1

Kurdistan

A Geographic and Environmental Threshold

They bloom/Blood red roses/As snow falls/And Karacadağ mountain sways/And the highlands sway . . ./See, my moustache is frozen/And I feel the chill, too/The dead of winter lingers on and on/I think of you as springtime/I think of you as Diyarbekir/So much it can triumph over/The taste of thinking of you.[1]

These passages from "Notes from Diyarbekir Fortress and the Lullaby for Baby Adiloş" by poet Ahmed Arif (1927–91) conjure the landscapes of Ottoman Kurdistan. On the region's plains, it is already spring and flowers bloom everywhere, while in the uplands the snow blows down from the famous Karacadağ Mountain and scatters across its sloping pastures. Arif, who was born and raised in Diyarbakir by a Kurdish mother and a Turcoman father from Kirkuk, conveys an embedded understanding of the diverse ecological niches of Kurdistan, from the lower plains to the lofty pastures and high mountains. The concept of "landscape trilogy" developed in this chapter builds from this starting point of Arif's environmental imagination.

This chapter explores the ecological diversity of Ottoman Kurdistan across the three major zones evoked by Arif: mountains, pastures, and

[1] Açar/Kan kırmızı yediverenler/Ve kar yağar bir yandan/Savrulur Karacadağ/Savrulur zozan . . ./ Bak, bıyığım buz tutu/Üşüyorum da/Zemheri de uzadıkça uzadı/Seni, baharmışın gibi düşünüyorum/Seni, Diyarbekir gibi/Nelere, nelere baskın gelmez ki/Seni düşünmenin tadı. Translated into English by Nazım Dikbaş. I am grateful to Nazım Dikbaş for giving a voice to Ahmed Arif in English. Ahmed Arif, *Hasretinden Prangalar Eskittim*, 40. Yıl Özel Basımı (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2008), 93–101.

plains. Kurdistan lies unevenly between today's Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria (Figure 1.1).[2] The northern edge reaches toward the Caucasus region and the Iranian borderlands, while the southern edge comprises part of what has historically been known as northern Mesopotamia. Figure 1.1 reveals a region characterized by a highly varied topography, including the mountainous northern and northeastern areas, and the low-lying south. The Taurus Mountain range, which runs eastward along the Mediterranean coast of Anatolia and eventually joins the Zagros Mountains in Iran, divides the region and connects the mountainous north to the low-lying south. There are dozens of fertile plains, most stretching east to west, and many river valleys dotted with pastures and arable land. The major commercial and administrative cities, including Diyarbekir, Erzurum, Harput, and Mardin, are in the plains. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers meander along the farmlands, and Karacadağ, an inactive volcano with an elevation of 1,950 m, forms a recognizable physical feature in the middle of the region. Further south, the elevation decreases dramatically with a broad plateau and dry lands stretching down to Aleppo in Syria and Mosul in Iraq.[3]

The total surface of Ottoman Kurdistan is roughly 335,000 square km (129,000 square miles), an area larger than Italy, and stretching 650 km (403 miles) east to west and 500 km (310 miles) north to south. The average (mean) elevation of the region is 1,889 m, with a minimum of –20 m below sea level and a maximum of 4,768 m above sea level. Forty-four percent of the land is lowland (0–1,000 m), 18 percent is highland (1,000–1,500 m), 28 percent is mountainous highlands (1,500+ m), and 11 percent of the region is uninhabitable mountains. Thus, more than two-thirds of Kurdistan consists of mountains and pastures, while plains viable for agriculture represent less than one-third of the terrain.[4]

[2] 39°N and 36°N latitude and 38°E and 43°E longitude. For Kurdistan and its geographical boundaries, see Martin van Bruinessen and Hendrik Boeschoten, eds., *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir: The Relevant Section of the Seyahatname* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 51–54.

[3] Murat Türkeş, "Kuraklık, Çölleşme ve Birleşmiş Milletler Çölleşme Ile Savaşım Sözleşmesi'nin Ayrıntılı Bir Çözümlemesi," *Marmara Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 20, no. 1 (2012): 7–56.

[4] Plains range from 400 to 1,200 m in elevation and are located within 5 km of a river or aquifer.

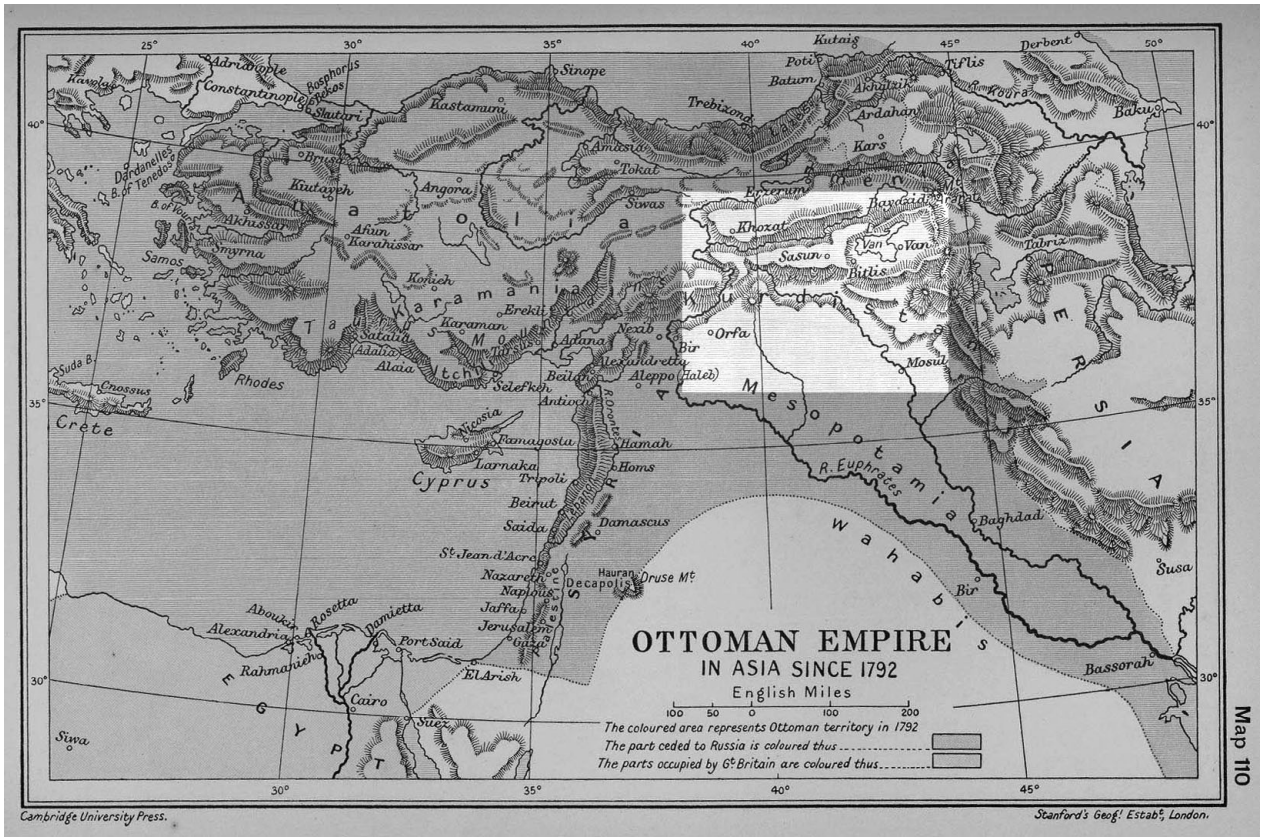


FIGURE 1.1 Kurdistan within the Ottoman Empire. Courtesy of University of Texas at Austin.

Ottoman Kurdistan was a distinct ecological threshold in the Middle East, an area in "which relatively rapid change occurs from one ecological condition to another."[5] Geographically and environmentally, it is distinctive: neither as flat nor as arid as neighboring central Anatolia, nor as mountainous as western Iran. Ottoman Kurdistan's mountains, pastures, and plains, and each contains distinct sub-ecological zones – including hilly farmlands, deep river valleys, and arid grasslands – with assorted flora and fauna. Like other parts of the Middle East, in Ottoman Kurdistan the urban-commercial, agrarian, and herding communities lived in proximity, sharing available food and water resources in shifting patterns based on seasonal migration across the three ecological zones.[6]

In this ecologically, economically, and ethnoreligiously diverse region of the Ottoman Empire, geography, intercommunal relations, and modern state formation were entangled during the transformations of the mid-nineteenth century. Kurdistan's geographic peculiarities are vital to understanding not only how the region's diverse communities interacted before the environmental crisis of the mid-nineteenth century, but also how state encroachment influenced the social, economic, and political fabric of everyday life in the region. This chapter begins by demonstrating the crucial role of geographic proximity in shaping agrarian and herding relations in the history of late Ottoman Kurdistan, including regional political economy, socioeconomic structures, and intercommunal relations. I argue that the region is marked by three distinct ecological zones, which differ from each other in terms of elevation, climate, vegetation, and both human and animal habitation. The chapter then shows the encroachment of the Ottoman state and the multifaceted consequences this had in the region. I examine the arrival of the Tanzimat state to Kurdistan and the ways in which this arrival expanded the capacity of Ottoman governance in the region while generating long-term socioeconomic and political disputes between ethnoreligious communities. Next, I draw a demographic portrait of the region, depicting how human beings brought different

[5] Andrew F. Bennett and James Q. Radford, "Know Your Ecological Thresholds," *Thinking Bush* 2 (2003): 1.

[6] J. R. McNeill, "The Eccentricity of the Middle East and North Africa's Environmental History," in *Water on Sand: Environmental Histories of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Alan Mikhail (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33–41.

ecosystems into conversation with one another. I argue that pastoralism, a unique form of human ecological adaptation, sustained the conversation between geographic zones into the nineteenth century, creating linkages and slippages between mountains, pastures, and plains, and defining the interaction between the three zones until these links begin to weaken in the face of a series of environmental crises. The chapter concludes with a glimpse into five villages from different parts of the region. Witnessing the varieties of rural life shaped by geography and the environment emphasizes different forms of socioeconomic interactions and collaborations between communities, and establishes a framework for making sense of the scale of transformations in the region in the subsequent decades of environmental change.

THE LANDSCAPE TRILOGY: MOUNTAINS, PASTURES, AND PLAINS

The Mountains

In terms of physical scale, the mountains comprise the largest ecological zone in Ottoman Kurdistan, covering almost two-thirds of the terrain.[7] They include multiple ecological niches, incorporating both agrarian and herding zones in addition to forests and volcanic lakes.[8] As shown in Figure 1.2, 11 percent are uninhabitable, characterized by rough terrain and steep slopes greater than 30 degrees, making them impassable for humans and domesticated animals. From south to north, Ottoman Kurdistan's mountain system can be divided into four major sites:[9] (1) the Southeastern (SE) Taurus;[10] (2) the lower depression

[7] I consider mountains to be ecological spaces inhabited by humans as well as domesticated and wild animals, and used for both cultivation and grazing. I adopt Wolf Dieter Hütteroth's definition of the mountains as "transition zone[s] between winter-warm plains of Upper Mesopotamia and the winter-cold Armenian highlands," with a height of 1,500–3,000 m or higher. Wolf Dieter Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus* (Marburg: Selbstverlag des Geographischen Institutes der Universität Marburg, 1959), 25.

[8] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern*, 25.

[9] Sırrı Erinç, Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1953).

[10] SE Taurus comprises the southern end of Kurdistan's mountain system. This system curves from Elbistan in the west to the southern part of Lake Van, down to northern Iraq in the east, and passes through Malatya, Maden, Akdağ, and Muş. Erinç, Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası.

FIGURE 1.2 Topography of Ottoman Kurdistan. Map credit: Aaron Bair.

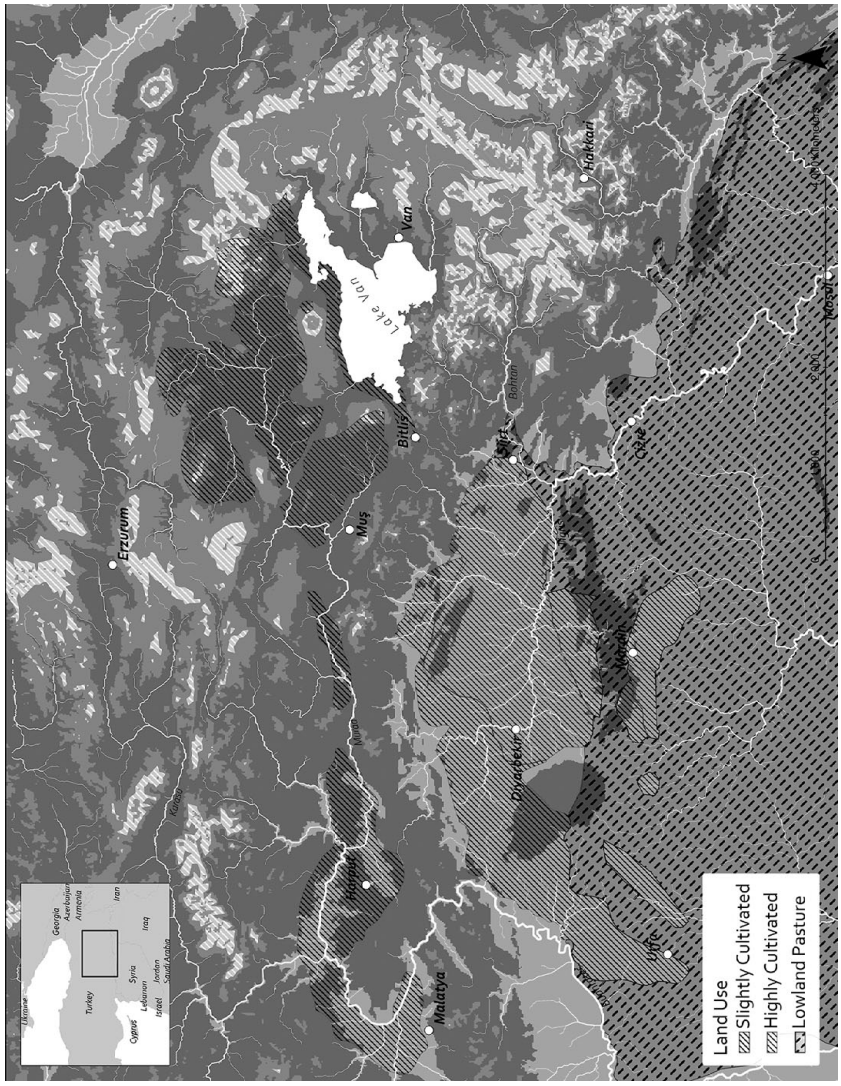


FIGURE 1.3 Land-use patterns in Ottoman Kurdistan. Map credit: Aaron Bair.

