts — where the real military

operations were to take place — were to be commanded by shaikhs who had influence locally and knew the local conditions:

1. The *northern/northeastern front* was to be under the supreme command of Shaikh Abdullah of Melekan. Sections of the front were to be led by the shaikhs of Chan (Kighi-Chabachur), Khalid Beg of the Hesenan (Mush-Varto), Shaikh Said's son Ali Riza and Mehmed Agha Khalile Kheto.
2. The *Kharput-Elazig front* was to be commanded by Shaikh Sherif of Gokdere.
3. The *Erghani front* by Shaikh Said's brother Abdurrahim.
4. At the *Diyarbakir front*, Haqqi Beg was to be in command on the eastern bank, Emeri Faruq on the western (both were Zaza chieftains).
5. The *Silvan (Farqin) front* was to be under Shaikh Shamseddin's command. Shaikh Said, assisted by a small war council, was to be in supreme command of all operations.<sup>47</sup>

When, not much later, the revolt broke out prematurely, these plans were largely followed.

### **The outbreak of the revolt**

Shaikh Said continued his tour of Lice, Hani and Piran. Everywhere he gave instructions to those who came to meet him, and discussed strategic questions with those who had specific leading tasks. In the village of Piran, on February 8, a minor incident prematurely precipitated the revolt. A few outlaws, pursued by the gendarmerie, put themselves under the shaikh's protection. The gendarme unit that was after them demanded their extradition, which, due to the tense atmosphere, led to an exchange of fire between the shaikh's men (the shaikh was accompanied by a large armed body) and the gendarmes of whom at least one was killed.<sup>48</sup> The shaikh, realizing that his preparations for the uprising were not yet completed, tried to hush up the situation, but rapidly lost control of it.

The people of Hani, hearing of the incident, chased the governor and all Turkish officials from their town. Near Lice, a mail-van was held up (February 10). It was no longer possible to stop the uprising; the leaders had to make the best of it. On February 14, Darayeni (Darahini) was taken and made the temporary capital and seat of government. The shaikh appointed Feqi Hasan of the Modan tribe as governor. He then returned south, collecting more tribal troops around him as he went. Lice and Hani were taken; from there the rebels marched on in the direction of Diyarbakir.

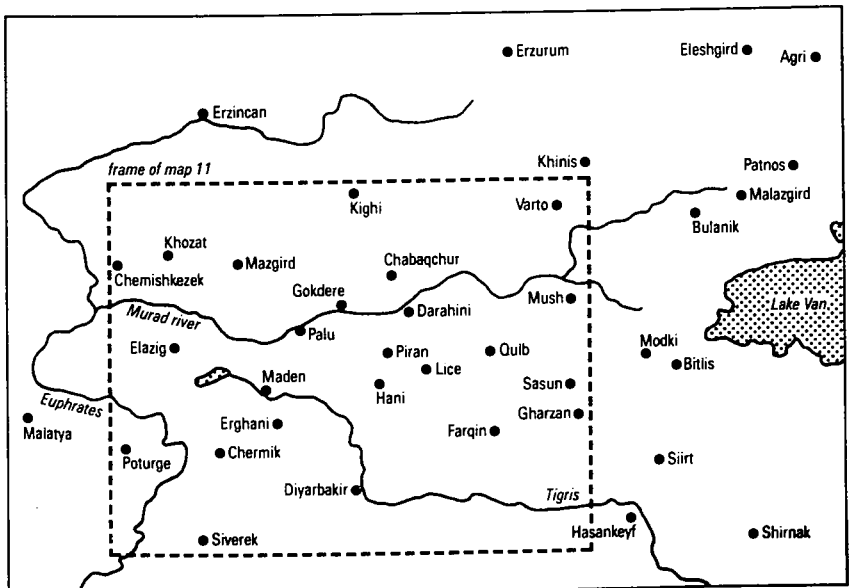
They were by then several thousand,<sup>49</sup> and easily routed an infantry battalion sent from that town. Diyarbakir itself had not yet been attacked: it was nearly impregnable to forces without heavy arms. Shaikh Said made his headquarters at Tala, north of Diyarbakir. From there he remained in contact, through couriers (telegraph lines had been

cut), with the other fronts. He asked for reinforcements on the Diyarbakir front, and sent envoys to Mahmud Beg, the son of Ibrahim Pasha of the Milan, urging him to lay siege to Diyarbakir from the south; there was no answer. Reinforcements did arrive from the Silvan area. The 'war committee' that was to coordinate operations had assembled by now. It consisted, beside Shaikh Said himself, of: Fahmi Bilal Efendi, Sadiq Beg (of Medrag), Shaikh Ismail, Rashid Agha (of the Terkan), Saleh Beg (of Hani), Sadiq (of Piran) and Mulla Mustafa (of Lice). All were Zaza-speakers from the central area of the revolt.

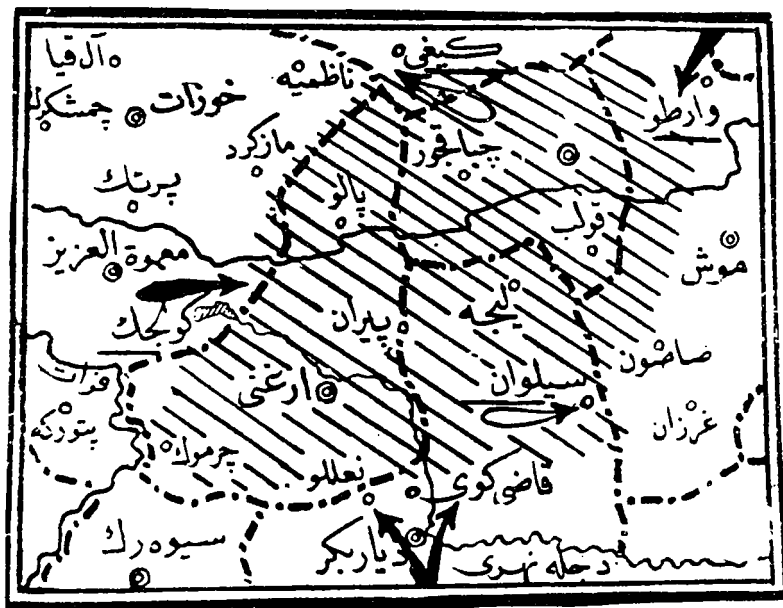
The offensive towards Diyarbakir began on February 29. The town was surrounded by a large number of Kurds — three to five thousand, possibly even more<sup>50</sup> — and the military commanders of the garrison were invited to surrender. On March 2 the attack started, but due to the thick walls and the strong garrison, they could not be taken by force. Contact had been established with (Zaza) Kurdish inhabitants of the city, and in the night of March 7–8 a small band of besiegers managed to enter the town with help from within. Most of them were killed in a bloody fight, however, and the survivors expelled.

Meanwhile, at the other fronts, more progress had been made, and a number of successes were obtained:

1. The shaikhs of Chan (Ibrahim, Mustafa and Hasan) took Chabaqchur (February 17); they also advanced on Kighi, but were repelled by the local Turkish garrison, assisted by warriors of the Khormek and Lolan tribes.<sup>51</sup>



Map 10. The area affected by Shaikh Said's revolt.



**Map 11. The districts in revolt by early April. Black and white arrows indicate movements of government and rebel troops respectively. (After the daily Cumhuriyet, 9-4-1925.)**

2. Shaikh Said's brother Abdurrahim took Maden (February 29) and Chermik. At the latter town his troops were reinforced by Shaikh Ayub with five hundred men from the district of Siverek who had first occupied the central town of their district. Together they advanced on the important town of Erghani and took it. Then they went south to reinforce the siege of Diyarbakir, the most important target.<sup>52</sup>

3. On the northeastern front, several operations took place simultaneously. The Hesinan took Menazgird, the Jibran Bulanik; their actions were coordinated by Shaikh Ali Riza. The latter tribe clashed with the Khormek and Lolan many times, at several places. It was these tribes, too, which at first hampered the occupation of the town of Varto. On March 11 finally that town was taken by Jibran troops in an attack coordinated by Shaikh Abdullah. Many of the 120 gendarmes stationed at Varto were Kurds and Naqshbandi *murids*; at the critical moment they assisted the rebels. Part of the Kurdish troops were now sent to Khinis (which was raided by Hesinan and Jibran under Shaikh Ali Riza and their own chieftains); another group was sent south to reinforce the rebels in the plain of Mush. These were to take Mush and Bitlis, and to liberate the Azadi leaders imprisoned in the latter town. The local tribes, however, did not join the revolt. News came that Khalid Beg (Jibran) and Yusuf Ziya Beg had been executed in their prison cells. The efforts were then concentrated in the northeastern direction.<sup>53</sup>

4. Spontaneous outbursts in sympathy with the rebels occurred at several places, even as far west as Chemishkezek and Poturge near Malatya.<sup>54</sup>

In general, the minor towns in the rebel area and at the fronts could be taken without serious resistance. Turkish gendarmes and officials fled or surrendered; Kurds simply took their places. About the capture of one major town, Elaziz, information from Turkish and Kurdish sources (none of which is first-hand) is usefully complemented by the observations of a European resident of that city.<sup>55</sup>

Rebels under the command of Shaikh Sherif and Yado Agha (a Zaza chieftain, called a robber-bandit by Firat) had first taken Palu, and advanced on Kharpüt and Elaziz. The mainly Turkish population of Elaziz heard the first rumours that the rebels were approaching on March 23.<sup>56</sup> On March 24, there was the sound of shooting. The vali (provincial governor) fled, as did some other officials. That same day some three hundred Kurds entered the town, sacked the government house and the Department of Justice, and opened the prison. The released prisoners showed the Kurds the houses of the officers and the rich, 'so that the first could be made prisoner and the second looted'. Porters and woodcutters of the town, mainly Kurds, happily joined in the latter activity. Later Shaikh Sherif entered the town and promised to maintain order (in which he did not succeed). On March 25 the looting continued; the military depot and the tobacco monopoly were plundered. Military and gendarmerie did not offer any resistance to the Kurds; they had either fled or gone into hiding. The ex-vali of Elaziz later claimed<sup>57</sup> that his gendarmes did not dare shoot at the Kurds since the latter had tied Korans to their bayonets — a trick only a few years younger than the Koran itself. Resistance was organized by the civilians of the town, after the main body of insurgents had left in the direction of Malatya. The Kurds had not left anyone in command at Elaziz; what remained was a disorganized, undisciplined band that seemed mainly interested in looting. Leading citizens organized resistance groups to expel them.

By the end of March, the main thrust of the Kurdish attack was over, and the Turks had brought sufficient forces into the area to start a massive counter-offensive and quell the rebellion.

### Suppression of the revolt

The Turkish military forces in the east (the Seventh army corps at Diyarbakir and the Eighth corps at Erzurum, under the command of Mursel and Kazem Karabekir Pasha respectively) were inadequate for dealing with the revolt. The Seventh army corps had many Kurds in its ranks; although there is no evidence of actual desertion, this may have contributed to the ineffectiveness of the army's counterattacks. The first units sent against the rebels were simply wiped out and the survivors taken prisoner by the Kurds. The Eighth army corps was very late in

turning against the rebels. My informants attribute this to Kazem Karabekir's general opposition to Mustafa Kemal (he was the president of the conservative opposition party Terakkiperver Jumhuriyet Firkasi). The main resistance against the revolt came initially from the Khornek and Lolan tribes of the Kighi-Varto area, who came to the aid of the small garrisons of these towns and also attacked the rebels elsewhere, especially the Jibran.

The Ankara government proclaimed martial law in the eastern provinces on February 23. The situation became so serious that Mustafa Kemal decided to take more direct control of the affairs of state. The Prime Minister Fethi Okyar, who was too hesitant, and not unfriendly to the opposition, was forced to resign, and Mustafa Kemal's trusted second man Ismet Pasha (Inönü) appointed in his stead (March 2). Two days later a law on the reinforcement of order (*Takrir-i Sükun*), giving the government extraordinary powers, was passed by parliament. Troops were sent on a large scale to the eastern provinces; this became possible because the French gave their permission to use the Baghdad railway (that passes through Syria) for troop transports. Altogether at least 35,000 well-armed Turkish troops were deployed against the rebels; some foreign diplomats gave even higher estimates.<sup>58</sup> The Turkish air force bombed the rebels continuously. Mustafa Kemal also ordered other Kurdish chieftains to join the Turkish forces and help them to quell the revolt. In fact, several tribes went to the Diyarbakir front — refusing to do so would be tantamount to rebellion — but managed to avoid real confrontation with the rebels. Others did attack, but only after it had become clear that the rebels were going to lose.

When the huge armies approached Diyarbakir, the rebels lifted the siege, and retreated from the plains into the mountains to the northeast (March 27). The Turkish troops laid an enormous ring around the rebellious area, thus preventing the rebels from escaping to other parts of Kurdistan. Gradually they contracted the ring, thus concentrating the rebels in the Chabaqchur-Genc-Lice area. A few violent open battles (April 3–8) had disastrous results for the Kurds: many were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. It was only then that the Kurds reorganized themselves into small guerrilla bands instead of large tribal armies. Such bands could escape from the iron ring that had been laid around them. Several did, and were to continue guerrilla warfare (on a limited scale) for years. On April 27, Shaikh Said himself, with a group of close associates, who had already broken through the circle, were caught crossing the Murad river north of Mush on their way to Iran.<sup>59</sup> They had been betrayed, it is generally claimed, by a dissident Jibran chieftain, Qasim Beg.

The reprisals were extremely brutal. Hundreds of villages were destroyed, thousands of innocent men, women and children killed. Special courts, established in accordance with the Law on the Reinforcement of Order, condemned many influential persons to death



— including several who had had no connection whatsoever with the revolt. On September 4, 1925, Shaikh Said and forty-seven other leading Kurds were hanged in Diyarbakir. Thousands of less influential Kurds were slaughtered without a trial. The population of entire districts were deported to the west. The role of shaikhs in the uprising was, moreover, the reason for a law ordering the closure of all *tekiyes*, tombs and other places of pilgrimage (December 1925).

This was not the end of the revolt. Not all the rebels had been killed or taken prisoner. Many survived, as small guerrilla bands, hunted most of the time, sometimes taking the initiative and attacking patrolling soldiers. In fact, in the months of July and August of 1925, there was a second outburst of rebellion. Tribesmen of the Modki and Sasun districts formed guerrilla bands and attacked Turkish soldiers. When at last these districts were pacified (November 1925) and the chieftains arrested or put to flight (to Syria), guerrilla activity started elsewhere. During most of 1926 and 1927, bands roamed Khinis, Varto, Mush, Solhan, Chabaqchur, Kighi and Lice. Among the leaders of these bands were those who had also played leading parts in Shaikh Said's revolt.<sup>60</sup>

In 1928 the government proclaimed a general amnesty. Most of the remaining guerrillas came down from the mountains and accepted the amnesty, i.e. surrendered their arms. The only area that was then not under complete control of the Turkish government was the easternmost part of the country, around Mount Ararat, the area inhabited by the Jelali tribe. A number of former guerrillas, who felt insecure in spite of the amnesty, went to this area. They were joined by Kurdish nationalists from several parts of northern Kurdistan. The Kurdish National League Khoybun, based in Syria, sent its agents there. Ihsan Nuri and other well-trained officers organized military resistance. Tribal chieftains joined them. A government was formed. In the first clashes with Turkish troops these were completely routed. These successes attracted more nationalists, and in 1930 the 'Ararat Revolt' presented an even more formidable threat to the Turkish government than Shaikh Said's rebellion had ever done. This revolt was also ultimately quelled. But not until 1938, after a third great revolt, in Dersim, and many lesser ones, was Turkish Kurdistan pacified — at enormous human costs.

## External and internal support for the revolt

### British aid?

There was one party that could only be extremely pleased at the revolt: the British, who in Iraq were up against strong pro-Turkish, anti-British propaganda among the Kurds. There was some malicious pleasure in London: 'Revolt provides a useful comment on the Turkish claim, which plays a large part in their Mosul case, that the Turks and Kurds are indissolubly united by racial and political affinity.'<sup>61</sup> It is not

surprising, therefore, that the Turks suspected, and publicly accused, the British of instigating this revolt; the Third International also took it for granted that British imperialism was behind it.<sup>62</sup> Both the British and the Kurds have always denied it. Representatives of Azadi did in fact approach the British several times for material and political support. The British also knew, from the deserting Kurdish officers (Ihsan Nuri and others) that a revolt was at hand. It seems unlikely, however, that they ever gave any form of assistance. The Turks never produced any serious evidence to substantiate their allegations, except one 'British agent' called Templeton, a person who had previously been in the Allied police and was now a private detective in Istanbul. He had entered into a 'highly compromising' correspondence with Sayyid Abdulqadir. The British disowned him and called him a 'Turkish agent provocateur'.<sup>63</sup>

### Arms

Although the Kurds would gladly have accepted any arms offered from outside, it appears that they did not receive any. The firearms they used dated from the First World War or earlier. The militias all had their own arms. Russian soldiers who retreated in 1917 frequently sold their rifles for some bread. Many more arms were taken from the Armenians. Yaqub Shauqi, a Kurdish general in the Ottoman army (at the Caucasus front) told his men after the armistice *not* to deliver their arms to the British, but to distribute them among the local (i.e. Kurdish) population. Due to all these sources there were enormous supplies of arms in circulation in Kurdistan. After 1923, the republican government had started collecting these — a process not completed in 1925, since most Kurds were quite reluctant to give up their arms.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, most of the Kurds fought with very primitive weapons. According to an eye-witness at Diyarbakir, they fought with picks and sabres, but fanatically, and took prisoner many of the better armed Turkish soldiers.<sup>65</sup>

### The Turkish opposition

Through Yusuf Ziya Beg, Sayyid Abdulqadir and others, Azadi had attempted to establish contact with the Turkish anti-Kemalist opposition — without tangible results. At no stage was there any cooperation between these two oppositional movements. Some Kurds had sympathy for Kazem Karabekir's Terakkiperver Jumhuriyet Firkasi, but there is no evidence that the latter party ever showed interest in the Kurdish revolt, Mustafa Kemal's accusations notwithstanding.<sup>66</sup> The Eighth army corps, which was under Kazem Karabekir's command, dealt more leniently with the rebels than other armies, but that is still a far cry from even passive support. There was little opposition to the severe reprisals taken against the Kurds.