chain;[11] (3) the Karasu-Aras mountain range;[12] and (4) the upper depression chain.[13]

Temperature and precipitation in the mountains are influenced by altitude. The mountains in the western Armenian highlands are distinguished above all by their severe winter temperatures, while southern Lake Van has more mild temperatures.[14] Historian and geographer Wolf Dieter Hütteroth argues that this wide range of winter temperatures reflects the existence of different climatic zones within Ottoman Kurdistan, which are extremely important for the local subsistence economy.[15] In the mountains, precipitation varies both regionally and seasonally. In general, precipitation levels are high during the winter and early spring, and low in summer. Annual precipitation in Van, for example, is 396.3 mm, while only 30.9 mm falls in the summer. At higher altitudes, almost 75 percent of precipitation occurs as snow during the winter months, with limited rainfall in the late spring and occasionally in summer. Usually, in the mountains, snowfall commences in early November and does not entirely disappear until early June or as late as August in some areas. The mountain ranges in the lower depression chain, particularly Bitlis and Çapakçur/Bingöl, have the highest annual precipitation in Ottoman Kurdistan, with 1,046.6 mm and 948.4 mm, respectively, primarily (95 percent) as snowfall in winter. Heavy snowfalls in the Kurdish mountains feed the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and their tributaries, ensuring water resources for drinking, irrigation, and grazing in

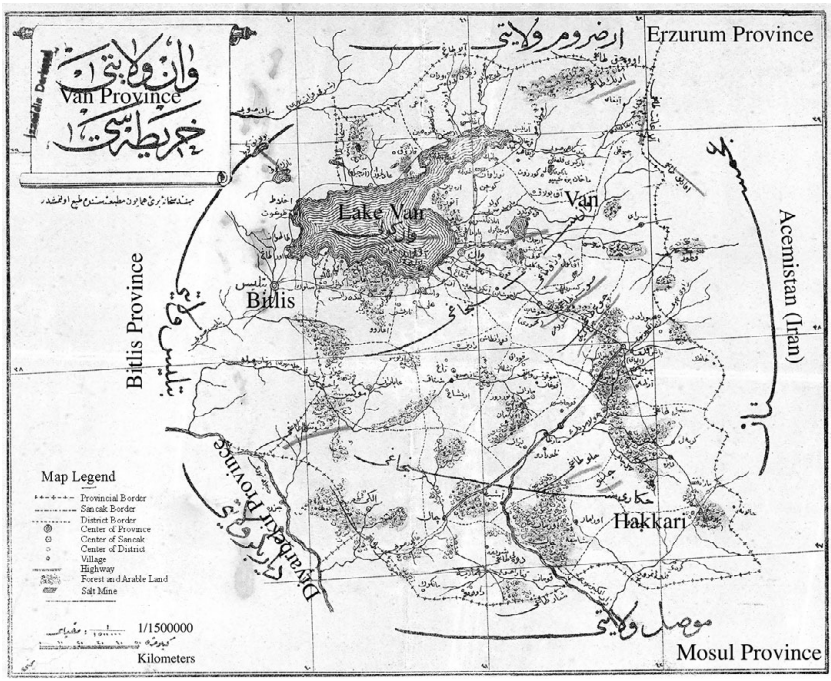
[11] This mountain site is located in Malatya, Çapakçur, Muş, Havasor (Gürpınar), and the Gever Basin. The highest point here is the Herakol Dağı at 3,000 m, located south of Pervari, while the lower eastern mountains of the plateau range from 1,600 to 2,000 m. Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im mittleren kurdischen Taurus*., 22. During the nineteenth century, these bases encompassed numerous mountain villages and their extensive grasslands.

[12] Here the average elevation is about 3,000 m. Its eastern basins contain many wide, lofty plateaus and five inactive volcanoes: Ararat, Aladağ, Nemrut, Süphan, and Tendürek. The pasturelands that skirt these inactive volcanoes provide sufficient food and water for nomads and their herds. Historically, these pasturelands were exploited by Kurdish pastoralists. They also attracted agrarian communities with its diverse landscape including lofty ranges and river valleys. Erinç, *Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası*, 5–6. Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im mittleren kurdischen Taurus*., 22–23.

[13] Erinç, *Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası*, 6–7.

[14] The city of Erzurum, for example, has a mean January temperature of −9.1°C, with an extreme minimum temperature of −36°C. Van, on the other hand, has a mean January temperature of −3.1°C, with lows reaching −28.7°C.

[15] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 25.



Van Province: It comprises 47,700 Square Kilometers and a population of 450,000. The province has been divided into two main administrative units [*sancak*], namely Van and Hakkari. The Sancak of Van is constituted of eight districts, including Karçikan, Şatak, Kevaş (Vastan), Adilcevaz, Erciş, Bargiri (Bargisikale), Meks (Mükûs). The Sancak of Hakkari is constituted of six districts, namely Çolemerik, Gevar (Dize), Şemdinan (Nehri), Mahmudi, Hoşab (Saray), Mamurtülhamid, Beytüşşebab (Aşit). In the province, postal and telegraph services are carried out in nine locations namely Van, Hamidiye, Başkale, Çolemrik, Dize, Vastan, Karçikan, Adilcevaz, Erçiş while İmadiye, Davudiye, Meks, Şatak, Bargiri has only postal service.

FIGURE 1.4 Forests and arable land in the province of Van. Courtesy of İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Atatürk Kitaplığı, *Hrt.1308*.

Kurdistan, Syria, and Iraq.[16] Without the snow, the nutritious and high-calorie meadow grasses in the Kurdish pastures would not bloom.

The mountains are home to diverse species of grasses, herbaceous or leafy plants, short scrub bushes, and forests. Oak scrub forests are the most common: provincial maps that mark forests suggest that during the late nineteenth century about 10–15 percent of Kurdistan's mountains were forested (see Figure 1.4).[17] In some parts of the mountains, the forest extends to lower altitudes, particularly in areas with gentler slopes where the forests were cleared to make way for farmland.[18] Elevation and

[16] For a history of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers see, Faisal Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan: The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
[17] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 29.
[18] Hütteroth, 29.

degree of slope are important factors in demarcating forest boundaries in the region. In Kurdistan, steep slopes and deep canyons and valleys formed natural barriers to human and animal access and allowed for the development of "high forests, where the oak grows several m[eters] high and form[s] quite gnarled trunks."[19] Such "forest islands" of oak are very common in the eastern and mid sections of the region.[20] In addition to oak, juniper trees and different species of wild fruit trees also grew on the slopes.[21]

In spaces where mountain forests were degraded by anthropogenic activities, a type of thorny vegetation known as Astragalus often appeared, preventing soil erosion with its dense, deep roots, and providing feed for livestock.[22] In the interior mountain basins, particularly in areas where water was scarce, xerophytic species – that is, plants that could survive in dry environments – were predominant and the ground cover, according to Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, usually fell below 10 percent.[23] Where water shortages occurred in summer, the level of xerophytic species covering the ground could increase by up to 50 percent. In the eastern mountains, particularly to the south of Lake Van, these "thorny, spiny" grass species were a "secondary" type of vegetation that emerged as a result of deforestation.[24]

In Kurdistan, people and animals inhabited the mountains both permanently and temporarily. The average size of the scattered mountain villages was smaller than settlements on the plains, with less than fifty households. Mountain livestock populations, however, were relatively high, as herders and agro-pastoral peasants could support large numbers of sheep, goat, cattle, buffalo, water buffalo, and donkeys on the abundant and nutritious grasslands in the area. During the summer, early spring, and fall, the highland pastures across the mountains were inhabited by pastoralists and agro-pastoral peasants with their millions

[19] Hütteroth, 29.
[20] Particularly in Bohtan, Şırnak Hakkari, Eruh, Bitlis, Lice, Bingöl and Dersim.
[21] TNA: WO 33/298, Secret Military Report on Eastern Turkey in Asia, vol. IV. Middle Euphrates Valley. Country from the Gulf of Alexandretta towards Erzerum and Bitlis. Compiled for the Intelligence Department, War Office, by Lieut-Colonel F. K. Maunsell, R.A., Military Attaché, Constantinople. 1904, p. 9; Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 29. These areas were Çatak, Narli, Bitlis, and Siirt.
[22] M. Sıtkı Kıvçak, "Astragalus – Geven," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Orman Fakültesi Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (1956): 76–79. *Gîni/Ginî* in Kurdish and *Geven* in Turkish.
[23] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 30.
[24] Hütteroth, 30.

of herd animals. The availability of pasturelands in the mountains, and the extent to which they could be exploited, depended on five key environmental factors: forest cover, elevation, slope angles, soil type, and availability of fresh water. The next section will explore these pasturelands, the second component of Kurdistan's landscape trilogy.

The Pastures

In the *Kurmanji* dialect of Kurdish, *germiyan*, *zozan*, *zom/zome/zoma*, and *war* all refer to pasturelands as ecological zones suitable for grazing herd animals and temporary habitation by people and herd animals. However, suitability for animal grazing does not mean these zones are ecologically uniform. Environmentally, they are distinct from each other in terms of elevation, vegetation, the degree of slope in the terrain, precipitation, and exposure to sunlight. As in the mountains, pastoralists and agro-pastoral peasants and their livestock connect these different pasture ecosystems.

Two major pasture ranges covered about 30–40 percent of Ottoman Kurdistan (see Figures 1.3 and 1.5): the low pastoral core in the south and southwest (average altitude 500–600 m), and the high grasslands in the middle, east, and northeast (average altitude 1,500–1,800 m, occasionally as high as 2,500–3,000 m).[25] In Kurdistan, highland and lowland pastures are in two different climatic zones.[26] While lowland pastures are generally characterized by wet mild winters and hot dry summers, highland pastures often experience heavy snowfalls in winter and cooler summers.[27] Precipitation in the form of rain and snow determines both the availability of water and the quantity and quality of pasture vegetation. As Figure 1.4 displays, the highland pastures have an abundance of water resources compared to the southern lowland pastures, primarily owing to heavy snowfall in the mountains that feeds dozens of streams in the highland pastures as it gradually melts between May and September.

[25] Besalet Pamay, "Doğu Anadolu ve Orman Durumu," *Istanbul Üniversitesi Orman Fakültesi Dergisi* 16, no. 2 (1966): 1.

[26] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 37.

[27] For example, in Cezire (400 m), located in the northern Mesopotamian steppe on the left bank of the Tigris River, annual precipitation is 680 mm; 400 mm falls in winter, and the area reaches 38–40°C in July. In Çatak (1,500 m), situated on the southeastern side of Lake Van, annual precipitation is 400–570 mm, and mean temperature is 11.3°C. Çatak's highland pastures are usually under snow for 110–150 days of the year.

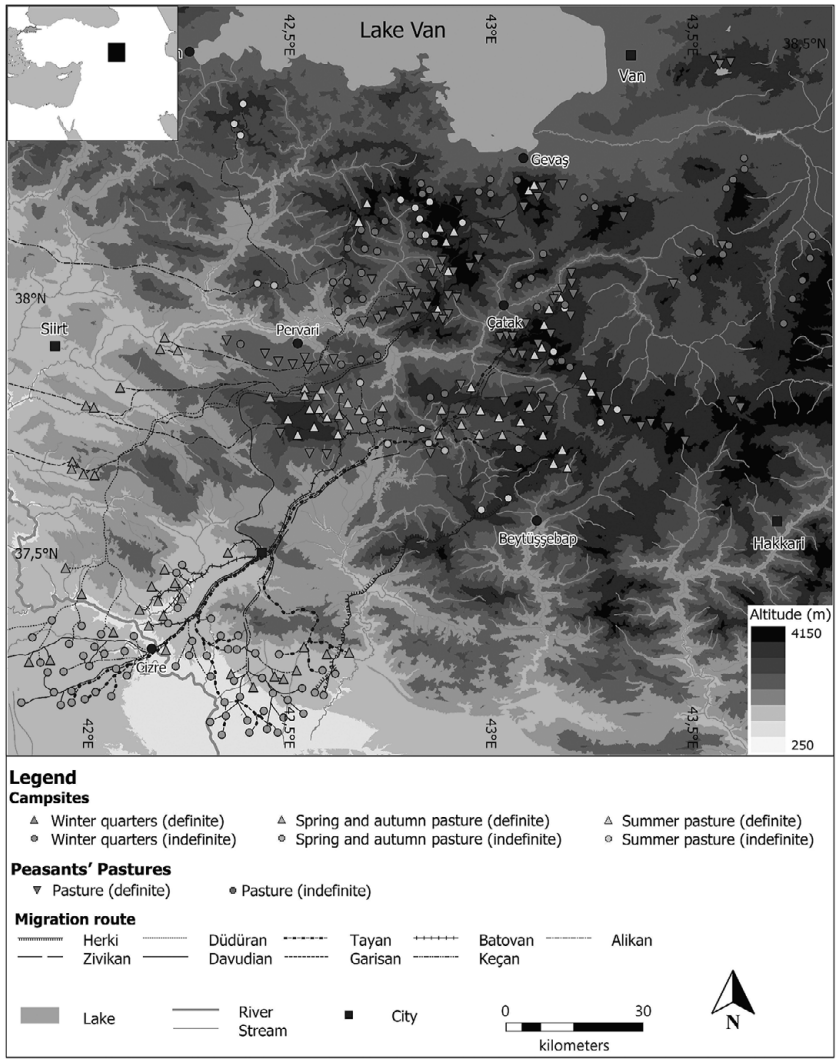


FIGURE 1.5 Pastures of Kurdish pastoralists, their annual migration, and agro-pastoral peasants' pasturelands. Adapted from Wolf Dieter Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus* (Marburg: Selbstverlag des Geographischen Institutes der Universität Marburg, 1959), map I.