Similarly, there is not a trace of evidence that ex-Sultan Vahideddin's

agitation lay at the roots of the revolt, as is claimed in other Turkish sources. There was certainly no coordination of the Kurdish planners with religious reaction in other parts of Turkey. As Toynbee noted: '... it is noteworthy that the revolt did not spread among the Turkish population of Erzurum, Trebizond, and Samsun, who were almost as backward and reactionary as their Kurdish neighbours, and who not long afterwards ... rose on their own account ... against the Ankara government's westernizing reforms.'<sup>67</sup>

### **Participation among the Kurds**

A striking fact is that the majority of the Kurds who participated, the nucleus that rose in revolt immediately after the incident at Piran, were Zaza-speaking Kurds of the small tribes in the mountainous Lice-Hani-Chabaqchur districts. These were the tribes where Shaikh Said (and the other participating shaikhs) had greatest personal influence. Of the Kurmanji-speaking tribes, apparently only the Jibran and the Hesinan played important parts. These have their habitats in Karlioṽa-Varto-Bulanik and in Malazgird and surroundings, contiguous to the Zaza-speaking territory. Outside this central area of the revolt, spontaneous outbursts were recorded in Siverek, Poturge (east of Malatya) and near Chemishkezek. After March 20 there was again an increase in activity: a number of tribes (no details known) rebelled in accordance with the original strategic plans, thus expanding the area in revolt.<sup>68</sup>

In the case of the Zaza tribes, participation was almost complete. According to Mulla Hasan (who belonged to one of these tribes, the Zirqan), 'it was not as in the time of the militias, when only a certain number of men from each tribe would participate in a campaign; this time every man came out to fight.'

It should be noted that in these tribes, nearly every man had his own piece of land and a few animals. In other words, they belonged to the stratum that can be most easily mobilized in rural revolts.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, the chieftains did not have economic power over the commoners, nor were they much richer. There were thus no conflicts of interest to make commoners refrain from participation at the demand of the aghas. Thirdly, these tribesmen were (and still are) known to be extremely pious, even bigoted. The influence of shaikhs was even greater here than elsewhere.

It is not known whether the Kurmanji-speaking Jibran and Hesinan also participated in their entirety. Both tribes are rather large, and did not have paramount chieftains, but a number of aghas. One of the Jibran aghas, Qasim Beg, reputedly betrayed Shaikh Said when the latter tried to escape to Iran, but there are no indications that any section of the tribe turned as a whole against the rebellion. It is not without interest that the operations by these tribes were coordinated by Shaikh Abdullah and Shaikh Ali Riza, in consultation with the

chieftains of the tribes. Of the other tribes that had reacted positively when first approached by Azadi, many remained aloof. Several even turned against the rebellion, when urged to do so by the government.

Outside the central area, where the revolt had a mass character, participation and non-participation or even opposition of tribes to the revolt were apparently determined to a large extent by the same kind of considerations that had for centuries determined tribal politics and policies *vis-à-vis* the state. The motivation of the commoners — be it religious or nationalist — played no part as yet worth mentioning. Chieftains joined or opposed according to what seemed the most advantageous thing to do and to what their rivals did; the commoners simply followed their chieftains. When chance turned against the rebels and they were on the losing side, several tribes that had remained neutral until then suddenly began to oppose them.

The case of the Alevi tribes Khormek and Lolan was different again. It is true that they had a feud with the Jibrān, but that was not their only reason for opposing the revolt. It was the orthodox Sunni, anti-Shiite ideology that had always been the justification of their discrimination and oppression by the Jibrān. Mustafa Kemal's Turkey was a secular republic; for the first time Alevis officially had equal rights, and the law protected them. An independent Kurdistan, under the authority of Sunni shaikhs, could only be to their disadvantage.

### **Non-tribal Kurds**

The plain of Diyarbakir was (and is) inhabited by non-tribal Kurds (with a small minority of Christians and Jews). They were tenants, share-croppers or labourers. The land on which they worked was owned by absentee landlords, most of whom lived in Diyarbakir. These appallingly poor peasants did not participate in the revolt. Apparently, they were not even invited to do so; with the characteristic contempt of the tribesman for the *rayat* they were deemed unfit to fight. My informant Arif Beg, who knew the plain well, thought that these peasants would, to a man, have rebelled if only their lords had told them to do so; I doubt this, however. Contemporary reports from other, similar parts of Kurdistan, suggest that the subject peasantry, even if they had vague nationalist feelings, were more strongly motivated by resentment against their lords.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, in the later Kurdish risings in Iraq, which were more widespread than Shaikh Said's revolt, the non-tribal peasants did not participate on any significant scale, but they did rise against the landlords several times.

The peasantry of the Diyarbakir plain thus had neither the economic independence which makes rebellion a feasible thing nor, most probably, the motivation. The revolt was **not** directed against their exploiters, but against a government that promised to curtail the power of these exploiters.

### Urban notables

Nationalism had its first defenders and propagandists among the urban notables: absentee landlords, high officials, people of the professions. The Kemalists' first and major support came from the same stratum. A high proportion of the urban population in eastern Anatolia, especially of the notables, was Turkish or turkicized; Kurdish nationalists were therefore often a minority. Diyarbakir was in this respect an exception. Of the two chief notable families there, the Pirinchizade sided with the Kemalists and later received high offices in reward, while the Jemilpashazades had the reputation of being nationalists. There was a large Kurdish Club in town (Kurd Taali Jamiyati), which boasted a thousand members. However, these do not seem to have played roles of importance in the revolt. They certainly did not try to organize an uprising in town in support of the revolt (but that may be due to the early arrest of some leaders). According to an outsider present in town during the siege, the Jemilpashazades had prior knowledge of the revolt, but were afraid to compromise themselves and never really became involved. The eldest member of the family, Qasim, left Diyarbakir for Istanbul in fear, in February. Another member, Mehmed, is even said to have collected some warriors from his villages and to have fought on the Turkish side.<sup>71</sup> Active members of the Kurdish Club were imprisoned before they had the opportunity to lead the Kurdish population of the town against the garrison. In the trials following the suppression of the revolt, several of them were found guilty of conspiring for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan.<sup>72</sup>

In the other towns of the area there was no organization comparable to Diyarbakir's Kurdish Club. Notables of Elaziz may have spontaneously welcomed the first rebels as defenders of the faith and the caliphate, but when undisciplined bands continued looting their town, these same notables expelled them and later helped Turkish troops to pursue the rebels.

### Urban lower class

Whereas the middle classes of most towns in the east were (and are) largely Turkish, most of the menial jobs were done by Kurdish immigrants from the surrounding countryside. These were unorganized — as is to be expected from a lumpen-proletariat — but showed sympathy with the rebels. In Diyarbakir many of these lower-class Kurds were Zaza-speakers, belonging to the tribes that were in rebellion. It was they who one night helped rebels to enter the town. They did not, however, rise in general rebellion. Without organization and without arms as they were, this could hardly be expected.

Similarly, the lower class Kurdish population of Elaziz joined the rebels only in looting their town. They do not seem to have joined them as warriors.

## The Naqshbandi order and the revolt

At several points in this chapter it was stressed that Naqshbandi shaikhs played a crucial part in the revolt. A comparison with the role of the Sanusi order in the resistance of Cyrenaica's Beduin to the Italians may therefore be illuminating.<sup>73</sup> The Sanusi order was responsible for coordinating the Beduin tribes' actions. It was a centralized, hierarchical order. Each tribe or sub-tribe had a *zawiya*, a lodge, where a khalifa of the Great Sanusi resided. The khalifa's authority was recognized because of his holiness and the charisma he derived from the Sanusi, and because he was an outsider, not a member of any particular tribe, and therefore not party to any conflicts. In fact, many tribes and sub-tribes actually requested the Sanusi to send a khalifa to them; it became a matter of prestige for a tribe to have its own khalifa. The superimposition of this centralized structure on the segmentary tribal Beduin society made concerted action possible, and welded the Beduin into a strong and coherent nation. Without the Sanusi order, there would probably not be an independent Libya.

The Naqshbandi order in Kurdistan was in a somewhat different position. It is an order that extends geographically from Egypt to Central Asia and India (also in the perception of its *murids*), and therefore has less of a 'national' character than the Sanusi order. Secondly, it is not centralized; neither the entire order, nor the Kurdish section has a generally acknowledged head. This is not to say that hierarchical relations do not exist. Some shaikhs enjoy more general respect than others, and may demand obedience from certain other shaikhs, who are their khalifas, or sons of their fathers' khalifas (or khalifas of their fathers' khalifas, etc.) The network, however, is only *partially ordered* in such hierarchical relations. And as there is no generally recognized head, there are many conflicts among Naqshbandi shaikhs, especially among those who live close to each other and compete for the same *murids*.

The families of Naqshbandi shaikhs with the most widespread influence in northern Kurdistan were those of Nursin (between Mush and Bitlis) and of Khizan (southeast of Bitlis), with the Hazrat and the late Ghawth as their most famous members. Both families are shown in Chart V of the Appendix. The Hazrat had always stayed out of politics; he was one of the few shaikhs entirely devoted to the spiritual life. Late in 1924, after the arrest of the Azadi leaders, the governor of Bitlis negotiated with the Hazrat's brother's son and successor, Ma'sum, and with Shaikh Salahaddin of Khizan, and secured their promises to refrain from activities against the government. These shaikhs and the tribes among which they had direct influence did indeed stand aside from the revolt. Their khalifas, however, did not feel bound by these promises one way or the other. One of the Hazrat khalifas, Mahmud, of the Jibran tribe, was to participate in the revolt; another, Shaikh Sehim of

Hezan (in Erzurum), was to fight it actively. It was only the shaikhs with influence among the Zaza-speaking tribes of the Chabaqchur-Palu-Lice area who, in mutual agreement, led the revolt and furnished the integrating network. Shaikh Said and Shaikh Abdullah, who had both been invited by Azadi because they were the most widely respected of all Zaza shaikhs (together with Shaikh Sherif who had military experience), coordinated the western and eastern sectors, respectively. Before the outbreak of the revolt they had conferred extensively about the course of action to be taken. Once the revolt broke out they had to act rather independently of each other, since the distances were large and communications difficult.

Both shaikhs also had *murids* among the Kurmanji-speakers. Shaikh Abdullah came from Melikan in the Solhan district, which is close to the Kurmanji-speaking area. Shaikh Said seems to have made deliberate attempts to gain influence among the Kurmanji-speakers. Originally from Palu, with family holdings in other parts of the Zaza territory, he had built a second *tekiye* in the Khinis district, and had married a woman from the Jibran's leading family. The shaikh's family relations certainly contributed to his emergence as the central leader. His sons travelled widely as animal dealers, which made it possible for them to perform courier duties as well. Ali Riza for instance had, prior to the rising, sold an enormous flock of sheep in Aleppo. He may have met Kurdish nationalists in exile there; it is certain that he went from there to Istanbul, where he visited Sayyid Abdulqadir and tried to establish contact with the Turkish opposition.<sup>75</sup> The money from the sale of the animals was to serve towards the financing of the rebellion. Ali Riza later became second-in-command in the northeast, which may have been a means of controlling Shaikh Abdullah. Shaikh Said's brother Abdurrahim led the Erghani operations. Another brother, Tahir, played a minor role early in the revolt: it was he who robbed the mail-van of Lice.

A third shaikh of influence was Shaikh Sherif of Gokdere. In the First World War he had been a militia colonel, commanding Zaza-tribesmen of Chabaqchur and Palu. His military experience proved very useful. The other shaikhs had a geographically more limited influence, and were active only locally, following previously made plans and instructions from Shaikh Said and the war committee.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, I have not been able to reconstruct the *murshid-khalifa* relations connecting these shaikhs with each other. It seems, however, that it was not the formal network of the order, but informal links between shaikhs who shared common political ideals, which constituted the integrating factor.

In Cyrenaica too, it was ultimately the general loyalty of the Beduin to the Sanusi, the head of the order, and the general anti-Italian agitation by his khalifas, rather than the order's potential for military

organization, that proved decisive. Both in the wars of the Sanusi order against the Italians and in Shaikh Said's revolt the fighting units were tribes or sub-tribes, generally led by their own chieftains. In the latter rebellion, the *coordinating* role of the shaikhs was very conspicuous, and the shaikhs took an active part in combat. The family of the Sanusi stood aside from the actual fighting, but the khalifas and close *murids* untiringly urged the Beduin to continue their resistance against the Italians and, in fact, played leading military roles.<sup>77</sup> On the whole, one gets the impression that Shaikh Said's revolt was better coordinated than that of the Sanusi's Beduins; the Kurdish shaikhs played their coordinating parts better than their Beduin counterparts. That is undoubtedly related to the fact that the Sanusi dispatched his khalifas each to a tribe or sub-tribe, whereas in Kurdistan the shaikhs had followers among more than one tribe.

### **The religious versus the nationalist character of the revolt**

The revolt was neither a purely religious nor a purely nationalist one. The nationalist motivation of those who planned it is beyond doubt, but even among them many were also emotionally affected by the abolition of the caliphate. Shaikh Said certainly was a very pious person, and honestly indignant at the secularizing reforms taking place in Turkey, but — as my informants insist — he was at least as sincere a nationalist. One of his closest collaborators in the revolt was Fahmi Bilal Efendi, a blasphemer who publicly mocked religion. The shaikh kept him as his right-hand man because Fahmi was a capable person and a convinced nationalist. The *primary* aim of both Shaikh Said and the Azadi leaders was the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. The motivation of the rank-and-file was equally mixed, but for them the religious factor may have predominated. The planners and leaders of the revolt, at any rate, thought that religious agitation would be more effective in gaining mass support than nationalist propaganda alone. Partly for this reason, shaikhs were chosen as figureheads for the revolt. The movement was called a *jihad* ('holy war'); Shaikh Said assumed the title of *amir almujaahidin* ('commander of the warriors of the faith').<sup>78</sup> This by itself, however, does not mean that religion provided the impetus behind the revolt. The report that Kurds tied copies of the Koran to their bayonets, as well as some of the declarations of participants at the trials, strongly condemning the sinful anti-religious reforms in Turkey, may give the impression that the revolt had the character of a messianistic movement in the name of old-time religion. Attaching a Koran to one's weapon, though, is only an effective method if the enemy respects the Koran. The way the revolt broke out and immediately spread suggests that a strong anti-Turkish or anti-government feeling motivated the masses, at least in the central area of the rebellion. The participants' zeal received



additional fuel from the religious justification given to their action.

After Shaikh Said and other leading shaikhs had either been killed or captured or had escaped, nothing of the messianistic appearance of the movement remained. Neither the guerrilla bands that continued the war against the government and its troops, nor the leaders of the Ararat revolt that followed, used religious phraseology. Nationalism seemed undiluted, then. To a certain extent, this nationalism was based on quite 'traditional' motivations, and took the form of 'traditional' rebellion against state authority. The Ararat Revolt started with the Jelali tribe's refusal to accept external authority — any external authority. The guerrilla bands followed the tradition of social banditry — a phenomenon endemic in Kurdistan, just like everywhere else where the norms of society conflict with the laws of the state. These 'traditional' motivating forces have certainly also played their parts in the nationalism of the participants in Shaikh Said's revolt.

Already Shaikh Said's departure from Khinis to the, for him safer, Zaza area had the character of a social bandit taking to the mountains to escape persecution by the state. Similarly, one of the participating Zaza chieftains, Kerem Agha of the Zirqan, had been 'on the run' for over half a year when the revolt broke out: he had killed a Turkish army captain and six regulars, subsequently living as an outlaw (Firat 1970: 196–7). The outbreak of the revolt was precipitated, again, by the attempt of gendarmes to arrest outlaws under the protection of the shaikh.

Yado, who together with Shaikh Sherif led the operations at the Kharput-Elaziz front, had earlier renown as a social bandit. After the shaikhs' arrest he resumed his previous career as an outlaw in the mountains around Chabaqchur until 1927, when he escaped to Syria (Silopi 1969: 105).

The borderline between social banditry and politically motivated guerrilla warfare is difficult to draw. The same may be said of the boundary between 'traditional' resentment of government encroachments and nationalist sentiment. Kurdish nationalism in this century has always remained in the indefinable in-between, and still largely finds itself near the vague borderline.