Though the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers run along the western and eastern edges of the lowland pasture zone, only a small portion of these pastures were able to use their water as the areas closest to the rivers were occupied mostly by agriculturalists and their farmlands. In the lowland

pastures, fresh water for pastoralists and their animals was mostly sourced from small streams and numerous wells.[28]

Vegetation, elevation, and precipitation rates vary greatly across the lowland and highland pastures, and the quantity and quality of grass species are heavily dependent on annual rainfall. During the nineteenth century, rich grazing lands and nutritious grasses of "endless variety,"[29] including festuca and wheat grass, could be found throughout northern Mesopotamia.[30] The ground was generally covered with wildflowers by mid May,[31] following the end of the snowmelt, and with lush grasses in June and July. Historical documents indicate that in all seasons a few showers were enough to turn brown lowland pastures in northern Mesopotamia green.[32] In the lowland pastures, an assortment of grasses was available from November to April, but vegetation was not as rich or as diverse as in the highlands due to the severe lack of rain that generally lasted six to seven months of the year.[33] Drought-resistant species with deep roots and fuzzy leaves constituted the majority of vegetation outside of valleys, or what geographer Baki Kasaplıgil describes as islands of forests and orchards within the lowland pasture steppes.[34]

[28] TNA: WO 33/54, Confidential, Captain F. R. Maunsell, "*Military Report on Eastern Turkey in Asia*," Compiled for the Intelligence Division of the War Office, vol. I (London: Harrison and Sons, 1893), pp. 231–33.

[29] Maunsell, "*Military Report on Eastern Turkey in Asia*," p. 274.

[30] For varieties of grasses in Turkey, Vecdet Erkun and W. M. Nixon, *Türkiye'de Çayır – Mer'a ve Yem Nebatları* (Ankara: Güzel İstanbul Matbaası, 1955), 11–13; Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: Murray, 1853), 234–35.

[31] Including festuca (*darikê nîşankirinê*, *dîkmarî*, or *dîkek*), wheat grass (*cîcîrûk*), clover/Trifolium (*nefel*, *gula sêbelg*, *keta beyar*, *and kulîlik*), Teucrium polium (*bêhnxos*), Medicago (*qûnjêrka*), Vicia (*xilore*), Onobrychis (*qurînqe*, *qoringa kurdan*, and *kevlok*), Lathyrus (*bakla xatûne*, *dîndaroke*, *çolik*, or *kelî*), Mentha (*pune*), Mentha longifolia (*piwîne*), Mentha Pulegium (*çedene*, *germok*, or *lêdange*) – Alptekin Karagöz, "Pasture Profile for Turkey" (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2001).

[32] TNA: WO 33/2758, Confidential, Military Report on Mesopotamia (Iraq), Area 1, (Northern Jezirah) Compiled by the General Staff, British Forces in Iraq, 1922, 27.

[33] Usually from early May to late October. Ahmet Necdet Sözer, "Güneydoğu Anadolu`nun Doğal Çevre Şartlarına Coğrafi Bir Bakış," *Ege Coğrafya Dergisi*, no. 2 (1984): 26.

[34] Baki Kasaplıgil, "Türkiyede Akdeniz İklim Tipinin Hakim Olduğu Bölgelerde Orman Vegetasyonu (The Forest Vegetation in the Mediterranean Regions of Turkey)," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Orman Fakültesi Dergisi* 2, no. 2 (1952): 53–54; Sözer, "Güneydoğu Anadolu`nun Doğal Çevre Şartlarına Coğrafi Bir Bakış," 25. Among drought-resistant species, the notabasis Syriaca (*telmekî or kerbeşka sûrî* in Kurdish), thistles/camel thorn (*beliq* or *çanteleyo sûre*), and mullein/Verbascum thapsus (*çuxlete heran*, *guhbelok*, *or guhkerk*) were the most common. Additionally, acanthophyllum verticillatum, Achillea

The availability of meadows and water in the pastures determined not only the annual migration of pastoralists between southern and northern pastures but also their small-scale movements in highland pastures during the summer months (see Figure 1.6). Many factors determined the temporal and spatial existence of green and lush herbaceous vegetation in these pastureland ecosystems. According to Hütteroth, the intensity of the sunlight in the pastures and the degree to which slopes were exposed to the sun were particularly crucial.[35] For example, although they grow at altitudes of 2,500 m to 3,000 m, most grasses and herbs on south- and southwest-facing slopes dried up by the end of August, while herbaceous perennials and briars growing on north- and northeast-facing slopes grew until late September.[36]

Vegetation is also affected by residual snow, which usually remains on the ground until late summer on the northern and northeastern slopes above 3,000 m.[37] In patches – located mainly in depressions and valleys along the northern side of ridges where snow melts very slowly – the soil at the lower edges of the pastures becomes intensely moist, supporting lush grasses and herbs for several weeks.[38] These residual snow patches are mostly not wider than 100 m. However, on the northern slopes, they reach 200 m, depending on the degree of slope: in steeper areas the water ran off more quickly, while on gentle slopes the water soaked the ground and provided more moisture.[39] For pastoralists and agro-pastoral peasants, these snow patches were extremely important for feeding flocks during the mid and late summer.

The availability of forage determined population density in the pasturelands. Sheep, camels, horses, and occasionally goats constituted the majority of livestock in the lowland pastures. Cattle, buffalo, and water buffalo were less common, except in wetlands and limited areas along the rivers. In the nineteenth century, herd animal populations were particularly concentrated in the lowlands during winter and early spring, supported by winter rainfall.[40] By mid April, as forage and pasture plants began to wane, pastoralists began their seasonal migration to highland summer pastures. In the highlands, sheep, goats, cattle, buffalo, horses,

Santolina, Alhagi Maurorum, Astragalus gummifer, Avena barbata, Bromus macrostachyus, Cichorium glandulosum, Convolvulus reticulatus, Dianthus multipunctatus, Delphinium peregrinum, Eryingium campestre, Euphorbia Aleppica, Gentiana olivieri, Hordeum leporinum, Onosma giganteum, Silene Kotschyi, Trifolium campestre, Centaurea, Hypericum, Salvia, and Verbascum are the other species of wild grasses in the lowland pastures.

[35] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 77.
[36] Hütteroth, 77. [37] Hütteroth, 77. [38] Hütteroth, 77. [39] Hütteroth, 77.
[40] Hütteroth, 70.

FIGURE 1.6 Kurdish pastoralists on annual migration.. By F. R. Maunsell, 1899. Courtesy of Royal Geographic Society Archive (with IBG), 094346.

mules, and occasionally camels were the chief herd animals, with sheep and goats in the majority.[41] Unlike on dry lowland pastures, cattle, and

[41] BOA, C.DH 24/1196 (17 Şevval 1218/ January 30, 1804). According to this Ottoman document, which provides a list of confiscated properties from the Haydaran Kurds, a large pastoral nomadic community living on the Ottoman-Iranian border in the province

sporadically buffalo breeds, were common in the northern highlands owing to abundant water resources and nutritious forage plants that could sustain large mammals.

Data from a 1950 study of pastoral nomadic communities in the Lake Van region by Hütteroth depict the existence of plentiful pastures and indicate both the volume of animal husbandry in eastern Kurdistan and the close distances between peasants' and pastoralists' pasturelands (Figure 1.5). The proximity of pastures used by agro-pastoral peasants and nomadic pastoralists in the southern portion of Lake Van fostered social, political, economic, and cultural, exchanges between these communities.

Well-watered highland pastures were particularly significant in ensuring the sustainability of pastoral nomadism and agro-pastoralism in the region. The availability of forage determined the periodicity of seasonal migration, as well as its direction, duration, extent, and number of participants. As illustrated in Figure 1.5, sometime between late April and mid May, as the southern lowlands began to dry out, pastoralists began the great migration toward highland pastures in the north, following a well-defined route. Depending on the availability of forage on the route, this migration took between thirty and forty-five days. As they traveled, pastoralists spent a few weeks in transit stations (1,000 m) or temporary camps to exploit rich grazing areas along the route. Historical data about transit stations are scarce. In his 1957 study, Hütteroth identified camps every one or two hours along the route.[42]

As shown in the Figure 1.7, when the productivity of spring pastures diminished around the end of the June, pastoralists embarked on another wave of migration to pastures newly freed from snow cover. During this "mid-summer migration," flocks of sheep and goats along with many men, and some women and children, moved to summer pastures further north (2,000–3,000 m) while most of the women, toddlers, and elderly members of the community continued to stay in spring pastures. Wealthy pastoral leaders and their families also remained at lower elevations, either hiring herdsmen or leaving herd supervision to younger family members.[43]

of Van, with a considerable number of sheep, cattle, camel, and three breeds of horses. For more on the other properties possessed by this group, see the document.

[42] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 72.

[43] Hütteroth, 73.

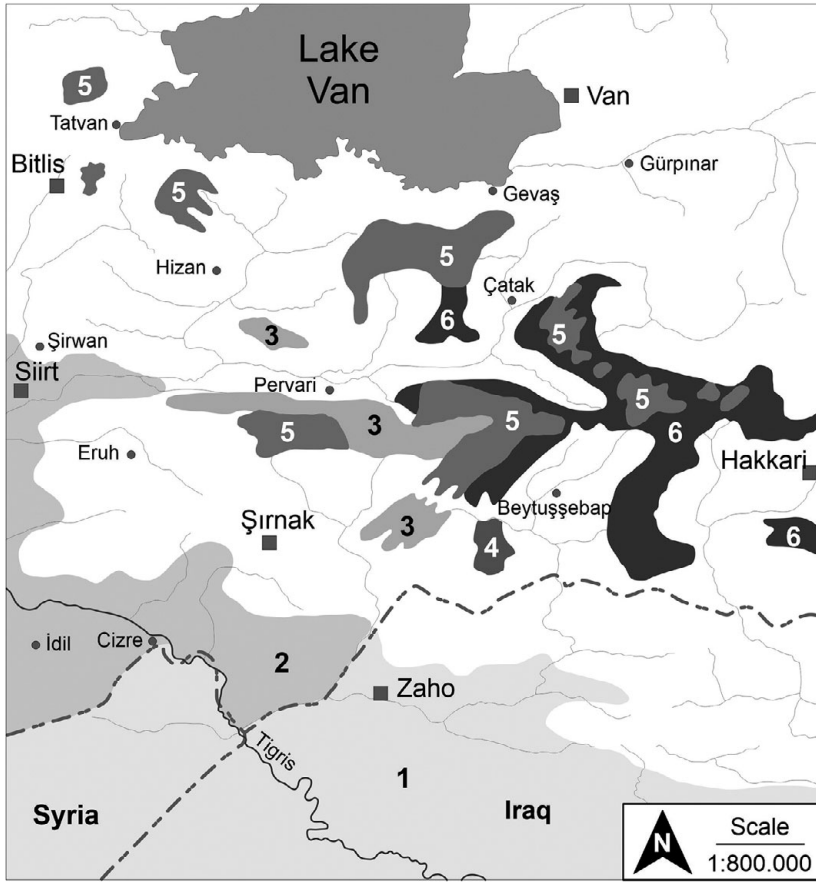


FIGURE 1.7 Seasonal usage of the pastures in the east and southeast of Kurdistan. Adapted from Wolf Dieter Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 75–76.

Hütteroth's categorization of the winter, spring, and summer pastures reflects the Kurdish vocabulary used to describe pastures and how (and when) humans and animals used them. Specifically, *germîyan* refers to winter pastures while *zozan*, *zom/zome/zoma*, and *war* delineate the grasslands used during the summer months.[44] In Kurdistan, the summer

[44] TNA: WO 106/6245, p. 75; the winter pastures (*germîyan*s) situated in the lowlands (200–600 m), comprise a large portion of northern Mesopotamia. In these rain-fed dry steppes, the annual precipitation was between 300 and 500 mm. Unlike *germîyan*s, *bane*s were found in the transit zones between winter and summer pastures with an average altitude of 1,000 meters above sea level. In general, by early May, the *bane*s are covered

FIGURE 1.8 A scene from Farashin, June 2022. Photo credit Burhan Tetik (@Mamoburhan).

pastures are characterized by three distinct sub-ecological zones which are distinct from each other in terms of elevation, degree of slope, vegetation, and physical size.

Farashin/Feraşin (2,625 m, Figure 1.8) in today's Şırnak province, was a particularly famous summer pasture (*zozan*) which received a great deal of attention from foreign consuls, military officers, and travelers to Ottoman Kurdistan.[45] It is in the east of the region within the depression zones of the southeastern Taurus Mountain range. F. R. Maunsell, a British military officer who spent more than a decade in the region collecting details about its geography, environment, people, animals, and natural resources, described Farashin as a "joyful pleasant place" and the largest pasture in Kurdistan.[46] Located near a large stream, the grazing zone of Farashin receives substantial winter snowfalls that only begin to melt in mid May.

In the nineteenth century, this famous pastureland was occupied by thousands of Kurdish nomads and their flocks between early June and the end of September, with each group occupying a historically delineated area. An eyewitness account from the 1890s describes the scene at Farashin as one of animation and beauty with the arrival of the first

with different sorts of grasses and wild flowers bloomed with the gradual disappearance of winter snow.

[45] TNA: FO 925/2830.

[46] F. R. Maunsell, "Central Kurdistan," *The Geographical Journal* 18, no. 2 (1901): 123.

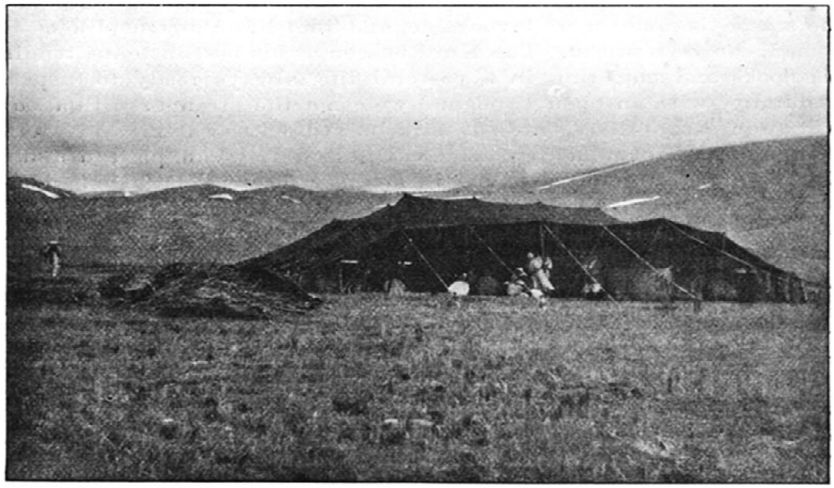


FIGURE 1.9 A Kurdish tent on a *zozan* near Nürdüz on the southern shores of Lake Van. After F. R. Maunsell, "Central Kurdistan," *The Geographical Journal* 18, no.2 (1901): 123.

group of nomads in early June, when the "great drifts of snow still lie about."[47] The area resembled a pristine green carpet, with "varied flowers . . . springing out of the ground."[48] Black hand-knotted goat-hair Kurdish tents (see Figure 1.9) were set within a landscape of alpine gentian, varieties of tulip, ranunculus, iris, primrose, and cowslip on the green Farashin.

Cemikari (2,500 m), on the slopes of Harakol Mountain in today's Siirt province, was another important summer pasture in the late Ottoman period. Cemikari was much smaller than Farashin, but environmentally and climatically similar. This pastureland was watered by numerous springs and streams and received considerable snow in winter. When the snow melted in late May and early June, wildflowers bloomed, including anchusa, thyme, atragalus, blueweed, lucerne, trefoil, henbit, various kinds of tulip, centaurea, and sage.[49] This rich flora fed sheep and goats, and provided pollen to millions of bees, which in turn supported the production of large quantities of honey by Kurdish nomads. Cemikari was surrounded by a wooded area with oaks that produced a large species of gallnut; nomads collected these oak galls to trade on the domestic and

[47] Maunsell, 123. [48] Maunsell, 123.

[49] Sığır dili, kekik, geven, ergenek otu, yonca, üçgül, ballı baba, peygamber çiceği, ada çayı are the Turkish names of these wild species.

global markets. Thus, in the Kurdish pasturelands, nomads pursued other economic activities in addition to animal husbandry, depending on environmental and socioeconomic circumstances.

The *zom*(s) are smaller grasslands, usually on the back slopes of mountains, where sheep and goats grazed for about two months of the year (from early July to mid September) as the *zozan*s began to be less productive.[50] Though some were in stony valleys, most *zom* had fertile brown soil that supplied lush vegetation for livestock herds. Unlike the *zozan*s, these were often smaller grazing zones that could feed only a few thousand sheep.[51] *Zom* were used by both pastoralists and agro-pastoral peasants. Almost all mountain villages in Ottoman Kurdistan had their own *zom*, usually located two to three hours from the farmlands on foot to permit daily animal grazing.[52] The sharing of this ecological niche and its natural resources suggests that in these areas intercommunal relationships were more robust than other zones.

Finally, the *war* was the pastureland located north of the *zozans*. The *war*s were mostly situated in hilly mountainous areas with a high degree of slope, usually between 20 and 25 degrees. They were exploited for a short period in late summer after the snow had melted. Owing to the steep terrain, only sheep and goats could graze on the *wars*. In general, the distance between a *zozan* and a *war* was less than 5 km (3 miles), while the distance to a winter pasture could be more than 100 km (62 miles).

In late Ottoman Kurdistan, pastoralists forged links between these different pasture ecosystems. With their annual great migration, they connected the southern winter pastures to both spring pastures in the middle zone as well as summer pastures in the highlands. Furthermore, by moving their herds to different sections of the summer pastures, pastoralists adapted as well as manipulated these marginal zones to take advantage of available forage and water resources. Lowland pastures tended to be culturally and ethno-linguistically diverse, inhabited by Arabic,

[50] These details about *zomes* and how they were used by people are based on a personal interview conducted with Fatma Canan, a woman in her 70s living in Karli, a village in the district of Yüksekova in today's Hakkari province (Turkey). I am grateful for her insightful knowledge regarding the landscape of the area and how people and their herds manipulated this environment.

[51] In today's Hakkari province, for example, the Karlı village's *zom* could only feed a herd of 1,000 sheep, while the *zom* in neighboring Pespınar (Badava in Kurdish) fed a few thousand. Perhaps because it was large and fertile, this *zom* was called Zozanêt Badewa, a pasture that resembles a *zozan*.

[52] Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im Mittleren Kurdischen Taurus*, 81.

Kurdish, and Turkish-speaking pastoralists. In contrast, Kurdish-speaking pastoralists dominated highland pastures, though a few Nestorian and Armenian nomadic communities also used them. In addition to connecting diverse pastureland ecosystems, pastoralists also established a thread extending from the pastures to the plains – the third and final zone in this landscape trilogy. Pastoralists were the chief players connecting not only the mountains of Kurdistan to its plains but also furnishing linkages between Kurdistan's plains and the neighboring provinces in Anatolia, Iraq, and Syria as well as Iran and Russia.

The Plains

Plains, the third and smallest segment of Ottoman Kurdistan's landscape trilogy, were areas used for extensive cultivation. Plains have slopes between 2.71 and 7.27 degrees, and elevations between 450 and 1,200 m above sea level (occasionally as high as 1,500 m). They are located at lower altitudes, and so experience temperature and precipitation patterns distinct from those in the mountains and pastures. Though there are regional variations, most plains have a Mediterranean-type climate, with rainy winters and dry summers. As shown in Table 1.1, from north to south and east to west, the average annual temperature on the plains increases gradually. At 30–35°C (at an extreme of 40–45°C in the southern plains), summer temperatures on the plains are some of the highest in

TABLE 1.1 *Temperature and precipitation rates in the plains (in °C)*

Plains	Annual Temp.[1]	Jan. Temp.	July. Temp.	Ann. rainfall mm[2]
Diyarbekir	15.7	1.7	31	500
Harput	12.9	−0.8	27.7	460
Malatya	11.9	−0.3	26.8	387
Muş	9.6	−7.4	24.9	764
Urfa	18.2	5.6	32	271

[1] Erinç, *Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası*; Sözer, "Güneydoğu Anadolu`nun Doğal Çevre Şartlarına Coğrafi Bir Bakış," 15–16; Mehmet Sönmez, "Muş Ovasının Tarımsal Potansiyeli ve Arazi Kullanımı Arasındaki İlişkiler," in *Makalelerle Muş*, ed. Ercan Çağlayan (Muş: Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi, 2014), 9; Vedat Avcı and Fatma Esen, "Malatya Havzası'nda Sıcaklık ve Yağışın Trend Analizi," *İnönü Üniversitesi Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 1 (2019): 234.

[2] Erinç, *Doğu Anadolu Coğrafyası*; Sözer, "Güneydoğu Anadolu`nun Doğal Çevre Şartlarına Coğrafi Bir Bakış," 15–16; Sönmez, "Muş Ovasının Tarımsal Potansiyeli ve Arazi Kullanımı Arasındaki İlişkiler," 9; Avcı and Esen, "Malatya Havzası'nda Sıcaklık ve Yağışın Trend Analizi," 234.

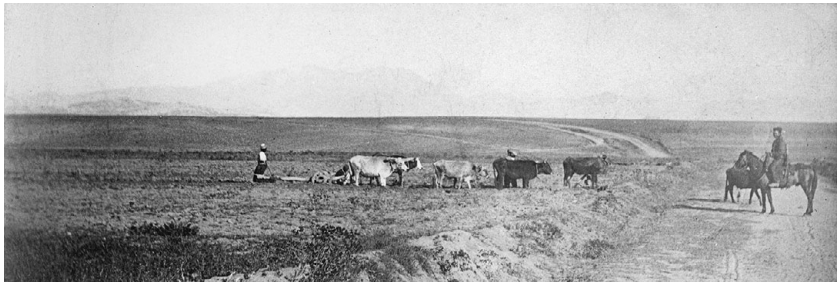


FIGURE 1.10 Ox on plough, Diyarbekir Plain. Courtesy of Royal Geographic Society Archive (with IBG), 0093988.

Ottoman Kurdistan, and in fact in all of Ottoman Asia, excluding Syria and Iraq. More than 50 percent of the annual precipitation on the plains occurs during the three months of winter, 30 percent in the spring (March and April), and only 1 to 2 percent in summer. The spring rainfalls are extremely important for rain-fed agriculture on the plains. The plains were also watered by the Euphrates River in the north and southwest and the Tigris River across the east and south.

By the mid-nineteenth century, this landscape served as the center of agricultural production for grain and cash crops as well as fruit and vegetables, and non-domesticated vegetation in the plains was less diverse than in the mountains or pasturelands. Livestock population included sheep and goats as well as draft animals such as cattle and oxen (Figure 1.10). The plains had the highest population density, because their fertile, arable land could support millions of peasants. Ottoman Kurdistan's major commercial and administrative urban centers, such as Diyarbekir, were also located in the plains, as well as numerous smaller towns and hundreds of villages (Figure 1.3). Cities, and their market economies, made the plains culturally diverse and major centers of interaction between rural and urban spaces and peoples.

The largest and most fertile plain in Ottoman Kurdistan is in the extremely flat middle plateau. The plain consists of about 40,000 hectares, most of which is under 700 m above sea level. Annual precipitation averages 400–500 mm, gradually increasing to 600 mm in the hilly east. The Euphrates in the west and the Tigris in the east water this vast area. As Figure 1.2 shows, the plains in this part of the country are the most densely cultivated areas in Kurdistan, due to their low elevation, accessible water resources, and irrigation system. In the nineteenth century this entire area, with a few exceptions, was inhabited by agriculturalists who

FIGURE 1.11 Peasant women in Körpe village, Harput Plain, 1910s. Courtesy of Project SAVE Armenian Archives, K2002.001.006. The following note has been provided by Project Save Photograph Archive: "From text handwritten in Armenian on verso of photograph: 'In Keorpeh, reapers at work, wearing stockings.'"

produced considerable amounts of wheat, barley, lentils, chickpeas, rye, sesame, rice, and cotton.

Mountain depressions contain the region's second major set of plains. The average elevation here is higher, between 800 and 1,500 m above sea level. From east to west, the Euphrates supplied water to the Harput (Figure 1.11; cf. Figure 1.13), Malatya, Muş, and Palu. These areas were densely cultivated by peasants growing wheat and barley, as well as important cash crops like cotton, tobacco, and rice supported by well-functioning irrigation systems.

The third main area of plains was in the western and middle portions of the nomadic zone, including the plains of Urfa and Harran, on the east bank of the Euphrates, and Mardin and Nusaybin on the northern edge of the Fertile Crescent. In comparison to the northern plains, this area is much lower in elevation, with an average altitude of less than 400 m above sea level, and slopes under 10 degrees. This area also receives much

lower precipitation, and its irrigation infrastructure is limited.[53] With limited water resources, this region was vulnerable to climatic fluctuations, as historical studies of changing land-use patterns and deserted villages have demonstrated.[54]

Starting in the late eighteenth century, Ottoman institutions began to disseminate across this diverse geography of Ottoman Kurdistan. With the growing centralization attempts, fiscal reforms, and dissolution of hereditary Kurdish emirates and other local notables, the Ottomans indeed reconquered Kurdistan.[55] The last hereditary ruler, Mir Emir Bedirhan of Botan, was sent to Crete into exile in 1847, and from that point onward Kurdistan was governed by the Tanzimat state and its modern institutions.[56] According to Martin van Bruinessen, the reforms and military campaigns instigated the "gradual atomization" of the political and social structure of Ottoman Kurdistan while replacing the "complex, state-like" entities (the Kurdish emirates) with "simpler forms of

[53] In addition to the peasants inhabiting farmland along the streams, pastoral nomads also cultivated millet predominantly using water wells. Historical studies suggest that some pastoralists used water wells and canals to irrigate millet as a summer crop. Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, "Villages and Tribes of the Gezira under Early Ottoman Administration (16th Century), a Preliminary Report," *Berytus: Archaeological Studies* (1990): 179–88; Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, "Settlement Desertion in the Gezira between the 16th and 19th Century," in *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century: The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience*, ed. Thomas Philipp (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992), 285–94.

[54] Hütteroth, "Villages and Tribes of the Gezira under Early Ottoman Administration (16th Century), a Preliminary Report"; Hütteroth, "Settlement Desertion in the Gezira between the 16th and 19th Century."

[55] According to Veli Yadırgı, the demise of Kurdish hereditary rulers and the "centralist restructuring of Ottoman Empire" caused an "immense insecurity" in Ottoman Kurdistan. Veli Yadırgı, *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 100; Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman–Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 31–85; Michael Eppel, "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates: The Impact of Ottoman Reforms and International Relations on Kurdistan during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 237–58. For the internal organization of Kurdish emirates see Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed, 1992), 161–69.

[56] Barbara Henning, *Narratives of the History of the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani Family in Imperial and Post-Imperial Contexts: Continuities and Changes* (Bamberg, Germany: University of Bamberg Press, 2018); Ahmet Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan Beyi Bedirhan: Direniş ve İsyan Yılları* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2011); Fatih Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler Bağlamında Bedirhan Bey Olayı" (PhD thesis, Ankara, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitisü, 2010).

social and political organization" (the tribes).[57] Historian Sabri Ateş identifies this process as "re-clanization of Kurdistan" while Janet Klein describes it as a route to the "rise of tribes."[58] Though the level of transformation brought by administrative and fiscal reforms differed from one area to the other, as will be shown in following section, in general the Tanzimat state aimed to transform Kurdistan's economy, society, and environment by bringing new legal instruments, institutions, commercial agriculture, and forced sedentarization.

THE TANZIMAT STATE AND ITS ARRIVAL IN KURDISTAN

Tanzimat (the "reordering") reforms officially began in 1839 and ended with the dissolution of the Ottoman parliament by Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1908) in 1877.[59] Tanzimat policies and institutional changes were a response to the internal challenges of governance as well as external pressures, such as encroaching European imperialism. They were aimed at transforming Ottoman institutions into modern forms of government.[60] Although far-reaching and innovative, the Tanzimat reforms did not affect every province at the same time; they were staggered in time and space. Indeed, the first new policies did not really reach Kurdistan until well after 1845, because of local rebellions, the Crimean War (1853–56), distance, and popular resistance to greater government intrusion in local affairs. When they did arrive, these reforms contributed to reshaping the political, social, and economic structures and livelihoods of the regional landscape trilogy in multiple ways, including through political participation, financial assistance programs, and relief measures in times of environmental calamities.