The relationship of nationalism and religion is different again. For the mass of participants in Shaikh Said's revolt, religious and nationalist loyalties cannot be separated: they coincided and were virtually identical. Nationalist sentiment arose out of, or was at least stimulated by, religious feeling and primordial loyalties to the shaikhs. Nationalist loyalties, however, began to lead a life of their own, and no longer have such strong religious associations.

## Notes

1. Firat adapts the official thesis that the Kurds are really Turks; Kurdish nationalism is consequently high treason to the Turkish cause. The Alevi tribes, notably his own, are presented as the loyal and faithful defenders of the Turkish fatherland. The book became one of the classics of anti-Kurdish propaganda in Turkey, reprinted each time new official offensives against Kurdish nationalism set in: in 1960 (with a preface by coup leader General Jamal Gursel), in 1970 and again after the 1980 military coup. Also, see Olson 1979.

2. When writing this chapter, I did not have access to the following important Turkish works relevant to the rebellion: Cemal (1955), Apak (1964), Toker (1968) and Gologlu (1972). Since the first edition of this book, several other relevant publications have appeared, notably Olson and Tucker (1978), Tuncay (1981), Hasretyan et al. (1985). Except for a few minor corrections, I have not made use of these publications to re-write the present chapter, which remains valid as it stands. In two recent articles, I have discussed the same rebellion from somewhat different perspectives (Bruinessen 1984, 1985).

3. *Mem u Zin* was recently published in Turkey, in Latin script and with a Turkish translation by M.E. Bozarslan. A number of lines from the section *Derde me* however, had to be left out, to spare the Turkish censor's sensibilities.

4. Silopi (1969): 38-9.

5. On the development of nationalism in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire see Lewis (1961): 323-361; Haddad and Ochsenwald (1977).

6. Jevdet, a medical doctor who greatly admired the achievements of the West, was one of the most radical westernizers among the Young Turks. He became a major intellectual influence on that strange apostle of Pan-Turkism, Ziya Gokalp (who, ironically, was also a Kurd). Jevdet belonged to the liberal and decentralist wing of the Pan-Turk movement, and after the First World War was in contact with the moderate wing of the Kurdish movement in Istanbul. See: Hanioglu (1981) and E. Sussheim, 'Abd Allah Djewdet', *E.I.*<sup>1</sup>, *Ergänzungsband*.

7. Previously, in 1876, the empire had received its first constitution, providing for a parliament. In 1877 Abdulhamid II, using a crisis in foreign politics as a pretext, had suspended parliament. The constitution was never officially abolished, but it remained an empty letter for the rest of Abdulhamid's reign, until the Young Turk revolution.

8. This Representative Committee (*Hayat-i temsiliye*) consisted of nine persons. Besides Mustafa Kemal himself and another military commander, Rauf Bey (Orbay), it included, among others: the Kurdish tribal chieftain Haji Musa Beg (Khwiti tribe, of Modki), the urban notable Sadullah Efendi (from Bitlis, an ex-parliamentarian) and the Naqshbandi shaiikh Fevzi Efendi (from Erzinjan). This committee was never convened (according to Mustafa Kemal, the Kurdish representatives never appeared at its meetings). At the Sivas congress a new Representative Committee was elected. Neither Haji Musa nor Shaiikh Fevzi were on the new committee. (S.S. Aydemir, *Tek Adam*, II: 122-3, more detail in Gologlu 1968, 1969).

9. The only estimates of the ethnic composition of eastern Anatolia around this time seem rather biased in favour of the Kurds, but are probably not absurdly far removed from the truth. Captain Woolley, a British officer friendly to the Kurds, reported after an inspection tour in eastern Anatolia that 90 to 95% of the population of the 'six vilayets' was Kurdish. (FO 371, 1919: ME 44/91479/3050). Major Noel, after an extensive tour through Diyarbakir, made the following informed estimates of the population of that province: (FO 371, 1919: 44A/105775/3050):

|                     | <i>pre-war</i> | <i>post-war</i> |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Kurds               | 750,000        | 600,000         |
| Armenians           | 120,000        | 20,000          |
| Syrians & Chaldeans | 81,000         | 23,000          |
| Turks               | 3,000          | 2,500           |
| others              | 10,000         | 3,000           |

Even before the massacres, the Armenians had not been the majority in any province, making up less than 20% of the total population of the claimed six provinces (see the statistics in Shaw and Shaw (1977): 201, confirming similar estimates by Cuinet (1891-4).

10. For an eye-witness account see Rawlinson (1923), especially part II: Intelligence in Transcaucasia.

11. Art. 13 of the treaty stated that 'The borderline between Turkey and Iraq shall be decided in a friendly way between the governments of Turkey and Great Britain within a period of nine months. In case an agreement between the two governments shall not be reached during the given period, the issue shall be forwarded to the council of the League of Nations (quoted in Ghassemlou (1965: 66).

12. On these measures: Aydemir, *İkinci İdam.*: 311-316.

13. 'If the ethnic argument alone had to be taken into account, the necessary conclusion would be that an independent Kurdish State should be created, since the Kurds form five-eighths of the population.' Quoted from the Commission's report in Ghassemlou (1965): 68.

14. Shaw and Shaw (1977): 376. More detailed discussion of the Mosul question, from the British point of view, in Edmonds (1957) and Longrigg (1953). Two recent Turkish studies: Kürkcüoğlu (1978), Melek (1983). See also: Beck (1981). The role of international oil interests is emphasized in Nash (1976).

15. Apart from a small group of exiles in Cairo, apparently consisting of members of the Bedirkhan family only, who published the journal *Kurdistan* there from 1898 to 1902, and possibly a shady organization mentioned by Silopi (1969: 25-6), the *Azm-i qavi jamiyah*, existing around 1900-04 (cf. Jwaideh 1960: 298n).

16. Noel from Aleppo, 23 September 1919. Enclosed in FO 371, 1919: 44A/141322/3050.

17. Jwaideh (1960): 370, after British official sources. Sharif Pasha then retired to his luxurious villa in southern France. After the war, at the peace conference, he found himself in the right spot to defend the interests of the Kurds. See also Arfa (1966): 31.

18. After the Russian revolution Abdurrazzaq remained in Anatolia, was arrested by the Turks and died in prison in Mosul (from poisoning, it is said). Kamil was in 1919 still said to be in Tiflis (Jwaideh 1960: 371; Silopi 1969: 80; Nikitine 1956: 195).

19. His name and function are mentioned in the correspondence on a diplomatic incident involving agitation of Kurds against the Kemalists, in September 1919 (Major Noel and a small group of Kurds of the Kurdistan Taali Jamiyali stayed with this governor under compromising circumstances).

20. Most of my informants claimed that all tribal militia units participated. Firat, however, writes that the former Hamidiye units (which were all Sunni) did not participate at all, and left the 'sacred duty of defending the Turkish homeland' to the Alevi units — especially his own tribe, the Khormek. Firat (1970): 180.

21. See the estimated statistics of ethnic composition of the population in note 9 above.

22. Major Noel, in one of his reports, quoted Ottoman regulations concerning the treatment of Kurdish refugees. According to Art. 3, tribal chieftains, shaiyks, mullas and other influential persons were to be separated from the tribesmen, and lodged separately, remote from their tribes, preferably in towns under direct government surveillance; and Art. 12 ruled that the refugees were to be divided into small groups of no more than 300 persons each, and to be sent to different zones, where they were not to exceed 5% of the population. 'Notes on the Kurdish situation', enclosed in FO 371, 1919: 44A/112202/3050).

23. See Jwaideh, (1960: 383-397) who quotes many British sources to that effect. Some informants told me similar things, but in vague terms. Thus, Mustafa Kemal, who was at Diyarbakir in 1916 as a commander of the 16th army corps, is often said to have made friends with many leading Kurds and to have made them similar promises.

24. President of this new society was again Sayyid Abdulqadir, with Emin Ali Bedirkhan and General Fuad Pasha (a Kurd from Sulaymaniyah, whose father had been a foreign minister) as vice-presidents. Retired general Hamdi Pasha was the secretary-general, and Sayyid Abdulqadir's son the treasurer. Other leading members included

military officers, prominent ulama and intellectuals (Silopi 1969: 52–4). A letter from the society to the British High Commission in Istanbul also mentions several persons from the tribal milieu, including Alishan Beg of the Qochgiri tribe, who was later to be one of the leaders of the revolt in western Dersim (FO 371, 1919: ME44/91082/3050). The Diyarbakir society, apparently established independently, had a very similar composition (see Silopi 1969: 45–7).

25. FO 371, 1919: ME44/91082/3050; 44A/147752/3050; 1920: E5063/11/44.

26. The split in the society, in which the old rivalry for leadership between Sayyid Abdulqadir and the Bedirkhans no doubt played a part, was provoked by a public statement by Sayyid Abdulqadir that his aim was *not* the establishment of an independent Kurdistan, but rather a limited form of autonomy. The Bedirkhans then broke with him and set up the Teshkilat-i Ijtima'iyye, in which they were followed by most intellectuals. This organization seems to have been only ephemeral, however, and many of its members also remained in contact with Sayyid Abdulqadir and his society. It was after all Sayyid Abdulqadir, and not the Bedirkhans, who enjoyed mass support. In 1920, the Kurdish guilds of Istanbul, who represented tens of thousands of lower-class Kurds, declared him the only person authorized to speak in their name (FO 371, 1920: E5063/11/44).

27. This uprising is usually named after the tribe that played the most prominent part in it, the Qochgiri. Nuri Dersimi, himself the son of a Dersim agha, took part as an envoy of a young faction within the Kurd Taali Jamiyati, and later reported on the events in his book (1952). A recent book on the events (Komal 1975) leans heavily on Dersimi but gives some additional information. See also Apak 1964.

28. According to Dersimi (1952: 125n), the first Assembly had no less than 72 Kurdish deputies.

29. Dersimi 1952: 122–5.

30. FO 371, 1919: ME44/90860/3050.

31. Lists of the signatories of these telegrams in Dersimi 1952: 125 and in FO 371, 1919: ME44/163679; 168763/3050.

32. In full: *Jiwata Azadiya Kurd* (Society for Kurdish Freedom), later rebaptized *Jiwata Khweseriya Kurd* (Society for Kurdish Independence). In the literature on the Kurdish movement, there is surprisingly little mention of this organization. Jwaideh, who does mention a number of shady Istanbul-based organizations with little more than a paper existence, makes no reference at all to Azadi, which was, according to my key informants, the most significant organization of that period. The reason is probably that Azadi was a secret organization active in Kurdistan itself, not in the capital, and therefore hidden to most outside observers. Unlike some of the other organizations, it never engaged in propaganda for foreign audiences. The polished diplomat Muhammad Sharif Pasha and the highly educated Bedirkhans made the Kurdish problem — and their own organizations — known to Europe; Azadi had no such members.

33. My only source on this congress is Mulla Hasan Hishyar, who was not himself present but knew many of those who were. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find independent confirmation of his narrative.

34. According to Mamduh Salim, the British were approached through at least three different channels: through the consulate in Trabzon, through the intermediary of high-placed Kurds in Iraq, and by Azadi members who fled into Iraq to avoid arrest.

35. Thus Chirguh (1930): 31, and a number of later publications all seemingly based on this source. Aydemir mentions in passing that 'several shaikhs and aghas were removed from the area' (*Ikinci adam*, I:312). For a more complete list of Kurdish grievances, as formulated in 1924, see below and the document mentioned in note 37.

36. On November 1, 1922 the Grand National Assembly passed a law separating the caliphate from the sultanate and abolishing the latter. The sultan, Vahideddin, who had been accused of collaborating with the British, did not wait for the Kemalists to enter Istanbul and fled abroad, aboard a British warship. The Grand National Assembly appointed his cousin Abdulmajid II as the caliph. The latter office was also abolished on March 3, 1924. Meanwhile Vahideddin attempted to organize the opposition to the new regime from abroad (Malta, later Arabia) largely in vain. The Kemalists suspected him of

also playing a role in the preparations of Shaikh Said's rebellion, see e.g. Avcioglu (1974): III, 1333-4.

37. 'Kurdish nationalist society in East Anatolia', report enclosed in FO 371, 1924: E11093/11093/65.

38. Obviously the Azadi members exaggerated the degree of support for the Kurdish cause in order to make the British more interested in it, and more ready to lend it material support.

39. It is not improbable that this name had first been suggested by the interrogators. The Bedirkhan family had no contacts with Azadi, but it was known to be pro-British.

40. This story is well-known in Kurdish nationalist circles. The accounts in Dersimi (1952): 173-4 and Silopi (1969): 82-3 are virtually identical with the oral information I received from Mamduh Salim and Mulla Hasan.

41. Ihsan Nuri's memoirs are now being published posthumously in the Kurdish journal *Hevi* of the Kurdish Institute in Paris, beginning in no. 2 (May 1984).

42. This difference in treatment shows that the Turkish authorities perceived that they had to deal with two different kinds of rebels, the traditional chieftain whose loyalty was negotiable, and the motivated nationalist whose demands could not so easily be bought off.

43. Thus Mulla Hasan. According to Firat (1970: 107-8) and Toker (1968: 35), the shaikh did give testimony in court and denied all contacts with Kurdish nationalists, claiming to be interested solely in religion and not to have any political objectives. The court saw no reason to detain him.

44. On the relations between the Jibran and the Khormek see Firat (1970): 144-187. Firat also reproduces Shaikh Said's letter to the Khormek chieftains (200).

45. Mulla Hasan was not present at these meetings. He joined the shaikh one or two days later. His and Firat's accounts of the events contradict each other in many details; both contain obvious mistakes. For the war plans I follow Mulla Hasan, but reservation is due. Many details he told me were clearly intended to impress me. Therefore I give only the barest outline; it may contain factual errors, but only minor ones.

46. Mulla Hasan (whose dates are not very exact) thought the revolt had been planned for May 1925, but all other sources mention mid-March.

47. Thus the planning according to Mulla Hasan. The way he tells it is just a little too organized. Undoubtedly his account of the strategic plans is influenced by the events at the fronts as they later actually took place. I quote him more fully here because, even if the account is not factually correct, it gives a clear idea of the underlying conception.

48. The accounts of the incident differ in minor details. Only Firat has a slightly different version: when the shaikh came to Piran the local gendarme unit noticed among his hundred armed companions five outlaws, whom they tried to arrest.

49. Firat (1970: 204) claims that ten thousand Kurds were engaged in this first clash, but this figure must be much exaggerated. The rebels' numbers here must have been lower than in the actual siege of Diyarbakir a few days later, when estimates varied from 3,000 to 10,000 (see the following note).

50. Shaikh Said said later at his trial that only 3,000 Kurds took part in the attack on Diyarbakir, while the government's estimate was 5,000 (Cemal 1955: 35). A resident of the city estimated the number of Kurds laying siege as 10,000 (FO 371, 1925: E 3340/1091/44).

51. Dersimi (1952): 178; Firat (1970): 2008-13; Cemal (1955): 29-30.

52. Shaikh Ayub's role in taking Siverek is only mentioned by Firat (1970: 204-5). Others credit Shaikh Abdurrahim with taking this town. On Shaikh Ayub's trial, see: *Les massacres Kurdes en Turquie*, p.20-21.

53. Firat (1970): 213-24; Dersimi (1952): 178-9; Silopi (1969): 87-9.

54. *Cumhuriyet* 11-3-1925, 15-3-1925 (in 1925 Turkey still used the old *mali* calendar for official purposes; this was 13 days behind the calendar used in Europe. I have silently converted *mali* into Gregorian dates throughout); FO 371, 1925: E 2195/1091/65.

55. The following paragraph is based on extracts from the diary of an anonymous European resident of Elaziz, in a report from the British military attaché in Istanbul,

enclosed in FO 371, 1925: E 2359/362/65.

56. I follow the dates as given in the diary, although these seem to be incorrect. Both Firat (1970: 206–8) and Dersimi (1952: 180–1) state that Elaziz was taken by the rebels on the 6th of March (Gregorian style).

57. Interviewed by the British military attaché in Istanbul. Cf. note 70.

58. In June 1925 the British military attaché in Istanbul estimated that there were some 50,000 regular troops in eastern Anatolia (FO 371, 1925: E 3970/362/65). The Persian diplomat M. Forughi, in a despatch to the Persian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made the even higher estimate of 80,000 (quoted in Ghassemlou 1965: 52n).

59. Firat (1970): 226–7; Dersimi (1952): 183. Several other rebel leaders ultimately reached Iran and there joined the Kurdish chieftain Simko, who controlled much of the Persian-Turkish frontier.

60. Thus Mulla Hasan. Firat also gives the impression that guerrilla activity remained considerable (1970: 227–30). Reports of it reached the French and British intelligence services in Syria and Iraq, see FO 371, 1925: E 5648/188/65, E 4996/221/65; AIR 23/237, 238 and 239.

61. Minutes by a high official at the Foreign Office on a consular despatch from Istanbul (FO 371, 1925: E 1229/1091/44).

62. This is clear from the Third International documents published in Aydinlik (1977).

63. 'Evidence' produced at Sayyid Abdulqadir's trial, in which Mr. Templeton appears as a British agent, is reproduced in Cemal (1955), esp. 81–2. The British representatives in Istanbul seemed not to know this Templeton: FO 371, 1925: E 3346/E3541/1091/44.

64. Oral information. According to Aydemir (*İkinci adam*, 1: 312n), the government collected altogether 160,000 weapons in eastern Anatolia, of which 30,000 were firearms.

65. FO 371: 1925: E 3340/1091/44.

66. Mustafa Kemal tried in his famous speech to discredit the Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Firkası by associating it with Shaikh Said's revolt, but he produced no convincing evidence whatsoever (See vol. II, 382–4 of the German translation). Aydemir discusses the party and the rebellion at length (*Tek Adam*, III: 220–30) and also concludes that there appear not to have been any contacts.

67. Toynbee (1927): 508n3.

68. FO 371, 1925: E 2195/1091/44, quoting a speech by İsmet Pasha in the Grand National Assembly.

69. As Eric Wolf especially has repeatedly emphasized, peasant revolts tend to originate not with the very poorest and most oppressed stratum but with the middle peasantry, i.e. 'a peasant population which has secure access to land of its own and cultivates it with family labour' (Wolf 1969b: 291).

70. On the subject peasants of central Kurdistan and the Rezaye district: Nikitine (1956): 196. On those of the plains of northern Iraq: Wilson (1931): 112.

71. Memo of an employee of the Banque Ottomane Impériale at Diyarbakir, enclosed in FO 371, 1925: E3340/1091/44.

72. Articles from the newspaper *Vakit*, dated 20/4, 7/5, and 14/5, 1925, translated in *Les massacres kurdes en Turquie*. Of the leading members of the Kurdish Club, Dr. Fuad and Kemal Fevzi were sentenced to death.

73. Evans-Pritchard (1949), especially chapter 3.

74. Thus Firat (1970): 196. According to my informant Shaikh Muhammad Isa, Shaikh Masum was a nationalist and was in contact with Shaikh Said, but he refused to participate in the rebellion because he believed it was doomed to failure.

75. Thus Firat (1970): 198. Sayyid Abdulqadir admitted during his trial that he had been visited by Ali Rıza, see Cemal (1955): 88, 90, or the summary of press reports on the trial in *Les massacres kurdes en Turquie*.

76. Besides the shaikhs mentioned here and their immediate relatives, the following shaikhs are also reported to have taken part in the uprising: Shaikh Shirin, a Kurmanji-speaking shaikh from Eleshgird (the only non-Zaza); the shaikhs of Chan: Mustafa, Hasan and Ibrahim; Shaikh Shemseddin and his brother, Shaikh Seyfeddin (according to some of my informants they were from Silvan, according to others, from

Qamishli in the Diyarbakir plain); Shaikh Ayub and his son, Khalid, from Siverek.

77. Evans-Pritchard 1949: 166–8.

78. Many sources refer to the shaikh's adoption of this title. Firat (1970: 200n) **even** reproduces a letter written by the shaikh to the Khormek chieftains and signed **with this** title.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Two questions among those with which I set out originally, and too abstract to answer directly, repeatedly come back to mind:

- How did and do the primordial loyalties arise, why are they as they are, and what makes them so strong?
- Under what circumstances do the primordial loyalties break down and/or give way to other ones, especially those of nation or class?

Each of these questions can be put on different levels of abstraction. I do not think that the question 'Why do tribes exist?' is a very meaningful one, and I certainly do not feel capable of answering it. 'How do tribes emerge?', on the other hand, refers to empirical reality, and indeed in the course of this book a number of processes by which tribes come into existence have been mentioned. Similarly, the question 'Why are tribesmen loyal to tribal chieftains?' is too abstract, but one might attempt to answer the question 'How do chieftains achieve and maintain their positions of leadership?' It is on this level that some answers have been suggested in the preceding chapters, and I shall stress here a few points that I consider important.

In the tribe, *kinship* is one of the basic organizing principles.<sup>1</sup> In small tribes especially, people are loyal to their fellow-tribespeople because they are kinspeople. One might try to explain kin loyalty from the economic and/or psychological security experienced within the (extended) family or lineage, but this is a circular reasoning, for the security is a consequence of the same kin loyalty that it should explain. I shall not attempt further to explain this kin loyalty but accept it as given for the present purpose. In some cases, tribespeople have *common economic interests*, e.g. communally held pasture land, which is a solid base for group solidarity. Similarly, *common locality* (often implying common economic interests) is a clear reason for group solidarity. Villages correspond often to a segment of a tribe, and consist in other cases of a number of not closely related shallow lineages.

The same kin loyalty plays a role in '*segmentary opposition*': in cases of a conflict between two persons, relatives of each rally to their support. If the people in conflict are related, their kinsmen support the party with whom they have closest blood ties (those with equal distance



to both remain neutral). Conflicts, especially the violent ones, are between kin groups, not individuals. Nearly all conflicts, therefore, acquire a feud-like character (see chapter 2). Conflicts between two groups can in general only be resolved through the *mediation* of someone whose authority is recognized by both groups. *Ipsa facto*, this mediator should not belong to any of the conflicting groups. This point can hardly be stressed enough, since it has important consequences for the nature of leadership in Kurdish society. As units increase in size, the probability of conflict increases more than proportionally.<sup>2</sup> In small tribes, a respected kinsman may act as the chieftain; he rules by consent, and only rarely do conflicts occur in which his authority may be called into question. Larger tribes, however, will ultimately be broken up into a number of smaller ones as a result of a feud or other conflict, unless there is a mediator whose authority is recognized by all. This explains why the chieftains of large tribes and emirates nearly all claimed foreign descent. It is not so important whether these claims are true: the essential factors are 1) sufficient distance from each of the sections constituting the tribe, and 2) charisma. A prestigious foreign descent lends the chieftain both.

Chieftains may be expected to spread the legend that their ancestors were invited by the tribes to come and lead them. Sharaf Khan's claim as to how his ancestors became the rulers of Bitlis (chapter 3) is a case in point. Such may have been true in some cases (as it was true for some of the European royal houses); in many others it probably was not. The rise of Hajo (or rather, of his family, the *mala* Osman) to power over the Heverkan confederation (chapter 2) is a telling example of how such a chiefly lineage, separate from and above the confederation's tribes and sections, may arise from within, instead of being invited from elsewhere.

Since it is conflicts (both internal and external) that make a paramount chieftain necessary to the tribe, chieftains who wish to increase or maintain their powers find an excellent way of doing so in the manipulation of conflicts. A chieftain should of course resolve conflicts to a sufficient degree to give his tribesmen a feeling of peace and security, but he should not completely eliminate them, for in so doing he would make himself dispensable. We saw that in the emirates of Bitlis, Hakkari and Botan conflict was, as it were, institutionalized in the juxtaposition of two confederations of tribes. In yet another way chieftains made (and make) themselves almost indispensable to their tribesmen: as intermediaries in all contacts with the state. In chapter 3 we saw how important this factor is. Accordingly as the grid of the administrative network of the Ottoman state and its successors became finer, the significant political roles were played by chieftains of ever lower levels: after the mirs, the chieftains of large tribes, then chieftains of smaller tribes or of sections of tribes, and finally village aghas. In the earlier phases of this process, *tariqa* shaikhs assumed increasingly

prominent political roles. They derived their political importance not only from an apparently growing personal following but also from their acting as mediators in conflicts between tribal chieftains. When the last mirs were deposed, some of their functions therefore fell into the hands of shaikhs. The latter could then manipulate and resolve tribal conflicts and, when the situation demanded it, coordinate collective action.

The above observations go some way towards explaining political processes in Kurdish society, but they are insufficient as an explanation of the strong loyalty shown by many Kurds towards an agha or a shaikh. It is not only by playing the game of divide and rule that aghas and shaikhs succeed in gathering followers around them. Even those who owe much of their position to their perpetual mediating in conflicts and their balancing of groups against each other have initially been accepted as mediators only because of some other legitimation that they had, or because of a personal charisma.

The authority of aghas and shaikhs consists usually in a combination of what Weber termed traditional and charismatic authority. One of the most common legitimations is typically traditional: descent from a famous ancestor, either an Islamic hero or a saint, or a more recent successful warrior-chieftain. A shaikh can, moreover, point to a *silsila* full of resounding names. Such traditional legitimation by itself, however, is rarely sufficient; one needs also to be perceived as having outstanding personal qualities: courage, cleverness and generosity in the case of tribal chieftains, and spiritual powers and exemplary piety in that of shaikhs. Image management is extremely important, and most aghas and shaikhs are very much aware of this. Their personal qualities need not be very attractive: some aghas rose to power in particularly nasty and cruel ways, that could hardly have inspired great love in their followers (see again the description of Hajo's career in chapter 2). What counts is success: however unpleasant the way by which it was achieved, a chieftain's success will attract many new loyal followers, and a texture of mystifying ideology is soon woven around his real behaviour. The oral epics that are still circulating in Kurdistan, and of which new ones continue to be composed, serve the same ideological function as the history textbooks used in European primary schools. The chieftains' actions are embellished and idealized, the political status quo is legitimated, and admiration and love of the rulers are hammered into the commoners' minds.

The shaikh's authority is buttressed by a similar sort of popular literature, the miracle tale. There are numerous such tales about, many of them conforming to standard types. Some of the shaikhs seem to have paranormal gifts, others are clever in organizing minor miracles. The *murids* taking part in the spiritual exercises led by the shaikh may have awe-inspiring experiences that they are likely to attribute to their shaikh's extraordinary graces. The *murids* that have once been

confronted with a little miracle become the shaikh's most devoted propagandists.

We may attempt to better understand the nature of traditional authority among the Kurds by studying situations where it is seen to be breaking down, where followers desert or rebel against their traditional leader.

First of all we must keep in mind that aghas and shaikhs have different categories of followers or subjects, whose loyalties to them are also different. Most cases of failing loyalty that have come to my attention concern the non-tribal subjects of these leaders. These are commonly exploited most directly, and often resent their subjugation and exploitation very much, even if they accept it as inherent to the nature of things ('traditional legitimation'). In the past their resentment may have been tempered by the relative security they enjoyed because of the protection given them by their overlords. But when the more anonymous state became capable of providing the same security, it happened several times that the non-tribal peasantry appealed to the state for liberation from their exploiters. When the British occupied Iraq they noted that the Kurdish peasantry's resentment of their aghas was stronger than any ethnic solidarity.<sup>3</sup> In the 1950s, peasant anger in Iraqi Kurdistan erupted in a series of large-scale revolts, and in the following decade only very few of the non-tribal peasants were to participate in the nationalist war. No ideology was apparently strong enough to veil from these non-tribal peasants the naked exploitation to which they were subjected; they perceived themselves clearly as a class. Barth, who did fieldwork among the Hamawand and the Jaf, noted that the *misken* dominated by the former even attempted to transform the Qadiri order — another focus of primordial loyalties — into an instrument of class struggle.

However, even where the non-tribal groups have liberated themselves from their tribal overlords, new systems of primordial loyalties may arise within their stratum: patron-client relationships as found almost universally in peasant societies. Barth noticed that among the *misken* there were a few persons who owned a *diwankhane*. This usually indicates that these persons act in several ways as patrons for those who visit the *diwankhane* regularly.

The closest and most loyal followers of a tribal chieftain are his retainers (if he has a retinue) and his close relatives. Even when the latter are in conflict with him, they may (but need not) immediately close their ranks against outsiders. After these follow his other fellow tribesmen, and finally the members of client tribes. The last may be resentful of domination, especially where this is combined with economic exploitation (in the form of high dues exacted), but they are more susceptible to arguments of tribal ideology than the non-tribal peasants. After all, they are tribesmen, and therefore more 'noble' than those who are not. For them as well as for the other followers, the

association with a powerful chieftain may be psychologically rewarding. As soon as the chieftain's success is seen to end, however, the client tribes break away, and many individual members of the tribe may transfer their loyalties to some other chieftain.

Similarly, a shaikh's followers are of several types, with various degrees of loyalty to him. The greater loyalty is to be expected from those *murids* who live in or near the shaikh's residence and those who participate regularly in the mystical exercises with him. Next, there is a much wider circle of persons, often living quite far away, who only occasionally pay visits to the shaikh but are convinced of his holiness, would take recourse to him in cases of real need, and would gladly obey many of his orders.

A shaikh may even have authority over people who do not know him personally. I met for instance, in the 1970s, all over Kurdistan, people who spoke very highly of Shaikh Osman of Tawela, although many of them did not even know his name and simply called him 'the shaikh of Tawela'. The holiness of his family is exemplary, and many would obey the shaikh's directives in spiritual if not in worldly matters.

Most shaikhs own at least some land; many even own considerable tracts. The peasants on the shaikh's land generally suffer severe economic exploitation, while they see the shaikh and his *murids* living in leisure off their labour. The exploitation may long be accepted because the shaikh is seen as holy, and working for him as meritorious. These exploited peasants however are the first followers to question the legitimacy of the shaikh's claim to their loyalties, and in times of crisis they may withdraw it.

Thus, Shaikh Osman felt forced to flee from Tawela in Iraq to Iran at the time of violent anti-landlord agitation under Qassem. I know no details, but apparently the shaikh could not trust his own peasants. In Doru too, I noticed that the villagers — who had theoretically become the owners of their land under the land reform, but continued to be exploited economically — behaved in a less than friendly way towards several of the resident *murids*, and did not show the shaikh the same degree of respect as the outsiders.

The best instance of the withdrawal of loyalty from a shaikh that I recorded is the chasing away of Shaikh Masud from Bamarni by the same villagers who had obediently and loyally allowed his father Baha ad-Din to exploit them (chapter 4).

Two general processes are at work that are likely to undermine, in the long run, the loyalties of tribespeople and peasants to their aghas and shaikhs. First, there is a tendency for the relations to become more openly exploitative, while the immaterial compensations for exploitation decrease. A point may be reached where the followers will start questioning the use of continuing the relationship (of course, they may simply look for another lord instead of becoming their own). In practice, it is often not the peasants but the agha, who is the first to

renounce the traditional relationship with the variegated social obligations it implies, and to transform it from a multi-stranded relationship into a purely economic contract, thereby jeopardizing the legitimacy of his claims. Secondly, the tribal and religious ideologies supporting these leaders' positions have almost everywhere come under attack. Modern education and radio disseminate quite different values from those of traditional society. In Turkey especially, generations of schoolteachers and textbooks have consistently mocked and condemned the shaikhs and aghas as backward, reactionary and anti-democratic, and many Kurdish nationalists have, for different reasons, sung to the same tune. Concerted efforts to create new loyalties, to the state, to the *umma* (the Islamic community), to the working class, or to the Kurdish nation, are likely to go on weakening traditional loyalties.

Nevertheless, the primordial loyalties show a remarkable resilience (as well as a great adaptability to new circumstances). The following example shows how strong they may remain, even where the said two processes have been conspicuously at work.

In the village of Sorgul (a pseudonym), in the plain southwest of Mardin (Turkish Kurdistan), the relations of production have become more clearly capitalist than in most other parts of Kurdistan that I visited. One might therefore expect the primordial loyalties to have weakened more here than elsewhere. The villagers (96 households) belong to the tribe Derbas which is spread over 10–15 villages. Each village has a village agha. The aghas of all Derbas villages are closely related. Two generations ago, all lands surrounding this village were registered in the name of the then village agha. The villagers worked as his share-croppers. Of this agha's two sons, one succeeded him as the village agha, the other was compensated by receiving a much larger share of the land, not an unusual arrangement. Their family now consists of two branches: the present agha with his two brothers (each owning some 60 hectares), and the land-owning branch (the 'owner of the car' and his brother, who each own some 400 hectares). As a result of a partial land reform in the 1950s, some 30 households own 10–15 hectares each, another 10 households own 5–10 hectares, while the remainder are completely landless.

Before the land reform, all villagers were share-croppers, who paid the owner of the land on which they worked 50%, formerly even more of the produce. Most of the traditional share-cropping arrangements have now been revoked, however. Only a number of relatives of the agha receive land in usufruct from him on this basis. The 'owner of the car' (who also owns a harvester, a tractor and a lorry) cultivates all his brother's land mechanically; his former share-croppers can only work as day labourers, for a short period every year. There is a two-crop rotation system: one year wheat or barley is grown, allowing mechanized cultivation, the next year lentils, which are still reaped with the scythe, necessitating human labour. The smallholders are also

becoming dependent on the 'owner of the car': about half of them let him cultivate their land mechanically, in exchange for 50% of the crop, a new type of share-cropping arrangement that is rapidly gaining ground in the entire Middle East. In some cases they do so voluntarily; the 'owner of the car' then pays all expenses (seed, fertilizer, labour, etc.) from his own pocket. In most cases, however, the small landowners are compelled to enter into this arrangement because they are indebted to him. Until their debts (and a high interest) have been paid back, they are obliged to let him cultivate their lands; moreover, in this case they also have to contribute half of the expenses.

A process of concentration of economic power into the hands of the 'owner of the car' is thus taking place. This entrepreneur feels no primordial obligations to his fellow tribesmen, and he easily dismissed the share-croppers from his land. His cousin the agha, on the other hand, who still takes the tithe for the upkeep of the *diwankhane*, has not revoked all share-cropping arrangements, but it is only close relatives who use his land. The incomes of most villagers have declined over the past decade. They are out of work most of the time. Eighty or ninety per cent of them work a few months each year as seasonal labourers on cotton and citrus plantations in the Adana-Mersin region. During my visit in 1976, many complained about exploitation, especially by the 'owner of the car'; they also accused the agha, but more reluctantly. On some of the walls of the village houses, the slogans of social justice broadcast by the social-democrat Republican People's Party could be seen. I heard, however, that in the last elections all villagers had unanimously voted for the reactionary religious Party of National Salvation, the party supported by the agha. Several of the villagers told me privately that they abhorred this party, but nevertheless voted for it in order to preserve the peace in the village. 'After all, we are all relatives, and it is better to maintain amiable relations'.