The Tanzimat state prioritized tax reform as essential to securing the empire's fiscal infrastructure.[61] However, limited bureaucracy, institutional infrastructure, and provincial sociopolitical dynamics made reforms difficult to implement.[62] In Kurdistan, revenue contracting and

[57] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 193, 181–82.
[58] Ateş, *The Ottoman–Iranian Borderlands*, 81–82; Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 62.
[59] For the role of the telegraph line and the ways in which it contributed to the centralization of power in the late Ottoman Empire see Bahadır Çelebi, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Merkezileşmesinde Telgrafın Rolü: 1855–1909" (PhD, Istanbul Üniversitesi, 2020).
[60] Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*.
[61] Tevfik Güran, *Tanzimat Döneminde Osmanlı Maliyesi: Bütçeler ve Hazine Hesapları, 1841–1861* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), 13.
[62] Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question' during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 04 (2012): 770–97.

tax farming continued in many areas.[63] With numerous agents, representing the new and old taxing regimes, many peasants continued to pay up to fifteen different types of taxes for decades.[64] Armenian peasants living in rural areas complained about the means and process by which the new Tanzimat taxes were assessed and collected, and communities put pressure on the state and demanded that officials fulfil the Tanzimat's promises.

The Tanzimat reforms involved the modernization of rule in terms of governance, jurisprudence (civic rights, equality, and commercial law), finance and taxation, and the building of infrastructure. For instance, looking at petitions from Muş, Van, and Erzurum, Dzovinar Derderian examines how local Armenians used extra-communal means to address marriage issues that by decrees of the state was deemed to be a communal realm to be dealt with only by the Armenian Patriarchate and its representatives.[65] The modern state was based on direct relationships between political authorities and individual subjects rather than social groups. From the beginning, the Tanzimat promised individuals new rights and fair treatment regardless of sect or economic station. Authorities aimed to break down the accumulated social, political, and economic privileges and power of the old regime and create an Ottoman citizenry through basic individual rights, a secular education system, broad conscription, and the cultivation of loyalty.[66] By eliminating intermediary forces and actors and forging direct ties between the central state and society, the government partially succeeded in the modernization of rule.

State capacity grew appreciably over the century. At the same time, the insufficient number of professional bureaucrats meant that some old regime groups, including members of *ulema* (religious class), soldiers, revenue contractors, landlords, and other local elites were simply incorporated into the Tanzimat provincial administration, including as elected

[63] Unsurprisingly, Kurdistan was not the only place that tax farming persisted in the post-Tanzimat period In Iraq, for example, the tax-farming system continued to shape social atmosphere, intercommunal relations, and political economy of Baghdad and Basra up until the outbreak of the First World War. Camille Lyans Cole, "Empire on Edge: Land, Law, and Capital in Gilded Age Basra" (PhD, New Haven, Yale University, 2020), 122–91.

[64] Arsen Yarman, *Palu-Harput 1878: Çarsancak, Çemişgezek, Çapakçur, Erzincan, Hizan ve Civar Bögeler*, vol. II (İstanbul: Derlem Yayınları, 2010), 45.

[65] Dzovinar Derderian, "Orders and Disorders of Marriage, Church, and Empire in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Armenia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 56, no. 1 (2024): 1–16.

[66] Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, 122–72.

members of provincial or urban assemblies.[67] The bargaining that this allowed between the centralized state and intermediaries representing local interests varied by region.[68] In her 1993 study of the advisory council of Damascus, Elizabeth Thompson identifies a form of bargaining taking place between the Sublime Porte, Damascene elites, and other influential groups.[69] The autonomy of the advisory council of Damascus in dealing with the affairs of the city and the province, Thompson argues, was a means of checking the military powers of governors.[70] In a province like Diyarbekir, on the other hand, the decision-making powers of the provincial assembly were never as strong as in Damascus. Here, the governor took advantage of ethnic and religious diversity and animosity among the members of the provincial assembly to dominate local politics on behalf of the central government.[71]

In more distant frontier regions, such as Albania, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Kurdistan, and Iraq, removing local elites was potentially dangerous in the context of ongoing warfare. In addition to the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832), the Ottoman Empire fought wars with Iran (1821–23) and with Czarist Russia (1828–29, 1853–56, and 1877–78).[72] The loss of Greece and associated tax revenue, in addition to postwar indemnities, expenditures, and increasing debt increased pressure on the empire's remaining taxpayers. In areas like Diyarbekir, Erzurum, and Van the effects of frontier conflict were also politically destabilizing. Although relations with Qajar Iran improved after the War of 1821–23, the general region of Kurdistan continued to experience considerable upheaval, as Kurdish leaders vied for local control.[73] During the Crimean War of 1853–56 both Russia and the Ottomans used titles, weapons, and salaries to entice local Kurdish leaders to join the war on their side. After the war,

[67] Ariel Salzmann, "The Old Regime and the Ottoman Middle East," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012), 418.

[68] For example, in Damascus the autonomy of the advisory council of the city was such that it operated as a means of checking the military powers of governors. Elizabeth Thompson, "Ottoman Political Reform in the Provinces: The Damascus Advisory Council in 1844–45," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 457–75.

[69] Thompson. [70] Thompson, 457.

[71] İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli Idareleri, 1840–1880* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000), 79–80.

[72] Generally, Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Longman/Pearson, 2007).

[73] Bedirhan Bey (d. 1868), who ended his career in exile in Istanbul and Damascus after 1849, was one of these local leaders who contested the new powers of the Ottoman state. For more on Bedirhan Bey see Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan Beyi Bedirhan*.

the British actively pressured the Porte to rein in the autonomy of Kurdish pastoralist leaders.[74]

The Tanzimat state employed various socioeconomic and political strategies to make the nomadic pastoralist communities across the Ottoman Empire more legible[75] while extrapolating these communities' human and nonhuman resources for taxation, conscription, and surveillance purposes. According to Reşat Kasaba, the roots of forced sedentarization (*iskan* in Ottoman Turkish) policies were embedded in the late seventeenth century,[76] when the Ottoman government began to establish a "political unity with plainly demarcated borders" that comprised "identified, registered, and counted" people.[77] Under this modernist vision, the Ottomans began to see mobility "not [as] an asset to be manipulated and taken advantage of but as a potential source of weakness to be contained."[78] Thus, from that period onward, the Ottomans implemented various policies in order to control the pastoralists and other migrant population of the empire.[79] According to Yonca Köksal, the most distinctive features of the Tanzimat resettlement policies were that they were long-term, permanent, and large-scale.[80] From Anatolia to Cilicia, and Kurdistan, and from Iraq and Syria to Yemen, millions of pastoralists were forcefully sedentarized across the large territories of the empire.[81]

[74] Ateş, *The Ottoman–Iranian Borderlands*, 76; Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 109–10; Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 363–72.

[75] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[76] For Ottoman sedentarization policies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see Stefan Winter, "The Reşwan Kurds and Ottoman Tribal Settlement in Syria, 1683–1741," *Oriente Moderno* 97, no. 2 (2017): 256–69; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Iskan Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997); Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı imparatorluğunda aşiretlerin iskânı* (İstanbul: Eren yayıncılık, 1987); Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Aşiretleri İskan Teşebbüsü, 1691–1696* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1963); Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Anadolu'da Türk Aşiretleri* (Ankara: Devlet Matbaası, 1930).

[77] Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 54.

[78] Kasaba, 54.

[79] For Ottoman resettlement policies and their implementation see Kasaba, 54–83.

[80] Yonca Köksal, "Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization: A Comparison of the Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Ankara and Edirne (1839–1878)" (PhD, New York, Columbia University, 2002), 293.

[81] For the resettlement policies of the Tanzimat state in Anatolia, Cilicia, Kurdistan, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Yemen respectively, among the others, see Yonca Köksal, *The Ottoman Empire in the Tanzimat Era: Provincial Perspectives from Ankara to Edirne* (London: Routledge, 2019); Köksal, "Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State

The Tanzimat strategy to build a settled, accountable, taxable, and so-called "civilized" agrarian community by settling the mobile, "backward," "underdeveloped," and "uncivilized" pastoralists had significant consequences for the environment, economy, and demography of the empire.[82] With some regional variations, resettlement strategies typically included mediation and coercion.[83] In the former, the state took advantage of social hierarchies within the tribal community by negotiating with tribal chiefs, offering titles, expensive gifts, and salary to secure loyalties and agreement with settlement policies.[84] In the latter, the state instrumentalized massive violence against pastoralists who refused to settle.[85]

Centralization"; Meltem Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region, 1850–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Chris Gratien, *The Unsettled Plain: An Environmental History of the Late Ottoman Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022); Yener Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes at the Intersection of the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian Empires (1820s–1890s)" (PhD, Istanbul, Boğaziçi University, 2020); Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East"; Oktay Karaman, "Diyarbakır Valisi Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa'nın Diyarbakır'daki Aşiretleri Islah ve İskân Çalışması (1868–1875)," *History Studies: International Journal of History* 4 (2012): 227–49; Oktay Karaman, "Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa'nın Diyarbekir Valiliği" (PhD thesis, Erzurum, Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1999); Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq 1900–1963: Capital, Power and Ideology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Samira Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," *Social History* 16, no. 1 (1991): 45–58; M. Talha Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Norman Lewis, "The Syrian Steppe during the Last Century of Ottoman Rule: Hawran and the Palmyrena," in *The Transformation of Nomadic Society in the Arab East*, ed. Martha Mundy and Basim Musallah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 33–43; Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Eugene L. Rogan, "Ottomans, Merchants, and Tribes in the Syrian Frontier (1867–1900)," in *Histoire Économique et Sociale de l'Empire Ottoman et de La Turquie (1326–1960)*, ed. Daniel Panzac (Paris: Peeters, 1995), 251–62; Norman N. Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849–1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[82] For the forced sedentarization of pastoralists in Cilicia, Iraq, and Syria in the late Ottoman Empire see Gratien, *The Unsettled Plain*; Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean*; Haj, *The Making of Iraq 1900–1963*; Lewis, "The Syrian Steppe during the Last Century of Ottoman Rule."

[83] Yonca Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Sedentarization of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 469–91.

[84] Köksal, "Local Intermediaries and Ottoman State Centralization," 278.

[85] Yener Koç, "A Tribal Confederation at the Intersection of the Ottoman, Russian and Qajar Empires: The Zilan Confederation and the Empires (1810–1860)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 59, no. 2 (2023): 181–98; Koç, "Nomadic Pastoral Tribes at the Intersection of

As shown by Meltem Toksöz and Chris Gratien, one of the most important initiatives to resettle pastoralists was the organization of a large-scale military campaign, known as the Reform Division (Fırka-i Islâhiyye) in Çukurova in 1865.[86] The Reform Division employed military force to pacify the region's Turkish- and Kurdish-speaking pastoralists.[87] In Kurdistan, according to Yener Koç, it was the "internal structure, resistance, and geographic location of tribes" that determined whether the state resorted to mediation or coercion in the resettlement of pastoralists during the Tanzimat period.[88] Koç's findings demonstrate that the Ottomans distributed titles and gifts in order to encourage the leaders of Celali, Zilan, and other Kurdish pastoralists inhabiting the Ottoman–Iranian borderlands.[89] While mediation was an important political instrument on the eastern parts of Kurdistan, the Ottomans applied more coercive strategies to force pastoralists in the middle and southern portions of the region by prohibiting them to access their traditional summer pastures, building military garrisons, and organizing military campaigns against them.[90] Economic motivations, sociopolitical factors, and interimperial rivalries influenced both the implementation of forced sedentarization policy during the Tanzimat era and also its success or failure across the diverse geographies of the empire.

Tensions between communities, aggravated by new pressures and refugee resettlement, also became a major problem for the Tanzimat state. In addition to the provincial revolts of the 1840s in Kurdistan, there were significant upheavals in neighboring regions, involving Christians (Maronites and Armenians), Druse, and Muslims in Greater Syria.[91] Armenians and Muslims in the Taurus Mountain enclave of Zeitun defied Istanbul's plan to expropriate lands for the resettlement of Crimean

the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian Empires (1820s–1890s)," 182–235; Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East."

[86] Gratien, *The Unsettled Plain*, 58–93; Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 65–80.

[87] Andrew G. Gould, "The Burning of the Tents: The Forcible Settlement of Nomads in Southern Anatolia," in *Humanist and Scholar: Essays in Honor of Andreas Tietze*, ed. Donald Quataert and Heath W. Lowry (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), 71–85.

[88] Yener Koç, "Kışla, Kordon ve Asker: Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Devleti'nde Göçebe Aşiretleri Kontrol Etmek," *Kürt Tarihi*, no. 11 (Ocak–Subat 1996): 11.

[89] Yener Koç, 12–13. [90] Yener Koç, 12–17.

[91] Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*; Ussama Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019).

refugees, while in Van, Armenian and Kurdish peasants rose up against exploitation.[92]

Reform of the tax system and ending tax farming were two of the most important objectives of the Tanzimat state and were considered absolutely necessary for securing the empire's fiscal infrastructure.[93] The authorities intended to simplify the taxation system and put all fiscal controls under officials appointed by Istanbul. Officially, taxes were unified under four categories: a tithe on agricultural crops, the sheep tax, the poll tax taken from non-Muslim subjects, and *vergü* (collection of all traditional taxes).[94] In addition to tax reform, the state ordered new surveys to measure the economic and human capital of the empire. Detailed property studies and censuses were undertaken in many provinces from 1844 onwards to determine the distribution of wealth and resources among subjects.[95] But in other provinces, limited bureaucracy, institutional infrastructure, and provincial sociopolitical dynamics made it difficult to carry out these surveys and revenue contracting continued, with peasants continuing to pay up to fifteen different types of taxes for decades.[96]

Rural areas proved resistant to reform; nevertheless, rural citizens demanded their rights promised by the Tanzimat state. Armenians living in Kurdistan who had ties with the Istanbulite and international Armenian communities put pressure on the state and demanded that officials fulfil the Tanzimat's promises of equal rights and tax reform.[97] Muslim and Armenian peasants expressed their expectations of the new regime in petitions concerning shortages of seed and draft animals, land

[92] Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 78–79.

[93] Güran, *Tanzimat Döneminde Osmanlı Maliyesi*, 13. [94] Güran, 13.

[95] Mübahat Kütükoğlu, "Osmanlı Sosyal ve İktisadi Tarihi Kaynaklarından Temettü Defterleri," *Belleten* 59, no. 225 (1995): 395–413; Tevfik Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı* (İstanbul: Eren yayıncılık, 1998), 13–14.

[96] Arsen Yarman, *Palu-Harput 1878: Çarsancak, Çemişgezek, Çapakçur, Erzincan, Hizan ve Civar Bögeler*, vol. II (İstanbul: Derlem Yayınları, 2010), 45. Two Ottoman documents from 1845 and 1846, for instance, indicate that due to local insurrections and the Bedirhan Bey (d. 1867) revolt during the 1840s in the district of Cezire-Bohtan, the Diyarbekir *temettüat* surveys were postponed. BOA, İ.MSM 1992/62 (17 Şevval 1261/ October 19, 1845); BOA, MVL 4/6 (15 Rebiülevvel 1262/ March 13, 1846). Also see Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, "Ruling the Periphery, Governing the Land: The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in Kurdistan, 1840–70," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34 (2014): 160–75.