One of my acquaintances in the village, who had four or five years of secondary education, was a self-proclaimed leftist and Kurdish nationalist. He was probably the most politically conscious person in the village. When talking about aghas in general, he denounced them; later, however, he confided to me that he too would vote for his agha's party in the next elections. His emotional feelings of loyalty towards his agha, in spite of his rational arguments to the contrary, became even clearer in a heated discussion with another Kurdish friend, a teacher from elsewhere, who argued the necessity for Kurdish and Turkish progressives to cooperate with each other. My acquaintance became more and more excited, until he burst out emotionally: 'I shall never trust those Turks! The leftists want to colonize us just as much as the others do. If one day a confrontation comes, I shall stand side by side with my agha, against the Turks!' If such are the emotions of the villager most exposed to external influences, who moreover belongs to the

poorest of the village (no land, no regular job), it is clear that primordial loyalties are still very strong indeed. An important factor is, of course, that it is not the agha, but his cousin who exploits the villagers. Relations with the agha have therefore not yet become too strained.

I have come across one case only where a clear break in primordial loyalties seems to have occurred. The community where it occurred is not a real tribe, however, although loyalties resembling the tribal ones used to exist.

The town of Shirnak and its surroundings are dominated politically by four families of aghas, the Mala Agit (the most powerful one), the Mala Abdurrahman Agha, the Mala Aghaye Sor and the Mala Osman Agha. I shall refer to them, in this order, as A, B, C and D. There are other 'aghass', related to these families, but they have neither wealth nor influence. The other Kurds of the town and the villages ('*kurmanj*') were, and in part still are, tied in exploitative patron-client relationships to these families of aghas. Many were also retainers of one of the families. The four families were in permanent rivalry. Some of the *kurmanj* told me how, until fifteen years ago ('we were still young, and politically unaware then') they went out at night to raid villages belonging to a rival agha, stole animals and even killed peasants. Their loyalty and obedience to the agha was unconditional and unquestioning. Elections (it is the elections of the mayor of Shirnak that are especially important) were until recently also exclusively an affair of the aghas. In 1965 and 1969, A and C put up the leading candidates (for Republican People's Party and Justice Party respectively, 'left' and 'right' in Turkey's politics); they were in coalition with B and D respectively. The outcome was purely a matter of arithmetic: the *kurmanj* allied to A and B voted RPP, those allied to C and D voted JP. A's candidate therefore carried the victory both times. In 1969 some signs of change were already perceptible, the loyalty of the *kurmanj* seemed to have become less unquestioning. C's candidate presented himself as very progressive, and addressed all *kurmanj*, promising measures to decrease their subjection to and dependence on the aghas. This had as yet little noticeable effect in the elections. In the following years, however, a number of influential *kurmanj* started preparations for a coup against the aghas and propagated the idea that, in the elections of 1973, the *kurmanj* should have a candidate of their own. Putting up an independent candidate would be a costly affair, they needed a party that would accept their candidate. The Justice Party, aware that in the existing conditions it was never going to win with a member of C as its candidate, was ready to put the *kurmanj* candidate (a local official) on its list.

During the elections of 1969 there had been some shooting between

members of A and C; a smouldering blood feud was the result. Faced with the danger of a kurmanj revolt, however, the families made peace. C declined to put up a candidate and supported that of A, so that the elections of 1973 were between the candidate of all aghas and the candidate of the rebellious kurmanj. The aghas apparently felt that their position was at stake, they attempted to terrorize the kurmanj into obedience. A relative of the aghas' candidate killed two kurmanj in the streets of Shirnak (among them a cousin of the kurmanj's candidate); four more people were killed in the surrounding villages. Election day showed that these methods were no longer effective; out of 2400 votes cast in town, over 1600 went to the Justice Party, that is, to the kurmanj's candidate; in some villages this proportion was even higher. Incidentally, the man who had killed the two kurmanj was, after much delay, arrested and condemned to a few years imprisonment. He was set free again under the general amnesty of 1974, and has lived in western Turkey since. When I asked whether ultimately blood revenge would be taken, my informants smiled excusingly: it is as yet inconceivable to take revenge against an agha. Moreover, when the man came to see his relatives occasionally, he was extremely well protected (which suggests that the aghas do not find revenge so inconceivable anymore).

The aghas' absolute control over the kurmanj has apparently been broken, but not completely: nearly thirty per cent of the kurmanj continued to vote for the aghas' candidate. That is not so surprising, as many kurmanj are economically dependent on one of the aghas' families. Moreover, there may have been conflicts among the kurmanj of which I am unaware, which made some of them vote against their candidate. On the other hand, a number of the poorer aghas (of families other than the four powerful ones) supported the kurmanj's candidate.<sup>4</sup> It seems unlikely that the aghas will ever be able to command the loyalties of the kurmanj as they did before, even if they were to succeed in re-imposing their dominance by economic means. However, the kurmanj's class-like behaviour is not a guarantee against new systems of patronage developing within the stratum.

I visited Shirnak in 1976, two and a half years after the critical elections. The atmosphere was subdued, there was tension in the air, as there had been ever since the elections. People took safety precautions, and avoided leaving their houses after dark. At wedding parties there was no outdoor music and dancing, the party remained inside. The people with whom I spoke talked much about the past confrontation of aghas and kurmanj. The details they gave were often contradictory; I have therefore given only the barest outline above. The obvious question to ask is why the, originally quite strong, loyalties of most kurmanj to their aghas have broken down, and why this happened in those years.

I looked for indications of increasing exploitation or other changes in the economic relations between aghas and kurmanj, but did not find



them. The degree of mechanization of agriculture is low (due to the unevenness of the terrain); nevertheless peasants of several villages where nothing else seems to have changed have, for a number of years, refused to pay the aghas their tribute, in a few cases defending themselves with firearms. The only semblance of capitalist relations existing in the area concerns a lignite mine near the town that is owned by family A and operated by a private company from western Turkey, and where some 200 men from Shirnak work. These workers had no connection whatsoever with the kurmanj's revolt. They are relatively privileged: it is mainly persons from the agha stratum, and loyal kurmanj, who find work there.

When I asked my informants for their explanations of the general rebellion of the kurmanj against the aghas, they had two observations that seem quite relevant. The first concerned education. The aghas' families of Shirnak did not show much concern about education; none of their younger members studied beyond lower secondary level. Many of the kurmanj, however, had perceived school education to be a channel of social mobility and sent their children through secondary school. Several kurmanj thus qualified as local government officials, which theoretically made them less dependent on the aghas. The kurmanj's candidate for the mayoralty, significantly, was one of these civil servants. The general leftist climate prevailing in Turkish schools during the late 1960s and early 1970s may also have contributed to the spirit of revolt. The second relevant experience was the Kurdish war in Iraq. During the 1960s, several of the kurmanj had spent short periods in Iraqi Kurdistan, where many of them have relatives, and taken part in guerrilla actions there. They came back with more outspoken political ideas, and a greater awareness of oppression at home. As Kurdish nationalism took firmer root, especially among the younger generation, the aghas were frequently accused of collaboration with the Turkish secret police, which gave further food to anti-gha agitation. Nationalist sentiment thus helped to weaken traditional loyalties and to engender an awareness of class contradictions.

A third factor should be mentioned. The aghas themselves were showing decreasing interest in their traditional obligations. A month before my stay in Shirnak, passing nomads had killed a kurmanj in one of the surrounding villages. It would have been the aghas' duty to take blood revenge. One of them, in fact, attempted to organize a counter-raid on the nomads, but the other aghas refused to cooperate, and the murder remained unavenged. This incident (and there may have been similar ones earlier) was seized upon by kurmanj activists to further delegitimize the aghas.

These two cases (Sorgul and Shirnak) show that the process by which primordial loyalties give way to the more modern class or national loyalties does not follow simple or uniform patterns. Moreover, the

process is not necessarily irreversible. It is not unlikely, for instance, that within the kurmanj stratum new patron-client relations will develop that will differ little or not at all from the earlier agha-kurmanj relations. The new loyalties, even where they develop, may carry within them aspects of the old primordial ones (such as with the young Kurdish leftist and nationalist who would stand by his agha against the Turkish leftists). Loyalties of class or nation may depend on ties almost primordial, such as the highly emotional bond with a charismatic leader.

Kurdish nationalism became a mass movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s, not because of the nationalist propaganda by intellectuals, which stressed the abstract idea of a Kurdish nation, but because of the military and political successes of Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Barzani in his lifetime became a legendary super-hero, whose feats were sung and told in all corners of Kurdistan. He was a shaikh's son, had the style of a great chieftain of the old days, and his heroics gave the Kurds something to be proud of. Admiration for, pride of, and consequently loyalty towards Barzani strengthened an awareness of Kurdish identity and loyalty towards the abstract idea of the Kurdish nation. These new attitudes became, to some extent, independent of the attitude towards Barzani; many Kurds later became disaffected with their former idol, but their nationalist sentiment remained as strong as ever.

By the 1970s and 1980s, Kurdish nationalism and, to some extent, radical and populist varieties of socialism had become the dominant discourse among the Kurds; many, moreover, explicitly and sincerely denounced narrow tribal loyalties. This did not mean, of course, the end of primordial loyalties. Nationalism and socialism, rather, came to be used to lend additional legitimacy to traditional authority. In conflicts and rivalries — most clearly so in Turkey, where elections make traditional rivalries more visible — aghas presented themselves (or were presented by their followers) as nationalists or champions of the little man. Nationalist arguments were used even more frequently to de-legitimize opponents, by accusing them of collaborating with the central government against the common interests of the Kurds. Although effective in a few cases, such efforts did little to weaken primordial loyalties in general.

In virtually all Kurdish parties and organizations, leading roles were played by Kurds from the traditional leading stratum — aghas, shaikhs and their relatives and close associates. This tended to make them, in spite of their sometimes radical ideologies, socially conservative. They may have attempted to break the power of some aghas, but never made any serious attempt to abolish chiefly privileges. The only organization that had a radically different composition was the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) of Turkey. It regards Kurdistan as a colony of the Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi ruling classes, and the aghas and shaikhs — most of whom owe part of their power to recognition by the state — as collaborators in the process of colonization. The national liberation

struggle, in the party's view, should therefore be directed also against this Kurdish ruling stratum. And this is what the party tried to do. Soon, however, it saw itself forced to enter into alliances with 'patriotic' aghas against the 'collaborating' ones, and its liberation struggle degenerated, for a year or two, into little more than ordinary tribal warfare, with the PKK resembling just another new tribe (van Bruinessen 1988: 42).

All in all, although we seem to perceive a general trend towards the weakening of primordial loyalties, these take a long time to disappear, and may re-appear. Such loyalties come more naturally to people than those towards wider and more abstract entities such as nation or class, and more easily fulfill the need to belong to an identifiable group. Economic change — notably intensified exploitation — may put loyalties under a heavier strain but will not necessarily lead to their breakdown. In any given situation, economic factors alone cannot predict which loyalties will prevail — primordial, class or national ones. We have, in this book, come across two clear examples where the exploited party rebelled and revoked its traditional loyalties: the peasants of Bamarni against Shaikh Masud and the *kurmanj* of Shirkak against the aghas. In both cases, it was not economic change but external political factors that provided the decisive impulse.

## Notes

1. This may seem a naive and old-fashioned statement, after so much recent writing on the tribe (ably summarized in Eickelman 1981: 85–104) has tended to dismiss the roles of kinship and segmentary opposition in the structure of the tribe as native ideology or figments of the anthropologist's mind. I am aware of the many cases where other factors outweigh kinship or lineage segmentation — the pages of this book are dotted with them — but time and again I was surprised to see not only how pervasive the kinship ideology is, but also to what extent it actually shapes behaviour.

2. If we assume that the probability of conflict within a group is proportional to the number of relations between two persons possible within that group, this probability increases quadratically with the size of the group. The number of relations possible within a group of  $N$  persons is  $1/2N(N-1) = 1/2N^2 - 1/2N$ . For those not mathematically minded, the following may give an indication:

in a group of 10 persons, the number of possible two-person relations is 45;

in a group of 100 persons, the number of possible two-person relations is 4950;

in a group of 1000 persons, the number of possible two-person relations is 499,500.

3. The British political officer, Leachman, reported in 1918 from Mosul that the Kurds of the province were strongly anti-Arab, but that 'the view of the country population is that, though we have freed them from Turkey, we have yet to free them from the tyranny of landowners, who are the only class in favour of Arab Government' (quoted in Wilson 1931: 112).

4. Shirkak also has Armenian inhabitants, nearly all of them craftsmen, altogether maybe 10–20% of the population. Their voting behaviour is not clear (for obvious reasons they were reluctant to talk about it), but I have the impression that most of them supported the aghas' candidate.



## Appendix

### The major shaikhly families of Kurdistan

The family trees of the most important families of Kurdish shaikhs may serve to elucidate the relationships between the many shaikhs and shaikhly dynasties mentioned in this chapter. Important shaikh-khalifa relationships between such families are indicated where known. In the notes short biographical notices on some of the shaikhs are given.

Chart I. The Barzinji family

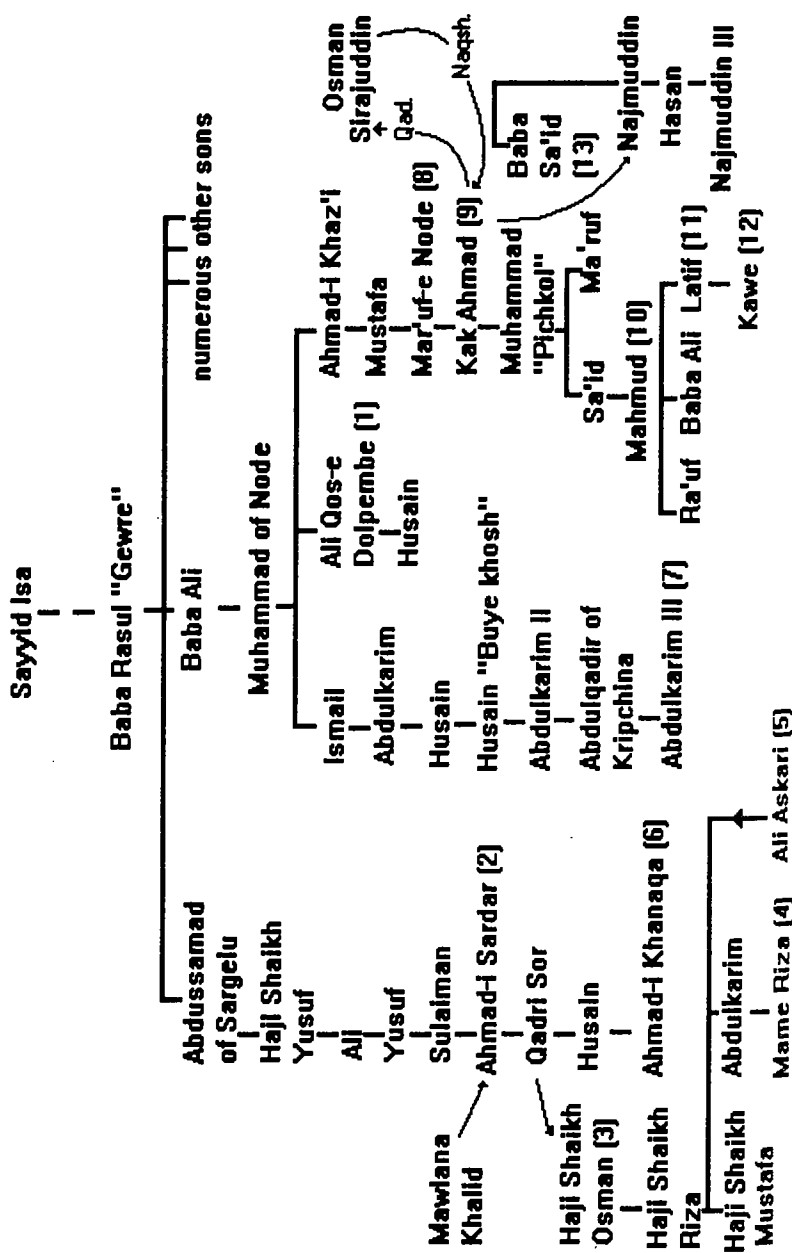




Chart III. The shaikhs of Biyara and Tawela (Hawraman)