[97] Derderian, "Nation-Making and the Language of Colonialism."

disputes, corruption, violence, and the unfairness of local governors.[98] Examining petitions forwarded to the Porte by the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople as well as *takrir*s, official reports prepared and submitted to the Ottoman government by the Patriarch, Masayuki Ueno points to many examples of non-Muslims negotiating the Tanzimat reforms. The province of Diyarbekir was one of the main regions that produced such petitions and inquiries between 1849 and 1869. The 158 *takrir*s from Diyarbekir documented violence, corruption, unfair behavior by local authorities, conscription, and over-taxation.[99] Petitioners tried to find solutions to their problems by using the language and ideals of the Tanzimat state to articulate them.[100]

Perhaps the most ambitious Tanzimat program was land reform. The 1858 Land Code that promised peasants title to their lands has been one of the most studied aspects of the Tanzimat. In his well-known discussion of land tenure in the Arab provinces, Haim Gerber argued that the 1858 Land Code should be viewed as a continuation of the old agrarian law of the empire with a few important modifications. He saw this continuity in terms of the centrality of the village community, which remained "a very meaningful legal and political institution" throughout the nineteenth century.[101] Reformers hoped that by giving title to small farmers they would stabilize the land regime and undercut more powerful individuals and groups such as urban notables, landlords, or religious sheikhs, who had usurped rights to land, produce, and labor over the past decades. Overall, according to Gerber, these policies were successful in Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia. The vast majority of peasants gained *tapu* (title), to their lands.[102] On the other hand, focusing on land disputes between cultivators and estate holders in Albania, Huri İslamoğlu has

[98] N. Özok-Gündogan, "The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in the Kurdish Periphery: The Politics of Land and Taxation, 1840–1870" (PhD thesis, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2011).

[99] Masayuki Ueno, "'For the Fatherland and the State': Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat Reforms," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 1 (2013): 100.

[100] Indeed, this was a very common strategy protestors have used in China, Africa, and other parts of the world. In their research on forms of resistance in China, political scientists Kevin O'Brian and Lianjiang Li have demonstrated how Chinese protestors exploited divisions within the state by employing "the rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb the exercise of power," a phenomenon they label "rightful resistance." For more on this see Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

[101] Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987), 69.

[102] Gerber, 68–72.

underlined that the process of land registration did not always go as reformers intended. No less an authority than Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (scholar, religious lawyer, and one of the principal drafters of the *Mecelle*, the comprehensive Legal Code of 1875) was forced to make concessions with local authorities, specifically in the course of land registration in Albania. Without such a partnership with local elites in consideration of local conditions, he admitted, "the population in these areas would rise up in arms."[103]

In Diyarbekir, obstacles to land reform abounded, including those brought by new regulations in the tax system. Armenian peasants living in rural areas complained about the means and process by which the new Tanzimat taxes were assessed and collected.[104] As Nadir Özbek points out, the tax situation in the Kurdish provinces was especially complicated.[105]

> In the Armenian and Kurdish provinces, records show numerous abuses . . . . For one thing, the peasants there were now made responsible for a "special tax" (*vergi-i mahsusa*) paid to government agents, *muhtars* (village headmen), tax collectors, and the gendarmerie, while they continued to pay out customary taxes to local notables, mostly Kurdish tribal leaders, as well as the tithe to tax farmers.

Documents from Ottoman and British archives indicate that despite the intent to abolish it, revenue-contracting persisted late into the nineteenth century. Within the revenue-contracting system, several factors shaped cultivators' labor conditions and their ability to obtain title to their lands. In a report from the early 1860s, British Consul George Taylor described several different kinds of labor contracts between landowners and laborers, attributing differences to population densities, climates, elevations, water resources, amounts of land under cultivation, and types of crops.[106] In the district of Cezire, for example, he noted variations on the standard *murab'a* (share-croppers) system: in one form, the laborer received one third of the profit, after expenses and tithes, while the landlord received

[103] Huri İslamoğlu, "Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858," in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 37.

[104] Ueno, "'For the Fatherland and the State': Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat Reforms," 100.

[105] Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question'," 776.

[106] TNA: FO 195/799, no. 9, encl. 1, Constantinople, July 13, 1864, Taylor to Bulwer, "Report on the Trade of Diarbekr and Koordistan for the Year 1863." Dated Diyarbekir, March 31, 1864.

two thirds.[107] Another type of contract in the same district involved urban capitalists loaning seed to peasants who paid back the loan at a set rate at harvest time. However, in Silvan, Behramki, and other districts nearer to trading centers, greater demand and higher prevailing wages gave peasants and tenants more leverage. Here, laborers received food and shoes instead of wages from the landlord and were permitted to sow a portion of the crop for their own use. Labor relations also varied depending on the type of crop sown. Commercial crops, such as cotton and tobacco, required irrigation and more intensive labor. Different groups of laborers were hired for each stage of cultivation: sowing, tending, and harvesting. At harvest time the landowners and water providers received 14 percent of the net produce of the crops, while the rest, after deduction of expenses, was shared by seed providers, laborers, and gardeners.[108]

In many areas, the existence of multiple constituencies with interests in registering land or in the agricultural economy, including peasants, pastoralists, rural and urban notables, and Muslim immigrants, discouraged reforms. But some populations did manage to assert property rights over smaller plots of land.[109] In Kurdistan, Diyarbekir had unique features owing to its large plains that were extensively cultivated. Given its ecological and sociopolitical differences from neighboring regions, it is not possible to extrapolate its experience from that of other areas of Kurdistan and Iraq, such as in Mosul, Sulaymaniyah, Kerkuk, and Baghdad, where great quantities of land would be registered in the name of tribal leaders, religious sheikhs, urban and rural notables after 1869.[110] Certainly, in some areas of Diyarbekir province, hereditary control over land passed into the hands of the most powerful.[111]

[107] TNA: FO 195/799, no. 9, encl. 1, Constantinople, July 13, 1864, Taylor to Bulwer, "Report on the Trade of Diarbekr and Koordistan for the Year 1863." Dated Diyarbekir, March 31, 1864.

[108] TNA: FO 195/799, no. 9, encl. 1, Constantinople, July 13, 1864, Taylor to Bulwer, "Report on the Trade of Diarbekr and Koordistan for the Year 1863." Dated Diyarbekir, March 31, 1864.

[109] Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 857–61.

[110] Sarah Shields, *Mosul before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Ebubekir Ceylan, *Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth Century Middle East* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011).

[111] Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, "A 'Peripheral' Approach to the 1908 Revolution in the Ottoman Empire: Land Disputes in Peasant Petitions in Post-Revolutionary

A CASE STUDY: PALU DISTRICT

Agricultural conditions were best documented in the plains of Palu and Harput, the most extensively cultivated lands in Ottoman Kurdistan, as a result of inquiries carried out under the auspices of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul in 1879 following the Treaty of San Stefano. These inquiries were aimed at documenting the plight of the peasants for the benefit of the Porte and foreign powers.[112] With the consent of the central government, the Armenian Patriarch sent three priests – Boğos Natanyan, Karakin Sirvantsdyants, and Vahan Bardizaksti Der Minasyan – to the region to report on the conditions of Armenians in the eastern provinces of the empire in 1878–79.[113] Their research was concentrated in Palu, which was home to many Armenian peasants. It was a highly productive agricultural zone owing to its rich soil and water resources, namely the Euphrates River and its branches. In addition to growing wheat, barley, sesame, lentils, linen, rice, and grapes, Palu[114] became one of the major cotton-producing areas in Kurdistan in the nineteenth century.[115]

The priests found that the Tanzimat reforms had not changed the nature of relationships between landlords and laborers. Examples from various districts indicated that by the second half of nineteenth century landlords maintained their dominant position, and the rate of peasant exploitation had even increased. Various examples from the districts of Kiği and Palu showed that the reforms had failed on the ground and the cultivators had become absolute *rençber*s (agricultural laborers) of the *bey*s (lords) and *ağa*s (rural powerholders). The reforms did little to improve the condition of peasants. The report provided many examples of the inability of the Tanzimat government to actually apply new regulations. *Bey*s and *ağa*s, the brokers who mediated the old regime, actually expanded their authority.

Diyarbekir," in *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870–1915*, ed. Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 199.

[112] TNA: WO 33/54, Confidential, "*Military Report on Eastern Turkey in Asia*," Compiled for the Intelligence Division of the War Office by Captain F. R. Maunsell, vol. I (London: Harrison and Sons, 1892), 468, 484.

[113] Yarman, *Palu-Harput 1878*. [114] Yarman, II:118.

[115] TNA: FO 195/112, encl. 1, Erzurum, July 16, 1839, Brant to Pansonby "Report of a Tour through a Part of Kurdistan in 1838." Dated June 1, 1839. According to James Brant there were 200 looms in the town, which produced clothes from the native cotton.

In 1878 the district of Palu was one of the most ethnically mixed in the empire. It contained seven subdistricts and 273 villages inhabited by approximately 52,000 Armenian-speaking, Turkish-speaking, Kurdish-speaking, and Zazaki-speaking inhabitants.[116] In addition to these settled populations, there were many Kurdish pastoralists in the surrounding areas of the district. As might be assumed from such an ethnically, religiously, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse population, there was more than one set of powerbrokers. While many Kurdish Muslim overlords dominated the scene, they did not work alone. They forged agreements with Armenian urban notables, called *çorbacı*s, as well as with Ottoman officials.[117] According to Natanyan, two of the most powerful *çorbacı*s were the Çıteyan brothers and Donabet Arpacıyan. They, along with other wealthy Armenians in Palu, played a key role in the oppression and exploitation of Armenians in the region. In addition to having strong networks with influential local actors, the *çorbacı*s also used intermediaries who promoted their interests among the Armenian peasantry.[118]

Muslim *bey*s and *ağa*s ruled over both Armenian and Kurdish villagers. In Palu, there were thirteen *beys*, each of whom claimed the loyalty of many Kurdish *bey*s or *ağa*s who controlled about 217 villages.[119] Additionally, they assumed important offices in the local administration. One observer claimed that the Ottoman government was not at all in control: the *beys* held "sovereignty in their hands."[120] Armenian notables also took advantage of these circumstances. Hampartsum Ulusyan of Khoşmat village escaped punishment for his ill deeds because he was a member of the rural communal assembly (Taşra Cemaat Meclisi) whose appointment had been supported by the Çıtayan brothers.[121]

Although the Land Code of 1858 was supposed to secure the proprietary rights of cultivators and did enable some peasants to gain title, this did not happen in Palu. The Istanbul investigators, Natanyan and Sırvantsdyants, reported that only 1 percent of arable land in the district was owned by Armenian peasants, the main group of cultivators. That meant almost all the land was registered in the names of the Muslim powerbrokers, the *bey*s and *ağa*s.[122] According to Sırvantsdyants, they

[116] Yarman, *Palu-Harput 1878*, II:99, 116, 144–45. [117] Yarman, II:106–7.
[118] Yarman, II:129–30. [119] Yarman, II:114–15.
[120] They were listed as Hacı Tahir Bey, Şükrü Bey, Haşim Bey, Şerif Bey, Cinoğlu Bey, Sait Bey, Mehmet Sadık Bey, Mahmut Bey, Küçük Bey, Mehmet Bey, Köhlan Bey, Yusuf Bey, and Necip Bey.
[121] Yarman, II:130. [122] Yarman, II:117.

took advantage not only of the peasants' lands, but also of un-registered lands inhabited by Kurdish semi-nomadic and settled communities. These groups paid them rent in order to cultivate these fields.[123]

Instead of becoming owners of their lands, cultivators were reduced to being tenants. Unlike in other districts in the province where peasants kept four-fifths of their yields after the deduction of tithes,[124] in Palu one-half part of the produce went to the *bey*s.[125] They exploited the Armenian peasants living under their control, forcing them to provide free labor, including ploughing and harvesting, furnishing food, cutting fennel, and supplying wood, and were subject to other exactions. As late as 1905, landlords continued to collect taxes at illegally high rates. Nadir Özbek notes this with respect to two villages in Diyarbekir, Khoan, a Kurdish settlement of 300 homes and Baghin, an Armenian settlement with 120 homes.[126] Accordingly, the total amount of taxes paid by the Kurdish and Armenian villages were 29,000 and 12,790 piasters.[127] In addition to taxes in agricultural tithe, property, income, and sheep/cattle taxes, the Armenian peasants were also paying 16,183 piasters in military exemption.[128] What is striking in these figures is that the total amount of taxes paid by each house in the Kurdish village was 99.66 piasters while the Armenian one was 241.44 piasters. The difference between them was almost 142 piasters. In other words, the Armenian peasants were paying almost 2.5 times more tax than Kurdish villagers. In some areas this amount was much higher.

A DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF KURDISTAN IN MID CENTURY

Population rates are hotly debated among historians of the late Ottoman Empire. Fundamentally, the debate centers on the question of whether the empire's Muslim population was overrepresented and Christians underrepresented in the archival documents. Attempts to reach accurate numbers have been plagued by inconsistent official censuses, regional differences in population estimates, and Turkish government restrictions sealing all incomplete censuses of the late Ottoman period. The situation

[123] Yarman, II:117. [124] Yarman, II:510. [125] Yarman, II:510.
[126] Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question'," 777.
[127] Kurdish peasants from Khoan paid 15,000 piastres in tithes, 7,000 in property taxes, 3,000 in earnings/income taxes, and 4,000 in sheep and cattle taxes. The Armenian peasants of Baghin paid 5,600 piastres in tithes, 3,940 in property and earnings taxes, 3,250 in sheep and cattle taxes, and 16,183 in military exemption taxes.
[128] Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question'," 777.

for Ottoman Kurdistan is even more difficult. Its demographic features have been obscured because it was the homeland of both a large Christian Armenian population and mobile pastoralists. Population estimates for the region are marred by suspicions that the Ottomans underrepresented the Armenians in Kurdistan, while Europeans, Russians, and the Armenian patriarchy in Istanbul overrepresented them to serve particular political agendas in the late nineteenth century. At the same time, records of pastoralist populations are essentially nonexistent. Available historical records include only rough estimates of the pastoralist population based on the individual observations of Ottoman and European statesmen.