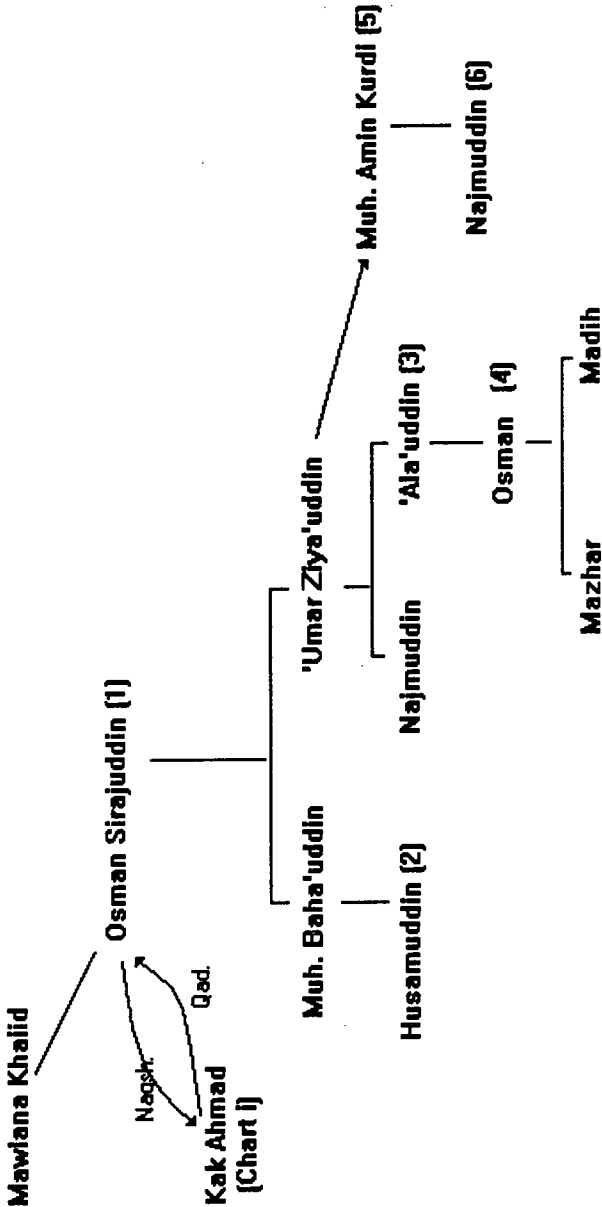
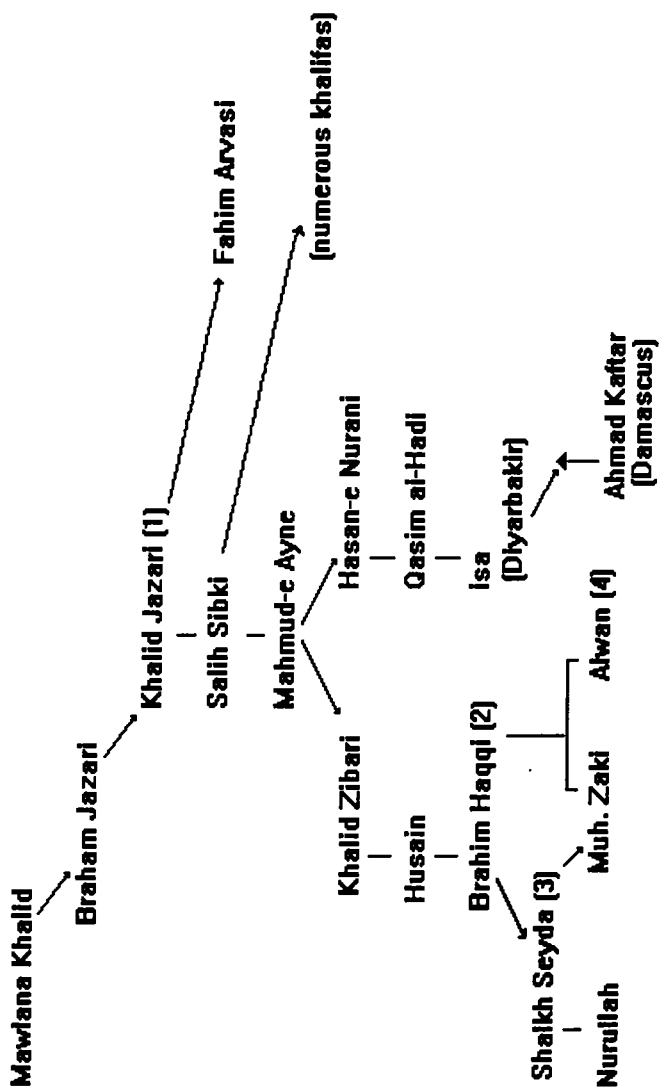




Chart IV. Important Naqshbandi shaikhs in the Jazira



### Chart V. Other influential Naqshbandi families

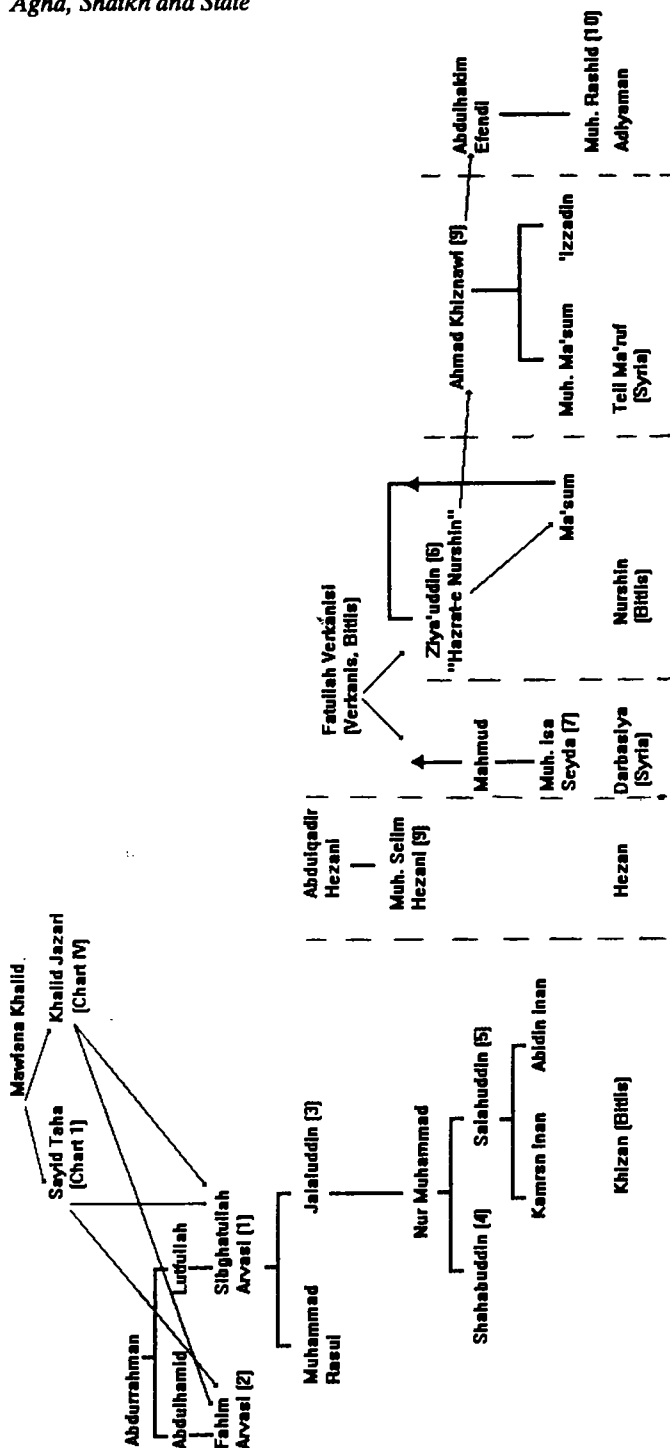
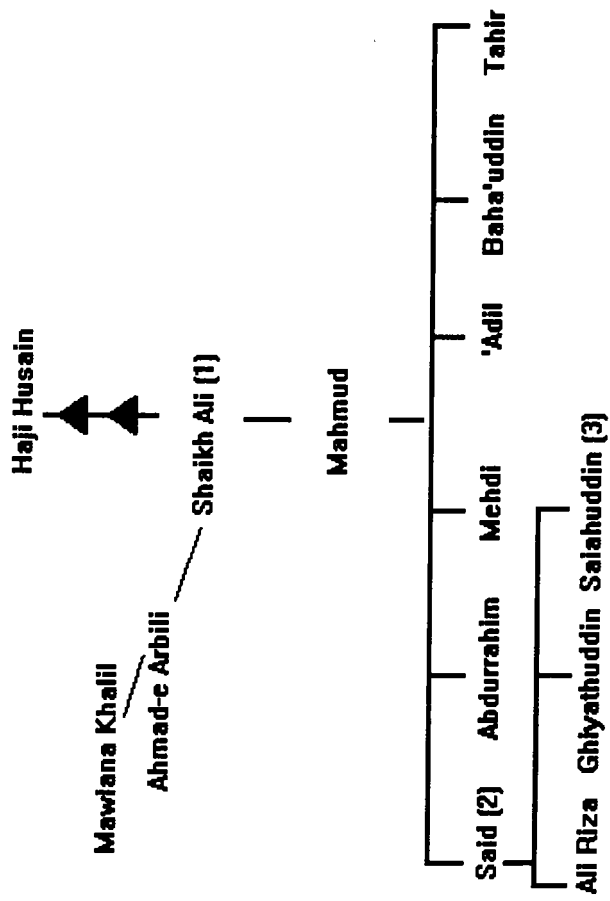


Chart VI. The shaikhs of Palu



**Notes to Table 1: The Barzinji family**

On this family, see also Edmonds (1957): 68-69; Tawakkoli (n.d.): 133-168. With few exceptions, this family represented the Qadiri tariqa.

- (1) This is the ancestor of the branch to which Haj Sayyid Wafa Salami belongs, whose silsila is given in the text (IV. d).
- (2) Ahmad-i Serdar received the Naqshbandi path from Mawlana Khalid and became himself a leading Naqshbandi shaikh.
- (3) Haci Shaikh Osman was a distant relative of Qadri Sur, from whom he received the Naqshbandi ijaza.
- (4) Shaikh Abdulkarim (of Sergelu), though continuing to call himself a Naqshbandi, introduced practices so different from the ordinary ones, that one might speak of a new tariqa or a sect. His followers are called *Haqqa*. Several of their practices were equally repulsive to the surrounding orthodox Muslims and to the British administration: men and women were seen bathing together in the water tank of the village mosque, even taking dogs with them into the water (the absolute height of impurity!), and similar things (see Edmonds 1957: 204-206 for a description). In 1944 his successor Mame Riza was arrested and put in an internment camp in southern Iraq. Hundreds (according to Edmonds) or thousands (12,000 according to Mame Riza's cousin Ali Askari!) of peasant followers left their villages and started off to join their leader in his exile. This forced the authorities to bring the shaikh back to Kurdistan where they kept him under house-arrest at Sulaymaniyah, so that his followers could easily come and visit him. (cf. Tawakkoli (n.d.): 233-4). Edmonds attributed Mame Riza's arrest to a simple administrative blunder, but Ali Askari was anxious to point out that the reason was his cousin's aid to Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who had just escaped from house arrest in Sulaymaniyah and made his way back to Barzan, where he led a fresh rebellion against the government. Mame Riza had sent fifty men to Barzan to assist Mulla Mustafa. The Haqqa sect still exists; a khalifa of Mame Riza, Hama Sur, has usurped its leadership. His village is organized, my informants (among them Ali Askari) say, as a 'kolkhoz'. The land is worked collectively; everything, women included, is collective property. Hama Sur himself is apparently the only one who is more equal than the others in this 'egalitarian' society: he disposes of much money, and he was said (in 1975) still to arrogate, in spite of his seventy years, the ius primae noctis of all the village girls.
- (5) Ali Askari and his father never were practising shaikhs. Ali was a young but well known guerrilla commander in Mulla Mustafa Barzani's last war (1974-5), and became one of the leading politicians and chief military commanders of the organization established by Talabani in 1976, the PUK. He was much liked for

his perpetual optimism, great energy, courage and military ability. In a dramatic armed clash between the PUK and the rival Kurdish organization loyal to Barzani's sons, the KDP-Provisional Command, in which the former was almost wiped out (Spring 1978), he was taken prisoner and later killed.

- (6) Ahmad-i Khanaqa was in the 1920s the leading Kurdish personality in the town of Kerkuk. Next to the Talabani shaikhs, he was the major rival of his relative, Shaikh Mahmud (10) for control of southern Kurdistan. In 1923 he was apparently heavily involved with Turkey, making pro-Turkish (and anti-British) propaganda among the Kurds. This political stand was probably not unrelated to the fact that the British had then brought back his relative and rival, Mahmud, to Kurdistan as their asset against Turkey. Edmonds personally arrested Ahmad, and claims that this effectively checked Turkish influence in the entire province of Kerkuk (Edmonds 1957, *passim*).
- (7) Shaikh Abdulkarim of Kripchina (Iraq) was in the mid-seventies the most influential Qadiri shaikh in Kurdistan: he had many khalifas in Iraq and Iran – I visited them at Mahabad, Bane and Sanandaj. During the last period of the Kurdish war in Iraq (post-1966, if I am well informed) he sided with the government against Barzani.
- (8) Ma'ruf of Node was the leading Barzinji shaikh at Sulaymaniyah when Rich visited the town (1820). He conspired with the 'ulama against Mawlana Khalid. Since the latter's departure from Sulaymaniyah, his descendants remained undisputed as the major religious and – after the fall of the Baban emirate – political leaders of the town and its surroundings.
- (9) Kak Ahmad acquired great fame as a miracle-worker. In spite of his antagonistic relations with Mawlana Khalid (according to some Naqshbandis he even attempted to assassinate this saint at the instigation of his father), he later established cordial relations with Khalid's main successor, Shaikh Osman of Biyare (Table III no. 1). These two shaikhs initiated each other in their respective paths (Edmonds 1957: 74-78).
- (10) Shaikh Mahmud was in the 1920's probably the most influential person in all southern Kurdistan. In 1918, the British made him governor of a large part of Kurdistan, but appointed a political officer to 'assist' him. Conflicts with his strong-willed advisor pushed the shaikh to an anti-British rebellion, in which most local tribes supported him. It took a large-scale military expedition to put down this rebellion; the shaikh was captured and sent into exile. In 1922, however, when the Turks were actively winning Kurdish support for the re-incorporation of oil-rich Mosul province into Turkey, the British saw themselves forced to bring the shaikh back to Sulaymaniyah. In the words of a political officer, '... we had despaired of keeping out the Turks with our

own resources and had brought back Mahmud to consolidate Kurdish national feeling as the sole means of doing so ...' (Edmonds 1957: 304). Shaikh Mahmud, on his part, tried to play the Turks and the British off against each other, and established contacts with nationalists from all over Kurdistan. He proclaimed himself 'King of Kurdistan', and by early 1923 was in open rebellion against the British again. After his capital, Sulaymaniyah, was bombed by the RAF, the shaikh retired across the Persian border, from where his troops continued for several years to make forays into Iraq. In 1927, he finally surrendered to the British.

- (11) Shaikh Latif, Mahmud's successor, was also a very influential personality throughout his life, though not universally liked. He so much intensified the exploitation of the peasants on the land he had inherited from his father, that these at last rose in protest in 1948. This (successful) peasant rebellion, organized by the village's Communist Party branch, and supported by a large part of the city population, was the first of its kind in Iraq (Batatu 1978: 612-4). Paradoxically, Shaikh Latif was in later years, during the 1960s, widely reputed to be a sympathizer and supporter of the Iraqi Communist Party. He was also known as a Kurdish nationalist and supporter of the Kurdish political aspirations, but always remained aloof when Barzani and the KDP were in armed conflict with the Baghdad government. He seemed reluctant to support a popular movement associated with a rival leader, but never turned against it either. When terminally ill, he turned down a government offer of treatment in a government hospital in Baghdad, preferring to die in a simple hospital in Sulaymaniyah.
- (12) His son Kawe was more directly politically involved. In 1974-75, still a young man, he took the government side and led paramilitary units (made up of the family's followers) against Barzani's Kurds. He was chosen as a representative in the 'parliament' of the Kurdish autonomous region (a Baghdad-controlled body). In 1982 his term was not renewed. Frustrated, he tried to find other patrons: he went, with a number of followers, to Iran, which was interested in establishing an Islamic Kurdish opposition movement in Iraq and might have use for a shaikh. For reasons unclear to me he soon left Iran again and joined a (non-religious) Kurdish guerrilla organization active inside Iraq, the Socialist Party of Kurdistan. During one nightly operation he was caught in a snowstorm and froze to death.
- (13) It is not clear whether Shaikh Baba Sa'id was a linear descendant of Kak Ahmad or a more distant relative who had an initiatory connection with him (the silsila I was shown was defective and insufficiently clear). Baba Sa'id came from Iraqi to Persian Kurdistan and established himself in a village near Mahabad now

called Ghauthabad. This name suggests that the shaikh had also, at one time, had the reputation of being the ghawth. Lehmann-Haupt met him in Mahabad in 1898, and wrote that he then had some 8,000 followers. Lehmann-Haupt heard also from Christian missionaries in Urmia (Rezaye) that the shaikh and his closest relatives had accepted Christianity and had been baptized secretly – although outwardly they remained Muslims and continued to practice the Qadiri tariqa (Lehmann-Haupt, vol 1: 232, 272). But the villages over which the shaikh had control were freely accessible to the missionaries, and later – after being much pressed by the missionaries – the shaikh made his conversion public. During the First World War Mahabad was invaded by Turkish troops. When these heard of the shaikh's conversion they demanded that he revoke it, and when he refused, hanged him. His brother Najmuddin succeeded him. (After Rev. F.G. Coan, 'Yesterday in Persia and Kurdistan', quoted in the *Bulletin mensuel du centre d'études Kurdes* (Paris), 1950 nr. 10: p 6-7).

Najmuddin's son Hasan recently died and was succeeded by a son, Najmuddin II, who still resides at Ghauthabad. The followers of the family are mainly from the Mamash tribe; most members of this tribe pay regular visits to Ghauthabad. I met a brother of the present shaikh at Mahabad where there is a khanaqa of followers of Ghauthabad which I visited several times. The meetings of dervishes at this khanaqa are not significantly different from those elsewhere. No one at this khanaqa, nor anyone at the other Qadiri khanaqa in town ever mentioned Shaikh Baba's conversion to me. The shaikh has apparently been canonized again and his peculiarities smoothed over. There is even a street (or rather, an alley) in Mahabad named after him.

## Notes to Table II: The Sadate Nehri and the shaikhs of Barzan

For general information on both families, see also Nikitine (1925a); Eagleton (1963). The Sadate Nehri claim descent from 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani himself, through his son 'Abd al-'Aziz, who had migrated from Baghdad to 'Aqre in northern Iraq, and the latter's son Abu Bakr, who established himself in Hakkari (Nikitine 1956: 212). The family therefore also uses the name of Gailani-zade. Nehri, after which the family is also often called, was the chief village of the Şemdinan district, which was the family residence from the early 19th century on. Şemdinan was then still an autonomous, be it small, emirate, and the shaikhs and the mir exercised a dual rule over the emirate. Until their 'conversion' by Mawlana Khalid, the Sadate Nehri represented the tariqa named after their ancestor.

- (1) Shaikh Sayyid Abdullah was Mawlana Khalid's instructor in the Qadiri tariqa (MacKenzie 1962). Later he and his brothers were initiated in the Naqshbandiya by his former murid. Since then, the family has been associated with the Naqshbandi tariqa only.
- (2) Shaikh Ubaydullah led the first Kurdish rebellion with explicit national demands, in 1880.
- (3) It is not clear whether Muhammad Siddiq, Ubaydullah's successor, was also sent into exile after the revolt, and if so, when he returned. At any rate, at the beginning of the 20th century he was living at Nehri, and was considered the most influential shaikh of central Kurdistan (Dickson 1910: 370; Nikitine and Soane, 1923). His power rivalry with the shaikh of Barzan, Abdussalam II, caused a lot of unrest in the Oramar district (lying between the two shaikhs' territories). He ruled *directly* over the sedentary Herki, the Girdi, the Zerza and the Khumaru tribes, together some 13,000 persons, and had *influence* in a much wider territory (Nikitine & Soane 1923: 77n). After his death (in 1911) a short but intense struggle for succession ensued between his son Sayyid Taha and his brother Abdulqadir, in which the former got the upper hand.
- (4) Seyyid Abdulqadir was exiled to Mecca with his father, and could not return to Istanbul until after the Young Turk revolution of 1908. That same year he was one of the founders of the first Kurdish political club, the Kürd Te'avün ve Teraqqi Cemiyeti (see V. d). He played a role in nearly all Kurdish nationalist activities in Istanbul, but became also a member of the (Ottoman) Senate and the president of the Council of State. In 1925, after the great revolt of Shaikh Sa'id, – with which he probably had nothing to do – he and his son Muhammad were executed. The other son, Abdullah, then fled to Nehri and led the local tribes in a new revolt, and after a few months took refuge in Iraq.
- (5) Sayyid Taha II, who succeeded his father, was more of a tribal leader and even a modern politician than a religious leader. After the outbreak of the First World War he went to Russia and tried to enlist support for the cause of an independent Kurdistan – under his own leadership, of course. After the October revolution he returned to Turkey, but he had to keep moving because of Turkish assassination attempts. In 1919 he contacted the British occupation authorities of Iraq in Baghdad, and pressed for a united Kurdistan under British protection. When the British remained non-committal, he went to Iran, where he joined Ismail Agha 'Simko', the chief of the Şikak tribe, who was in armed revolt against the Persian government (Bruinessen 1983). In October 1922 he returned to Iraq and offered the British his services against the Turks (who were at that time making active propaganda in Iraqi Kurdistan and even had a military unit at Rowanduz, which the British had been forced to evacuate). The British realized this time



that they needed the sayyid, who was a man of great influence in the district of Rowanduz and owned land there. They appointed him as the qaimmaqam (governor) of the province. Due to Sayyid Taha's influence over the tribes, the Turks could then be expelled and British rule restored. Several years later (in 1932) Sayyid Taha accepted an invitation by Shah Reza of Iran to come to Tehran; he was poisoned there.

- (6) Shaikh Abdullah Efendi established himself (in 1941) in the village of Diza, in Mergiwir (Persian Kurdistan, territory of a settled section of the Herki tribe). Known as a wise and pious man, and a staunch nationalist, he enjoyed great prestige. Even today people speak of him as 'the best-loved man of Kurdistan'. He and his brother Muhammad Siddiq 'controlled an immediate following corresponding to that of a medium-sized tribe (about 8,000), but their influence reached farther afield' (Eagleton 1963: 20). When (in 1945-46) preparations were made for the autonomous Kurdish republic of Mahabad (supported, even stimulated, by the Soviet Union), a large number of tribal leaders chose him as the favourite person to become the leader of (northern) Persian Kurdistan. The Soviets however considered him a British agent and tried (successfully) to prevent his election as the President of the short-lived republic. Neither of his sons continues to wear the shaikhly mantle. Abdulaziz attended the military academy at Baghdad and became a high officer in the Iraqi army (a marshall, according to some of my informants). Later he moved to Rezaye, where he quietly lives in town. Abdulqadir lives in Diza, and is a common landlord. The village, once buzzing with life and commercial activity (due to the great numbers of pilgrim-visitors) is now in a state of sorry decay.
- (7) Abdulhakim Arvasi (1864-1943) was one of the most influential Naqshbandis of republican Turkey, as well as one of its greatest and most conservative 'ulama. He was the religious mentor of the colourful reactionary poet and pamphleteer Necip Fazil Kısakürek (see the latter's autobiographical *O ve ben*) and of Hüseyin Hilmi İşik, the founder of an anti-reformist, ultra-conservative sect. He was born into a family of sayyids in Erwas (Arvas), a village near Van that is famous for the many great 'ulama it has produced. The information on his genealogical and spiritual ancestry is contradictory. İşik, who should know best, claims that his father was a certain Mustafa, a khalifa of Shaikh Ubaydullah (İşik 1979: 966). Uyan (1983: 34ff) gives the same genealogical link, but claims that Abdulhakim was initiated by Shaikh Fehim Arvasi, who himself had studied with various Kurdish Naqshbandi shaikhs, among them Sayyid Taha I and Khalid Jazari (Uyan 1983: 771 ff). Kısakürek, in his *O ve ben*, incorrectly makes Abdulhakim a grandson of Fehim, through his son Ma'sum.

- (8) The information about the earliest shaikhs of Barzan is often partisan, and full of contradictions. According to some sources (e.g. Damaluji, quoted by Jwaideh 1969: 145), Tajuddin was a khalifa of Mawlana Khalid himself, according to others of Shaikh Sayyid Taha I of Nehri. The most detailed source (Nikitine 1925a) does not call the first of the Barzani shaikhs Tajuddin but Abdurrahman. According to the same source, Abdussalam I was not Abdurrahman's son but his younger brother. Tajuddin, who had already had an education as a mulla, spent a further period of religious education in Nehri, where Sayyid Taha initiated him in the Naqshbandiya. After sufficient instruction his teacher sent him back to Barzan, where at that time Nemet Agha of the Zibari tribe exercised a despotic rule over a wide area. Under Tajuddin, Barzan soon became a rallying point for the peasants who resented the exploitation by the Zibari aghas. Attracting the persecuted and rebellious from all over central Kurdistan, Barzan developed into an almost utopian community with the shaikh as a truly charismatic leader and embodiment of the ideals. A new tribe emerged, the Barzanis, with extremely strong loyalty to their charismatic leaders.
- (9) Abdussalam I, the brother or son of Tajuddin, became a khalifa of Sayyid Taha's brother and successor Saleh. Both Sayyid Taha and Tajuddin had, for unclear reasons, objected to Abdussalam's becoming a khalifa. When Tajuddin died, Abdurrahman proclaimed himself a shaikh in his own right. Shaikh Ubaydullah, who had meanwhile succeeded Saleh at Nehri, was much annoyed. He said that Abdurrahman and his followers had fallen victim to Satan and had become mad – maybe the first signs of the eccentricities for which Barzan was to become famous had already shown themselves in Abdurrahman? His opinion was apparently widely shared, for in the early 20th century the Barzanis were commonly known as *Diwane*, 'the madmen'. Mad or not, Abdussalam kept gaining adherents, and his growing influence was a great nuisance to Ubaydullah. The latter therefore sent a strong tribal army against Barzan. Abdussalam's popularity did not decrease because of the defeat he suffered; his followers even proclaimed him the Mahdi. This made him afraid of further, and probably more severe, reprisals by Shaikh Ubaydullah, and he went into hiding.
- (10) Abdussalam was succeeded by his son Muhammad, who re-established cordial relations with Nehri by meekly going to Ubaydullah and humbly requesting to be instructed and initiated in the tariqa. Ubaydullah, probably with a keen eye on Muhammad's large following, appointed him his khalifa. Some time after Ubaydullah's capture and exile from Kurdistan, Muhammad was, like his father before him, proclaimed the Mahdi by his followers.
- (11) Abdussalam II was involved in perpetual conflicts with Muhammad Siddiq of Nehri (3) and Shaikh Bahauddin of Bamarni

(Dickson 1910; cf. Nikitine and Soane 1923). His relations with Sayyid Taha II (4) on the other hand were quite cordial again; the latter at one time even took refuge in Barzan from persecution by the Ottomans. Abdussalam raised several times the banner of revolt against the Ottoman governor of Mosul province. In 1916 he was captured and hanged in Mosul, apparently on the accusation of collusion with the Russian enemy.

- (12) Shaikh Ahmad Barzani, 'the God of Barzan', was the most eccentric member of this unconventional family. Unsympathetic contemporaries called him 'unstable' or even 'half mad' when he succeeded his brother as the leader of the Barzani community (e.g. Hay 1921: 180). He resented British control of Iraq, and clashed with the British as early as 1919 (see Wilson 1931: 151-3), and was from then on to remain in almost perpetual revolt. His relations with neighbouring tribes were always antagonistic, and when his followers proclaimed him an incarnation of God, and the shaikh allowed the eating of pork, his rival, Shaikh Rashid of the Lolan, who had influence over the Bradost tribe as well, declared holy war on him. When the Barzanis counter-attacked (under Ahmad's fierce brother Mulla Mustafa), the British sent troops and ultimately the air force to intervene. Shaikh Ahmad in the end had to flee to Turkey, where he was imprisoned (Hamilton 1937, *passim*; Wilson 1937: 291-2). Extradited to Iraq, he was held under surveillance in Sulaymaniyah, far from his loyal followers. He did not take part in his younger brother's adventures (see below), and only returned to Barzan after Qassem's coup in 1958. He immediately resumed his conflicts with the neighbouring tribes, especially with the Zibari – or rather, he ordered his brother to resume them. Ahmad himself stood back from military enterprises. He remained in the village, enjoying the profound devotion of his followers for whom he remained an almost divine figure. He died in the late 1960s.
- (13) Mulla Mustafa Barzani as a young man led the fights against his brother's enemies. He was exiled to Sulaymaniyah together with Shaikh Ahmad but escaped from there to Barzan in 1943, and started attacking police stations in the area. He remained in rebellion for two years and then withdrew across the Persian border with his men, joining the Kurds of Mahabad, who were soon to proclaim an independent republic (Eagleton 1963: 51-4). Barzani became one of the Kurdish republic's generals; after its collapse he and his men retired again into Iran, and in a famous 'long march', defying the Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian armies, crossed through Turkey into the Soviet Union with his men. They were to remain there until the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown by Qassem's coup in 1958. During his absence in the USSR, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq made him its honorary

president, and after his return to Iraq he soon succeeded in becoming the actual leader of the Kurdish movement there. From 1961 to 1975, with but short interruptions, he led the war of Kurds against successive Iraqi governments. More than anything or anybody else, it was Barzani, with his tremendous charisma, his legendary life history, and his military successes against superior armies, who embodied the Kurds' idea of themselves as a nation. The national awareness and national pride of the Iraqi Kurds, and even of those of Turkey and Iran, is to a large extent due to Mela Mistefa Barzani. The humiliation of his last years, and the anti-Barzani reaction that followed could never change that. In 1975 the Shah, who had become his patron, sold Barzani's Kurds out in a profitable treaty with Iraq. Barzani gave up the war and retired to Iran, together with many tens of thousands of former fighters and their families. He went to the USA for medical treatment, and died there in early 1979.

(14-15) Among Barzani's sons, Idris and Mas'ud were the ones groomed to become his successors. Idris was the youngest of his sons by his first wife (a cousin); Mas'ud, who was born in Mahabad, the first son by his second wife Hamayl, the daughter of a Zibari chieftain, whom he had married during a temporary truce with this traditional enemy tribe. Mas'ud had grown up among the Zibari when his father was in the USSR. Because of these two different backgrounds, the brothers could appeal to different loyalties; they deliberately created a semblance of disagreement to maintain this situation. Mulla Mustafa Barzani and these two sons, and not the KDP's politbureau, formed the real leadership of the Kurdish movement during the early 1970s. Not long after the collapse of the movement in 1975, Idris and Mas'ud resurrected the KDP, while other leaders established a variety of other parties. During the Gulf War, the two brothers' KDP waged again a guerrilla war in northern Iraq, with heavy Iranian support, if not actually under Iranian control (cf. van Bruinessen 1986). Idris was killed in 1988. Their elder brother Loqman had in the 1960s also been a guerrilla commander, but preferred after 1970 to remain in Baghdad and no longer involved himself in Kurdish affairs. Ubaydullah was after 1970 even made a cabinet minister, and remained in this function when his father resumed the war against the government in 1974. These two brothers, and also a younger brother, Sabir, and several other relatives who were living in Baghdad, disappeared from view in the early 1980s. It is assumed that they were killed by the regime they were serving.

(16-17) During Shaikh Ahmad's last years, daily affairs at Barzan were taken care of by his son Osman, who by being an intermediary between the pious followers and his father, and also by his character established his popularity among the Barzani common folk. After

Ahmad's death therefore he seemed the most natural and acceptable successor, even though his brother Muhammad Khalid was older and was preferred by Mulla Mustafa. A few days before the war between the Kurdish movement and the government was resumed (in March 1974), Shaikh Osman left Barzan and moved to Baghdad with his closest followers. He never returned to Barzan, and also disappeared in 1982 or 1983, like the other Barzanis in Baghdad. Muhammad Khalid meanwhile had remained in the 'liberated areas' during 1974-5, and took refuge in Iran after the collapse of the movement. He strengthened his ties with Idris and Mas'ud by giving them each a daughter in marriage. He never joined the reorganized KDP, but in June 1985 suddenly joined the war with several hundred followers, armed and supported by Iran, whom he styled 'Hezbollahi Kurdistan'. Together with Iranian army units, his men occupied the most northeastern part of Iraqi Kurdistan and challenged not only the Iraqi army but also the non-Islamic guerrilla groups in northern Iraq.

### Notes to Table III. The shaikhs of Biyare and Tawela

Mudarris (1983) is the most detailed study of these shaikhs and their khalifas.

- (1) Shaikh Osman Saraj ad-Din was Mawlana Khalid's major successor in the Sulaymaniyah region. He belonged to the family of aghas of the twin villages of Biyare and Tawela in Hawraman, east of Sulaymaniyah, just on the Iraqi side of the border. He established cordial relations with Kak Ahmad: the shaikhs initiated each other in their respective *туруқ*. Since that time the shaikhs of this family instruct both the Naqshbandi and (a somewhat 'civilized' version of) the Qadiri paths. The Barzinjis who descend from Kak Ahmad do not, however, instruct the Naqshbandi path.
- (2, 3) In Edmonds' time the cousins Husamuddin (at Tawela) and Alauddin (at Biyare) were among the politically most influential leaders of the area: 'For the former I conceived great respect, for his moral authority was invariably exercised actively in the interests of law and order, ... His cousin, in contrast, was a restless and grasping old man who, while careful to maintain an appearance of co-operation, lost no opportunity of using his pull with the administration in attempts to establish formal title to lands which had been in the possession of unsophisticated villagers for generations; he received a small salary and was quite shameless in his persistent demands to get a rise.' (Edmonds 1957: 156).
- (4) Shaikh Osman moved from Biyare in Iraq in Duru on the Persian side of the border after Qassem's coup, when many landowners in

Iraqi Kurdistan were threatened by the muqawama ash-sha'biyya ('popular resistance forces'). It was in this village of Duru where I twice visited Shaikh Osman (see IV. n). In 1980 his son Madih led a minor army, consisting of the shaikh's followers and armed by Iraq, the *Supay Rizzari*, against Islamic Iran's government forces and rival Kurdish groups.

- (5) Muhammad Amin Kurdi is the author of what is probably the best known and most widely read Naqshbandi treatise of the last century and a half, *Tanwir al-qulub*. He was born in Erbil around 1853 as the son of a Qadiri shaikh, Fathullah Hewleri (Hewler being the Kurdish name for Erbil). He spent a period at Biyare, studying the Naqshbandi tariqa with Shaikh Omar Ziyauddin, whose khalifa he became. He returned to Erbil for some time, then lived in Mecca for ten years (where he had many Indonesian students) and finally settled in Cairo, where he died in 1928-9 (see Mudarris 1983: 565-7).
- (6) His son Najmuddin succeeded him there. A Javanese Naqshbandi shaikh whom I interviewed had studied with Najmuddin (who was then very old) in the late 1960s.