While some demographic data do exist for the region, they should not be taken at face value. Because the Ottoman Empire's official census data are incomplete for the first half of the nineteenth century and inaccessible to historians for the second half, all demographic figures are approximate. There are also discrepancies between available Ottoman and European population data, and further complications owing to shifting, provincial administrative boundaries during the nineteenth century.

As Table 1.2 shows, the population of the Ottoman Empire was approximately 32 million in the late nineteenth century.[129] Two-thirds of this population (24.6 million) inhabited the empire's Asian provinces, including western and central Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, and Kurdistan, while the remaining one-third lived in the European provinces. Less than 5 percent lived in northern Africa. Population density in the European provinces, however, was more than twice that of the Asian provinces, with 23.17 persons and 10.8 persons per square km, respectively. Moreover, on the eve of the First World War, across the border, the empire's population density doubled due to an extreme contraction of its territory from 3 million square km in 1800–1809 to 1.3 million square km in 1914.[130]

Ottoman Kurdistan's diverse landscapes were inhabited by an equally diverse group of people.[131] Though some portions of the landscape

[129] Tevfik Güran, ed., *Osmanlı Devleti'nin ilk istatistik yıllığı, 1897* [The first statistical yearbook of the Ottoman Empire], vol. V (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997), 15.

[130] Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 777.

[131] For a general overview of late Ottoman population see Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); for a critical analysis on Ottoman population and the state's ideological motivation toward the census records see Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers:*

TABLE 1.2 *Ottoman population in 1897*

	Population	Scale km²	Population Density
Ottoman land in Europe	6,279,182	271,060	23.17
Ottoman land in Asia	24,627,672	2,443,794	22
Ottoman land in Africa	1,300,000	557,500	1
Total	**32,206,854**	**3,272,357**	**31**
Provinces in Kurdistan			
Bitlis	488,642	27,688	17.65
Diyarbekir	564,671	64,504	8.75
Erzurum	687,322	80,368	8.55
Mamuretülaziz (Harput)	566,656	46,000	12.32
Van	202,007	47,700	2.77
Total	**2,509,598**	**266,260**	**9.42**

Derived from Güran, Osmanlı Devleti'nin ilk istatistik yıllığı, 1897 (The first statistical yearbook of the Ottoman Empire), 15, 19.

trilogy were more linguistically, ethnically, and religiously homogenous than others, it is clear that multiculturalism was one of the most significant characteristics of regional demographics.[132] In the nineteenth century, Ottoman Kurdistan was one of the most important frontiers of the imperial rivalries between the Ottoman, British, and Russian empires. Population statistics were used to support political ambitions within these rivalries, resulting in wide discrepancies in available historical figures from Ottoman, European, and Armenian sources.[133] For example, the Ottomans underrepresented the Armenian presence in Kurdistan, while Europeans, Russians, and the Armenian patriarchy in Istanbul overrepresented them.[134] The following analysis therefore draws on both Ottoman and foreign sources to estimate population figures in the region.

As Table 1.3 shows, the population of Ottoman Kurdistan was approximately 2.3 million in the mid-nineteenth century, with an average

The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878–1918) (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010).

[132] Among others, Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983); Levon Marashlian, *Politics and Demography: Armenians, Turks, and Kurds in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, 1991).

[133] Bedross Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022), 45.

[134] Stephan Astourian, *Testing World-System Theory, Cilicia (1830's–1890's): Armenian-Turkish Polarization and the Ideology of Modern Ottoman Historiography* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Dündar, *Crime of Numbers*.

TABLE 1.3 *Population of Ottoman Kurdistan in the late 1860s*

Province	Population
Diyarbekir	683,000
Erzurum	1,230,700
Mamuretülaziz	400,000
Total	**2,314,000**

TNA: FO 195/939, no. 25, encl. 1, Erzurum, November 16, 1870, Taylor to Elliot, "Report on the Conditions of Industrial Classes in the Consular District of Koordistan" (copy), dated November 5, 1870.

TABLE 1.4 *Population of Kurdistan's main cities (in thousands)*

Cities	1830s–40s[1]
Bitlis	15
Diyarbekir	54
Erzurum	15[2]
Harput	20
Malatya	12
Mardin	15
Muş	7
Van	20
Urfa	50
Total	**208**

[1] Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey, 1800–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 34–35.
[2] TNA, FO 195/112, London June 1, 1836, James Brant "Report of a journey through a part of Armenia and Asia Minor," p. 33.

population density of seven individuals per square km.[135] Two-thirds of this population inhabited the region's plains and mountains while the remaining one-third inhabited the pasturelands. The population of Kurdistan was primarily rural, with only about 5 to 10 percent of the residents living in cities and small towns. This distribution was roughly comparable to the rest of the Ottoman Empire. The largest cities, including Diyarbekir, Erzurum, Harput, and Mardin (see Table 1.4), and numerous small towns, as well as thousands of villages, were located in the plains. This population concentration also meant that available

[135] Güran, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin ilk istatistik yıllığı, 1897*, 5:15.

statistics more accurately represent the demographic structure of this landscape as compared to the pastures.

Peasants, mostly residing in the plains and mountains, made up the largest segment of the population of Ottoman Kurdistan. Pastoralists constituted the second largest socioeconomic group. The quantity of historical records documenting pastoralist populations in Kurdistan increased dramatically from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the growth of British, Russian, and Ottoman imperial interests in the region. Imperial powers sought alliances with pastoralists because they were large mobile groups inhabiting and largely controlling a key geopolitical region between the Mediterranean, Caucasia, and the Persian Gulf. They were also in possession of valuable beasts of burden, particularly horses, camels, and mules, which would be extremely valuable in times of war. Among the available records is a report from 1862 prepared by Alexandre Jaba,[136] the Russian Consul of Erzurum, which provides significant details regarding Kurdish mobile indigenous groups, the number of their tents, and the number of individuals in each tent.[137] According to Jaba's report, there were about one hundred thousand Kurdish tents in the region with a minimum of seven occupants in each tent. However, according to British officials, the Kurdish tent often contained up to twenty people.[138] Based on these sources, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Kurdish-speaking pastoralist population was arguably somewhere between seven hundred thousand and two million individuals.

Kurds were not the only pastoral nomadic group in the region: the region's southern and southwestern portion was occupied by Arabic-speaking pastoralists.[139] According to Ottoman statistics from the early

[136] Alexandre Jaba published important scholarship on the history of Kurds and Kurdish language. Alexandre Jaba, *Recueil de Notices et Récits Kourdes* (St. Pétersbourg: Commissionaires de l'Académie Impériale des sciences, 1860); Alexandre Jaba and Ferdinand Justi, *Dictionnaire Kurde-Français* (St. Pétersbourg: Commissionaire de l'Académie impériale des sciences, 1879).

[137] A&P, "Report by Antoine Magack and Sir Robert Dalyell, on the Commerce of Erzeroom, for the Year 1863," Pera, March 25, 1865, in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls, during the Year 1865*, 1866, Paper Number: 3582, LXIX:1, pp. 448–52.

[138] A&P, "Report by Antoine Magack and Sir Robert Dalyell, on the Commerce of Erzeroom, for the Year 1863," Pera, March 25, 1865, in *Commercial Reports Received at the Foreign Office from Her Majesty's Consuls, during the Year 1865*, 1866, 450–52.

[139] For more on these groups see, Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East*.

twentieth century, Shammar Arabs were the largest Bedouin group, about 65,000 individuals, inhabiting the southern fringe of Ottoman Kurdistan, specifically in the vicinity of Mardin, Siverek, and Deyr-i Zor.[140] Tayy was the second-largest Arabic-speaking nomadic group, approximately 4,000 people,[141] occupying the surrounding areas of Nusaybin.[142]

Kurdistan was an exceptionally diverse region, both ethno-confessionally and linguistically. The region was inhabited by Armenians, Arabs, Chaldeans, Greeks, Kurds, Jews, Nestorians, *Süryani* (Syriac),[143] Turks, and Yezidis. There were also a considerable number of Muslim refugees, mostly Circassians and Chechens, who were settled in the region by the Ottoman government during the second half of the nineteenth century, after the Crimean War. Armenian-, Syriac-, Kurdish-, and Turkish-speaking peoples made up the largest segments of the population (Table 1.5). Confessionally, in addition to Christians, Jews, and Muslims, many Alevi, known as Qızılbash, and Yezidis lived in the region, despite the systematic suppression and violence they had faced over the previous five centuries of Ottoman rule.

Arabic, Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish, and Syriac were the region's major languages, and most people, both urban and rural, were bilingual. Kurdish and Turkish were the lingua francas of urban spaces across the entire region, though urban dwellers often also spoke Arabic or Armenian, depending on location. Across the rural areas, both Armenian and Kurdish were commonly understood. Research indicates that most Armenian peasants and town-dwellers knew some Kurdish, particularly on the plains and in the mountains. In the pasturelands, Kurdish was the dominant language in the north, east, and southeast, while Arabic and Turkish were more commonly spoken in the south and southwest. These languages were by no means uniform. Kurdish speakers were divided between the dialects of Kurmanji, Zazaki, and Sorani, and the region was also home to multiple dialects of Turkish and Arabic. Linguistic diversity was also visible in writing. In addition to the Arabic

[140] Suavi Aydın and Erdal Çiftçi, *Fihristü'l Aşair – İmparatorluğun Son Aşiret Sayımı* (Istanbul: Iletişim Yayınları, 2021), 146.

[141] Aydın and Çiftçi, 147.

[142] Another account, on the other hand, estimates Tayy's population as 13,547 individuals. Aydın and Çiftçi, 147.

[143] For a recent study on Syriacs in Ottoman Kurdistan see Henry Clements, "Documenting Community in the Late Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51, no. 3 (2019): 423–43.

TABLE 1.5 *Kurdistan's ethnoreligious composition in the 1860s (*in thousands*)*

Province	Turks	Kurds	Christians	Jews	Yezidis	Qızılbash	Arabs	Chechens	T. Imam(Shia sect)
Diyarbekir	30	391	108	1	8	12	118	15[1]	–
Erzurum	272	357	411	1	2	158	–	–	29
Harput	140	100	130	–	–	30	–	–	–
Total	**442**	**848**	**649**	**2**	**10**	**200**	**118**	**15**	**29**

[1] There are some discrepancies around the number of Muslim immigrants/refugees in the region. In his firsthand report from Ottoman Kurdistan, Consul Taylor stated that the number of this community was 150,000. However, in the Accounts and Papers published for usage in the House of Commons, this number was published as "15,000 thousand." Though Taylor's report is a firsthand account and the Accounts and Papers are a published version of this firsthand account, the second figure was more probable.
TNA: FO 195/939, no. 25, encl. 1, Erzurum, November 16, 1870, Taylor to Elliot.

alphabet, Armenian, Syriac, and Jacobite communities used the Armenian and Aramaic alphabets.

In general, it is possible to identify four characteristics of Ottoman Kurdistan's population during the nineteenth century. First, peasants and pastoralists constituted more than 90 percent of the population while urban dwellers constituted the remaining 10 percent. Second, the plains were not only the region's most densely populated areas, with their commercial city centers and large villages, they were also the most socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse zone of the landscape trilogy. Third, Armenian-speaking Christians and Kurdish-speaking Muslims made up the largest segment of the population. Fourth there was an ethnoreligious division of labor among the residents of the region. Although there were Kurdish- and Turkish-speaking peasants across the region, the majority of the peasants were Armenian-speaking people while the pastoralists, except a few Alevi, Nestorian, and Yezidi communities, were overwhelmingly Muslim. A similar kind of difference was noticeable in geographic settlements. Although most of the plains and mountains were ethnoreligiously heterogenous, some areas were heavily inhabited by certain ethnoreligious communities. For example, the plain of Muş in the northeast (see Figure 1.12) and the mountains in the provinces of Bitlis and Van were cultivated and grazed by the Armenian

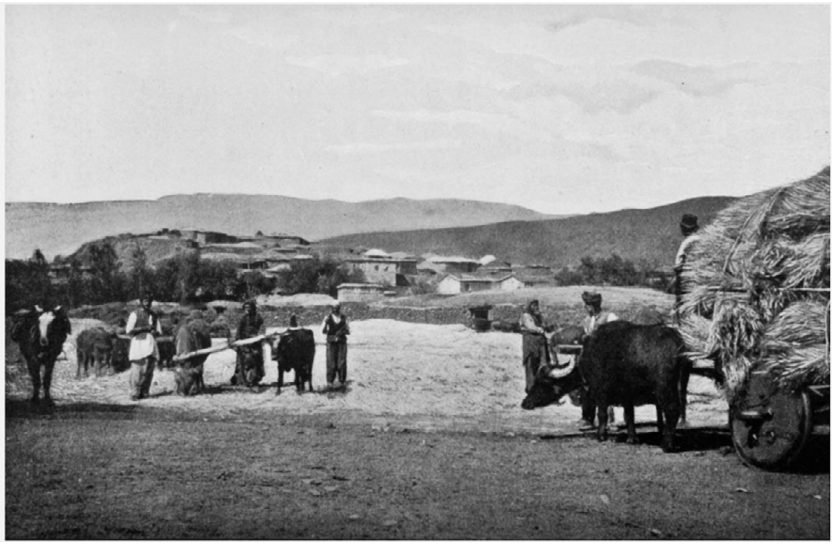


FIGURE 1.12 Armenian village of Gundemir in Muş with Bingöl Cliffs in the background. After H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, vol. II (1901), 359.

agro-pastoral peasantry while the mountains in Hakkari were occupied by Nestorian peasants. In the case of mobile pastoralists, the Arabic-speaking people were only in the southern portion of the region while Kurdish-speaking communities were found throughout the pastures and mountains of the landscape trilogy.

FIVE VILLAGES: A GLIMPSE OF SETTLEMENT PATTERNS ACROSS THE TRILOGY

To demonstrate the structure of the peasant economy across the landscape trilogy of Ottoman Kurdistan, this final section presents a portrait of five villages from diverse environmental zones in the region.[144] The portraits offer insight into village life before the climatic crises and prepare the ground for tracing how the crises of the late nineteenth century disrupted peasant environments, livelihoods, and intercommunal relations. This section draws on conventional historical materials, including Ottoman and British archival documents and travel accounts, alongside firsthand knowledge of the region accumulated through my personal history.