### Notes to Table IV: Naqshbandi shaikhs in the Jazira

This table is based on a number of silsilas that I collected. I am not sure as to whether all vertical links in the major family tree are genealogical. The cognomen of the second Khalid indicates that he belonged to the Zibari tribe; therefore he must have been a khalifa of the preceding shaikh rather than a son.

- (1) Khalid Jazari was one of Mawlana Khalid's first khalifas in central Kurdistan. He established himself in the village of Besret, northwest of Cizre, where also his successors were to remain, until Brahim Haqqi left it for Syria. Khalid Jazari exercised great influence and had many students, among them Fehim and Sibghatullah Arvasi (Table V).
- (2) Brahim Haqqi left Besret for northeastern Syria after the closure of the tekiyes and the persecution of the shaikhs in Turkey. He established a reputation of great holiness.
- (3) His khalifa Shaikh Seyda did not flee but remained in Cizre and came to an understanding with the Turkish authorities. He had a wide influence among the tribes of southeastern Turkey and a great reputation as a clairvoyant. His murshid Brahim Haqqi so respected Seyda that he sent his own children to study at Seyda's feet.
- (4) Shaikh Elwan has a khanaqa in the village of Helwa, near Dugir in the Syrian Jazira. A khatma I attended there is described in IV. j.
- (5) Ahmad Kaftar has for many years been the chief mufti of Syria. He was the only one whose name was sometimes mentioned when I

asked whether the present Kurdish Naqshbandis recognize anyone as Mawlana Khalid's legitimate successor. Many others vigorously denied his having such a position, and emphasized that he was 'just a government official'.

### Notes to Table V: The ghawth of Khizzan and his khalifas

Much interesting information on Shaikh Sibghatullah and his major khalifas, down to Ahmad Ghaznawi, may be found in a recent book of 'Sacred Sayings of Naqshbandi Shaikhs' (Uçar 1983).

- (1) Shaikh Sibghatullah became widely known as 'the ghawth', the most holy of contemporary shaikhs. He belonged to a well-known and much respected family of sayyids that descended from Mulla Muhammad Arvasi, an early 18th-century Naqshbandi shaikh of wide renown. The family produced many leading 'ulama. Sibghatullah studied with various Naqshbandi shaikhs, and finally settled in the village of Khizan near Bitlis, which was to remain the residence of his descendants (see also Uyan 1983: 1812-22).
- (2) Fehim accompanied his older cousin Sibghatullah on his travels to various shaikhs in Kurdistan (see also Uyan 1983: 771-817). He settled in the family village of Arvas, and was one of the teachers of Abdulhakim Arvasi (Table II, no 7).
- (3) Jalaluddin is said to have led, during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, a party of 30,000 Kurds on a plundering foray as far as Bayezid (Dickson, 1910: 370).
- (4) Shaikh Shihabuddin led a pan-Islamic revolt (with Kurdish nationalist overtones) against the Young Turks in 1912 or 1913. Other leaders were a Shaikh (or Mela) Selim and a Shaikh Ali, also from Khizan. Many chieftains had previously promised support, but failed to give it when necessary. The revolt was suppressed, and the leaders took refuge in the Russian consulate at Bitlis. At the outbreak of World War I, the Turks took the consulate; the rebels were hanged. (Reports on this revolt are all contradictory; see Nikitine (1956): 195; Chirguh: 19; Safrastian: 74; Jwaideh: 328/9; Turkish newspaper *Dünya*, June 4, 1977).
- (5) Salahuddin was the shaikh of Khizan in the time of the great rebellions. He did not participate directly in Shaikh Sa'id's rebellion but was reported to be in rebellion later in the same year (1925). After the amnesty of 1928 he returned to Khizan, and abstained from further oppositional activities, collaborating with the government instead. He was temporarily given authority over the entire district. In the 1950s he was active in politics through the Democratic Party, in which he was one of the group supporting a moderate brand of Kurdish nationalism. His sons did not succeed to

shaikhhood but chose modern political careers. Kamran became a senator, and once even became a vice-secretary general of NATO (he is considered as one of the staunchest pro-Americans in Turkey); he was a cabinet minister in the right-wing National Front government that governed Turkey from August to December 1977. His brother Abidin was a member of parliament for the province of Bitlis. The family has large landholdings in several parts of northern Kurdistan.

- (6) Shaikh Ziyaaddin (1856-1924) is usually called 'the Hazrat (an honorific title, "His Holiness") of Nurşin' (a village between Muş and Bitlis). The Hazrat was a man of exemplary holiness, with no interest in (nationalist) politics; his nephew and successor, Ma'sum, though sympathizing with the nationalist cause, always managed to stay aloof when anything serious was going on (such as Shaikh Sa'id's revolt of 1925).
- (7) Shaikh Muhammad Isa is not a practising shaikh but a Kurdish politician. His father Mahmud, khalifa of the Hazrat of Nurşin (while the grandfather had been a khalifa of the Hazrat's murshid Fathullah) was an influential shaikh among his own tribe, the Cibran. Because of the involvement of this tribe in Shaikh Sa'id's rebellion, Mahmud and his family fled to Syria. The family settled in Derbasiye. Muhammad Isa was, in 1957, one of the founders of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria. When Barzani wished to bring this independent party more under his control, he used the shaikh to this end, forcing a split in that party.
- (8) Shaikh Muhammad Selim of Hezan, another khalifa of the Hazrat, was the only shaikh of the region who actively turned against Shaikh Sa'id's rebellion.
- (9) Ahmad Ghiznawi (thus called after the village of Ghizna close to the present family palace at Tell Ma'ruf in the Syrian Jazira) is the best known, and most influential of the Hazrat's khalifas. Shaikh Ahmad had come to Syria after the closure of the tekiyes in Turkey. Large numbers of the murids of local Qadiri shaikhs suddenly flocked to Ahmad's side, which produced jealousies and hatred amongst the Qadiri shaikhs who saw their following and sources of income thus dwindle. They engaged in a fierce propaganda campaign against him, accusing him of heterodoxies and even of unbelief, but without much effect. For several decades he exercised a virtually unrivalled influence in northeastern Syria, among both Arabs and Kurds. Due to the rapid socio-economic developments his influence has much declined now, but he still has many adherents in Turkey, where he makes tours of several months every year. The publication, in Istanbul, of a voluminous hagiography of Shaikh Ahmad and his predecessors (Uçan 1983) is an indication of the interest he arouses also among the literate.
- (10) Muhammad Rashid (called Raşit Efendi in the Turkish press)



emerged in the early 1980s as the most spectacularly successful Naqshbandi shaikh in Turkey. His father Abdulkhakim had been Ahmad Ghiznawi's khalifa in Adiyaman. Muhammad Rashid not only increased his following in Adiyaman and other Kurdish districts but also made many converts in Turkey's Aegean region especially, it is said, among people who had previously led dissolute lives and had little knowledge of, nor interest in, Islam. In 1983 the government, alarmed at his rapidly growing influence, sent him into exile to Çanakkale in European Turkey and prohibited contacts with his followers (see also Algar 1985: 182, 191).

### Notes to Table VI: The shaikhs of Palu

These shaikhs became widely known for their involvement in the 1925 rebellion in Turkish Kurdistan, which is discussed in Chapter V.

The family has been established in the Palu region (north of Diyarbakir) as religious leaders since its ancestor Hacı Huseyn settled and opened a tekiye there. Hacı Huseyn was a Qadiri shaikh, born in Sulaymaniyah (and therefore possibly a member of the Barzinji family). Leaving Silemani, he had lived in Damascus and later in the Diyarbekir region. His son and grandson, who succeeded him there as Qadiri shaikhs were apparently rather inconspicuous. A change occurred when the next successor, Ali, was initiated in the Naqshbandi order (Rondot 1937: 46).

- (1) Shaikh Ali seems to have achieved more political prominence than his ancestors. His rise coincides with the emergence of shaikhs as political leaders all over Kurdistan. In his youth, Ali had studied in the cities of Diyarbakir and Cizre. In the latter city he met one of Mawlana Khalid's khalifas, Shaikh Ahmad of Erbil. In due time Shaikh Ahmad initiated him in the Naqshbandiya, whereupon Ali travelled to Damascus for further studies at the feet of Mawlana Khalid himself. (Thus Rondot, one of my informants, himself a Naqshbandi shaikh, claimed that Ali was initiated not by Shaikh Ahmad but by Mawlana Khalid's half-brother, Shaikh Mahmud Sahib and did not meet Khalid himself). Finally Ali was sent back by his master to the Palu region to organize the order there. Because of conflicts with government officials he had to move further east, to the Muş and Bitlis regions. He won over several Qadiri shaikhs of this region (khalifas of his ancestors?) to the Naqshbandiya, and retired towards the end of his life to Palu (Rondot 1937: 46).
- (2) His grandson Sa'id had great influence among the Zaza-speaking tribes of the districts north and northeast of Diyarbakir, and further

increased his social standing by marrying into the leading family of the powerful Cibran tribe. The other Naqshbandi shaikhs of these districts recognized Sa'id as their superior. These shaikhs, as well as Sa'id's brothers and sons, played leading roles in the 1925 rebellion (see Chapter V).

- (3) Shaikh Salahuddin returned, after a long period of exile abroad, to Turkey and settled in Palu again. In the 1970s he again exerted wide influence, and was therefore courted by political parties (of the right and extreme right). He and his family kept a safe distance from Kurdish nationalism, and for some time the family was even associated with the pan-Turk, fascist Nationalist Action Party. Salahuddin died in September 1979. His burial, reported in the Turkish press, drew many thousands of devotees.

## Some Oriental Terms Frequently Used In This Book

The words are given in the form in which they occur in the text, which is the Arabic for terms used throughout the Middle East, the Turkish for terms referring to the Ottoman Empire, and the Kurdish for specifically Kurdish terms. In brackets the corresponding forms in Kurdish c.q. Arabic are given.

*agha* (K: *aṣḥa*): chieftain (of tribe or section thereof).

*baraka* (K: *bereket*): blessing, especially as carried by anything that is or has been in contact with a saint.

*bavik*: shallow lineage.

*beg*: 'feudal' lord: chieftain invested with an office as governor.

*beglerbegi* (Ott. *Emp.*): governor of large province (*eyalet* or *beglerbegilik*, consisting of a number of *sanjaqs*).

*dervish* (K: *derweş*): someone following a spiritual discipline, be it as a 'begging monk', be it as a member of one of the mystical orders. In Kurdistan the term is generally reserved for disciples of the Qadiri order.

*eşir*, *eşiret* (Ar: *ashīra*): tribe, both in the organizational sense and as a 'caste' setting itself apart from non-tribal subjects.

*eyalet*: large Ottoman province, consisting of a number of *sanjaqs*.

*Ekrad begligi*: 'Kurdish sanjaq', province incorporated in the Ottoman Empire, where governorship is hereditary within a Kurdish ruling family.

*fatwa* (Ar: *fatwa*): (religious) decree, issued by an expert of canonical law (*müfti*) in answer to a concrete legal question posed to him.

*ijāza*: permission, especially to teach the doctrine and method of a *tariqa*.

*jizya*: poll-tax paid by non-Muslim subjects in Muslim countries.

*keramet* (Ar: *karāma*, pl. *karāmāt*): special graces (received from God), especially the power to perform miracles.

*khalīfa* (K: *xelife*): 'deputy', a person who has received from a shaikh the permission (*ijāza*) to teach a *tariqa*.

*kḥānaqā* (K: *xaneqa*): place where dervishes and sufis hold their ritual meetings. In Kurdistan the terms *xaneqa* and *tekiye* are used as synonyms.

*kharāj*: 1. (*kharāj-i erziye*): a tax paid on land originally held by non-Muslims. 2. = *jizye*.

*khatma* (K: *xatime*): the ritual meeting of the Naqshbandi order (the Arabic dictionary meaning is: 'recital of the entire Qur'an').

*khutba*: 'sermon' in the Friday prayer.

*Mahdī*: the Islamic Messiah-figure.

*majlis* (K: *meclis*): 'gathering': the ritual meeting of the members of a mystical order.

*mezheb* (Ar: *madhhab*): one of the four basic schools of religious law and ritual practice, systematizing the rulings laid down in the Qur'an and the Traditions.

*mezin*: 'great', 'old': elder of (small) tribe or lineage.

*miskén* (Ar. *miskīn*): 'poor', 'submissive', 'servile'. Term used in southern Kurdistan to denote the subject (non-tribal) peasantry.

*mir* (Ar. *amīr*): ruler of semi-independent principality (emirate).

*murīd* (K: *mirid*): 'disciple': follower of a shaikh, both in a narrow and in a very general sense.

*murshid* (K: *mirşid*): 'teacher', 'instructor': someone who instructs in a specific *tariqa*, generally the shaikh of an order.

*müfti*: expert on (religious) law.

*naqib ül-eshraf*: representative and administrator of the *seyyids* of a certain district.

*ojaqliq*: autonomous district in the Ottoman part of Kurdistan, under its own ruling family, paying no tribute to the treasury and not regularly contributing soldiers to the sultan's armies.

*qadi*: judge in a court of (religious) law.

*qebile* (Ar: *qabīla*): (small) tribe, subtribe.

*reyet* (Ar: *ra'a*, pl. *ra'āyā*): 'flock': the tax-paying subjects; originally the non-Muslims in Muslim empires, later all those who did not belong to the military class. In Kurdistan the term is used especially for the non-tribal subject peasantry.

*sanjaq*: 'standard': administrative territorial unit in the Ottoman Empire (province), governed by an appointed *sanjaqbegi*.

*seyyid*: descendant of the prophet Muhammad.

*shahada*: Muslim confession of faith: 'lā ilāha illā 'illāh, Muhammadan rasūlu 'llāh' (there is no God but God, Muhammad is the prophet of God).

*shaikh* (K: *şex*): 'old man'. In Arabic this term has a wide range of meanings, but in Kurdistan it only denotes saintly persons, especially the heads of the mystical orders.

*shariat* (Ar. *shar'*, *sharī'a*): the canonical law of Islam.

*silsila*: 'chain': spiritual pedigree, chain of transmission of a spiritual path.

- sipahi* (Ott. Emp.): member of the 'feudal' cavalry, granted with a 'fief' as a reward for his services.
- sūfī* (K: *sofī*): mystic. In Kurdistan the term is generally used for members of the Naqshbandi order, but also for old and pious men.
- taife* (Ar: *tā'ifa*): tribe, clan, brotherhood (term used for tribes and their subdivisions as well as the dervish orders).
- tariqa* (pl. *turūq*; K: *teriqet*): spiritual path: a mystical method or system associated with a great Sufi master. Around most of the *turūq*, orders emerged that adopted the name of the *tariqa*; with one *tariqa*, however, a relatively large number of only loosely related orders may be associated. In common parlance the term is also used for the orders, not for the path only.
- tekiye*: originally a dervish lodge. Synonymous with *khānaqā* now, at least in Kurdistan.
- timar*: 'fief' granted as a reward for military services by the sultan (or the beglerbegi) to a *sipahi* or (in later times) civil official.
- tire*: section of a tribe.
- tobe* (Ar: *tawba*): 'penitence': a forswearing of all past sins and declaration of intent to lead a pure and sinless life. Required before entrance into an order.
- turūq*: plural of *tariqa*.
- vālī*: governor of a large province (in Ott. Emp. identical with *beglerbegi*).
- yurtluq*: identical with *ojaqliq*.
- zīkr* (Ar: *dhikr*): 'remembrance': recitation of God's name or short pious formulas, either mentally (among the Naqshbandis) or aloud (as among the Qadiris and many other dervish orders).

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The following abbreviations are used:

|                         |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>AA</i>               | <i>American Anthropologist</i>                                                  |
| <i>BSOS (BSOAS)</i>     | <i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>                   |
| <i>BTTD</i>             | <i>Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi</i> (Journal of Turkish History in Documents) |
| <i>E.I.<sup>1</sup></i> | <i>Enzyklopädie des Islam</i> , 1st edition                                     |
| <i>E.I.<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edition                                     |
| <i>GJ</i>               | <i>Geographical Journal</i>                                                     |
| <i>IJMES</i>            | <i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>                          |
| <i>JA</i>               | <i>Journal Asiatique</i>                                                        |
| <i>JCAS</i>             | <i>Journal of the Central Asian Society</i>                                     |
| <i>JESHO</i>            | <i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>                 |
| <i>JRAI</i>             | <i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>                           |
| <i>JRAS</i>             | <i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>                                     |
| <i>JRGS</i>             | <i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i>                                |
| <i>MEJ</i>              | <i>The Middle East Journal</i>                                                  |
| <i>MW</i>               | <i>The Muslim World</i>                                                         |
| <i>REI</i>              | <i>Revue des Études Islamiques</i>                                              |
| <i>RHR</i>              | <i>Revue de L'Histoire des Religions</i>                                        |
| <i>RMM</i>              | <i>Revue du Monde Musulman</i>                                                  |
| <i>SI</i>               | <i>Studia Islamica</i>                                                          |
| <i>SWJA</i>             | <i>Southwestern Journal of Anthropology</i>                                     |
| <i>WZKM</i>             | <i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>                        |
| <i>ZDMG</i>             | <i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>                  |

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