In the mid-nineteenth century, there were about 13,500 villages in Ottoman Kurdistan.[145] Across Kurdistan, there is a strong correlation between the presence of arable land and water resources and the number of villages found in the plains and mountains. Forty percent of villages were concentrated in the plains, where favorable climate circumstances, low altitude, and numerous rivers and streams used for irrigation supported a relatively dense population. In the plains, agriculture was the chief economic activity, shaping the socioeconomic and cultural life of the peasantry and their relationships with the environment and each other. In the mountains, on the other hand, the availability of grazing land meant that animal husbandry was far more important than agriculture for peasants. The mountainous eastern portion of the region held the highest density of agro-pastoral villages owing to abundant water resources and pastures. To characterize the social, economic, cultural, demographic, and environmental features of Kurdistan's agrarian population, five villages from different parts of the landscape trilogy are discussed.

[144] John R. McNeill, *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 49–65.

[145] Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie, Géographie Administrative: Statistique, Descriptive et Raisonnée de Chaque Province de l'Asie Mineure*, vol. II (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1891).

Aşîta was a large village of little stone houses surrounded by gardens, vineyards, orchards, and fields perched over a green valley and fenced in by exceptionally high mountains in Hakkari – the western end of the Zagros Mountain range in Iran. This village was one of the largest villages located on the mountainous portion of the landscape trilogy.[146] In the 1840s, the village contained two churches and more than 300 individual houses, each typically two stories tall and with a *çardak* (canopy) on the roof. Instead of windows, small rectangular holes bored in the walls allowed light to enter while keeping out the cold during the winter months. The lower parts of the houses were divided into two or three rooms, inhabited by the family and their cattle and sheep for additional warmth. The upper floors were open and faced south, while "enormous beams, resting on wooden pillar[s] and on the walls, support[ed] the roof."[147] The entire family lived here in summer, sleeping under the roof canopy in the heat.[148] The roof was also where the inhabitants amassed dried grass and straw for their cattle and other livestock.[149]

In the 1830s, Aşîta was one of the most populous villages in Ottoman Kurdistan, with about 5,000 residents.[150] Household were composed of least eight family members, and usually two to three nuclear families, 15–20 individuals, resided in the same building.[151] In addition to agricultural taxes, each male also paid the head tax. Aşîta was one of few villages in the region to have a school, founded by Asehal Grant (1807–44), an American medical doctor and missionary, in the fall of 1842.[152] The school building, referred to as a *Qal'ah* (fortress) by Kurdish locals,[153]

[146] William Francis Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, vol. II (London: John W. Parker, 1842), 227–28.

[147] Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849), 176–77.

[148] Gordon Taylor, *Fever and Thirst: An American Doctor among the Tribes of Kurdistan, 1835–1844*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2008), 185.

[149] Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 176–77.

[150] Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, II:226.

[151] Ainsworth, II:286.

[152] For the biography Asehal Grant and his journey in Kurdistan see Taylor, *Fever and Thirst*.

[153] When it was first completed, the building was seen as a symbol of threat or intervention into the region's politics, and it caused a rise in atrocities against Nestorian Christians in 1845–46. In fact, a few years later, when the British archeologist, botanist, and traveler Henry Layard saw this building complex in the upper mountains of the Aşîta, he described it as follows: "These buildings had been the cause of much jealousy and suspicions of the Kurds. They stand upon the summit of an isolated hill, commanding the whole valley. A position less ostentatious and proportions more modest might certainly have been chosen." Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 178.

was built in the upper hills, and the sudden change that the missionaries brought to the area sowed the seeds of sociopolitical conflict between Christian Nestorians and local Kurdish elites.[154]

Aşîta was situated in a valley alongside the Great Zap River, one of the major tributaries of the Tigris, and was well watered by numerous mountain streams.[155] The land in the area was extensively cultivated, with "every available plot of ground ... in terraces, rising one above the other, and the rocky interval that separates them ... covered with fruit-trees or tall poplars for building."[156] Rice was the primary crop, and tobacco, wheat, barley, and *garas* and *uthra*, two varieties of millet, were also cultivated.[157] *Garas*, which does not require a long time to ripen, was a staple food for peasants in this area. Beyond the fields, there were vineyards and orchards. In addition to agriculture and animal husbandry, peasants were also involved in viticulture and produced large quantities of raisins and other fruits, which they exported to Mosul and surrounding towns. In Aşîta, women wove woolen fabrics on looms, and prepared the region's famous mulberries and grapes into exportable commodities.[158] At the harvest season, they were "clipping the grapes and immersing them in boiling water" before drying them for raisins.[159] They also beat boiled-dried wheat to make bulgur – one of the main foods that families consumed year-round.

Toward the hills were pastures used for grazing cattle plantain, clover, trefoil, thistle, and the astragalus, known as *geven* by locals.[160] The villagers collected gum tragacanth from two species of the astragalus.[161] Vegetation gradually changed nearer the mountains, where a considerable sum of fennel, a principal wintertime food for cattle, was found.[162] Up in the mountains, junipers, willows, and oaks were abundant.[163] Since

[154] For the dimension of disputes between the Kurdish elites and the American missionaries see John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: A History of Their Encounter with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 78–82.

[155] Taylor, *Fever and Thirst*, 185.

[156] Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, II:227.

[157] Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 171. [158] Layard, 178. [159] Layard, 176–77.

[160] Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, II:228.

[161] James Brant, "Notes of a Journey through a Part of Kurdistán, in the Summer of 1838," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 10 (1840): 383.

[162] Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, II:228.

[163] Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 166–67.

poplars, oaks and other trees grew fast and were in great demand for constructing buildings and assembling rafts used for river transportation, many these trees were exported to Mosul via the Great Zap.[164] Oak trees also supplied galls, which were used for dyeing and tanning leather. Though the galls were an important commercial item for the region, a few local landlords monopolized the trade and so Aşîta's residents did not earn much from gall harvesting.[165]

Aşîta had its own *zom*, "enlivened with the gaudy flowers of spring."[166] This beautiful pastureland, called *Zoma Suwarri* (today's Siwara Kotran),[167] was at an altitude of 2,185 m (7,169 ft).[168] The entire pasture was "sprinkled with the large bright blossoms of the Crocus Alpina and Azalea procumbens and ... several species of squill. Year-round snow on the upper hills provided good circumstances for the growth of nutritious grasses, so the *zom* served as an effective grazing area for hundreds of cattle and sheep."[169] There were some other *zom*s in the vicinity, used by the neighboring villages "in harmony with each other."[170]

Unlike Aşîta, Kızılağaç was a small agro-pastoral village located on the edge of the plains segment of the landscape trilogy in Muş and just six km away from the Murat River, a major tributary of the Euphrates. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Kızılağaç was comprised of thirty Armenian households.[171] Most of the peasants engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. Because the arid and stony land was not suitable for the cultivation of wheat or barley, millet was the main agricultural crop. The area of Kızılağaç had rich grasslands: different species of fennel and wild grasses provided sufficient food for the peasantry's considerable livestock, particularly cattle and sheep herds. In 1838, Kızılağaç's

[164] Layard, 167. [165] Layard, 166–67.

[166] Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, II:233.

[167] According to ethnographer Serdar Canan, this area is still a pastureland used by the Kurdish peasants in the region. Today, the peasants called this area as Siwara Kotran meaning the flocks of the pigeons in Kurdish. By looking at the similarity between the travel accounts and today's pronunciation, we can clearly state that the pastureland that has been described by Ainsworth and Layard is today's Siware Kotran. I am grateful to Serdar Canan for this critical note.

[168] Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, II:230.

[169] Ainsworth, II:234–35. [170] Ainsworth, II:233.

[171] Brant, "Notes of a Journey through a Part of Kurdistán, in the Summer of 1838," 353–54.

residents possessed 300 cattle and 600 sheep.[172] On average, it seems that each household in the village owned roughly ten head of cattle and 20 head of sheep, which meant that Kızılağaç's agro-pastoral peasants were relatively wealthy.[173]

Livestock were not only a source of wealth and food, but also of energy, as they provided muscle power for ploughing the land and heated the house by being inside during the wintertime. Furthermore, peasants living in this part of Kurdistan used animal dung (*goashgoor* in Armenian, *tezek* in Turkish and *qelax/rîx/sergin* in Kurdish) as fuel for cooking and heating. By the end of winter, the women of Kızılağaç were typically employed in making *goashgoor* by mixing water, chopped fine straw, and fresh animal dung, which was accumulated in a large hole maintained inside the stable. The women used pitchforks or their bare feet to aerate this mixture, shaped it into rectangular or oval pieces, and placed it in the sun to dry.[174] When ready, it was stored in open baskets inside the house.[175] *Tezek* was a key source of fuel for villages and towns, and for Kurdistan's cities, which also lacked wood.[176]

Kızılağaç served as the wintering grounds for thirty Kurdish Atmanki pastoralist families and their cattle, who all lived in a few buildings. In 1838, the Atmanki Kurds paid 480 *l* (*lira*) to local authorities to winter in the village.[177] Pastoralists usually stayed in the village from early November to late March (depending on the cold) – a system called *kışlak* (wintering in Turkish).[178] As a result, Kızılağaç's human and

[172] Brant, 353–54. [173] Brant, 353–54.

[174] Susie Hoogasian Villa and Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *Armenian Village Life before 1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 35.

[175] Robert Curzon, *Armenia: A Year at Erzeroom* (London: John Murray, 1854), 114; Villa and Matossian, *Armenian Village Life before 1914*, 34–35.

[176] The British botanist and traveler Robert Curzon, who visited the region, described the dried animal dung as the "only fuel" in the city of Erzurum. Curzon, *Armenia*, 111–12.

[177] Brant, "Notes of a Journey through a Part of Kurdistán, in the Summer of 1838," 353.

[178] Available historical records suggest that the *kışlak* was a nineteenth-century phenomenon that came into being during the formation of the modern Ottoman–Iranian border in the early nineteenth century. Before the final demarcation of the border, most of the Kurdish tribes were wintering in the grasslands located in the western end of the Iranian plateau. However, with the demarcation of the border, the mobility of transhumant Kurdish pastoralists had been disrupted. To encourage and convince large pastoralists to reside/remain in the Ottoman lands, the local Ottoman administration had formulated this new arrangement called *kışlak*. Accordingly, large important Kurdish pastoralists, who used to be wintering in the Iranian plateau resided in the villages inhabited predominantly by the Armenians in the provinces of Erzurum, Van, and Muş. The pastoralists would pay a fee to the villagers for the houses as well as some other fees to the Ottoman governors or local Kurdish landlords. However, the details regarding the

FIGURE 1.13 Kurdish peasant women in Er-Rus. Courtesy of İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 90567/111.

animal populations fluctuated greatly throughout the year, with the population more than doubling in the winter.[179]

The village of Gıravi/Kireh (today's Şenoba in Muş province), on the east bank of the Murat River, was a small agro-pastoral village located on the plains and inhabited by twenty Armenian peasant families in the mid 1830s. The village was the property of a Muslim landlord, known as

process of negotiations as well as payments and the rates of hosting fees agreed upon are "unclear." It seems that the amount of the hosting fee changed throughout the region and was perhaps determined by the number of residing pastoralist families and their herds of cattle and sheep. Although, theoretically, the *kışlak* system was abolished in the late 1840s, it seems that in practice it continued in some parts of the region. In fact, one of the main requests of the Armenian patriarchy that had been submitted to the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was the abolishment of the *kışlak* system. Çiftçi, "Fragile Alliances in the Ottoman East," 110–11.

[179] In addition to residing in the villages, some pastoralists like Celali Kurds in the district of Bayezid were using some large cages located in the area during the winter. The Ottoman statesman Mehmet Hurşid Pasha has described not only this practice but also the ways in which it functioned in great detail. For more on *kışlak* and the ways in which it functioned in the Ottoman Kurdistan see Mehmed Hurşid, *Seyâhatnâme-i Hudûd* (Istanbul: Simurg, 1997), 261–62.

Murad Beg of Hınıs in Erzurum province.[180] Peasants in Gıravi cultivated wheat and barley in "light and sandy" soil.[181] Because they practiced dryland farming, the quantity and quality of wheat was dependent on weather conditions. While grain yielded ten- to twelvefold in wet years, yields decreased to only four- to fivefold in dry seasons.[182] Peasants also cultivated linseed for oil, which was used in lanterns for lighting the house.[183] Gıravi had abundant pasturelands, and residents possessed a considerable number of livestock, including 300 head of cattle and buffalo, 20 brood mares, and about 300 sheep.[184] Like Kızılağaç and almost all other villages in the plain of Muş, peasants in Gıravi mainly used animal dung for fuel, while village women manufactured wool for domestic use. In the mid 1830s, Gıravi households paid three different forms of tax. This included three *Saliyane*s, which was about 5*l* or 6*l* annually, a poll tax, and the landlord's share. In addition to this heavy taxation, peasants were obliged to provide quarters for ten Kurdish pastoralist families and their livestock during the winter months.[185]

Unlike Kızılağaç and Gıravi, the mountain villages in the district of Lice and Hazro, located in the northwest of Diyarbekir province, were inhabited by diverse multicultural communities. The village of Şimşem/Şimşim/Shamsham (today's Ormankaya), for example, was one of the largest mountain villages and was comprised of 142 households of Armenians, Jacobites (Orthodox Syriacs), and Kurds.[186] The village's western and southwestern ends were well-forested, and its northern and eastern parts were under cultivation. Two small streams ran across nearby fields, vegetable gardens, and orchards, which contained all sorts of fruit trees, including apple, pear, apricot, peach, and plum. The orchards also held almond and walnut trees, which only grow where water is abundant. In addition to wheat, barley, and other grain crops, available water and a well-functioning irrigation system enabled the villagers to cultivate tobacco and cotton as cash crops.

Şimşim was a proto-industrial hub among dozens of mountain villages across Lice and Hazro. Peasants in the surrounding area often spun their own cotton and wool thread and brought it to Şimşim for weaving. The most common textile manufactured was *kras/kiras*, a thin white fabric used for pillowcases, pajamas, and undergarments. In addition to the

[180] Brant, "Notes of a Journey through a Part of Kurdistán, in the Summer of 1838," 348.
[181] Brant, 348. [182] Brant, 348. [183] Brant, 348.
[184] TNA, FO 195/112, Erzurum, July 16, 1839, James Brant to Lord Pansonby, "Report of a Tour through a part of Kurdistan in 1838," p. 258. Also see, Brant, 348.
[185] Brant, 348. [186] BOA, NFS.d 3732.

nascent textile industry, there were blacksmiths, tinsmiths, woodshops, and carpenters serving the region in Şimşim. Peasants from surrounding villages brought their tools to the village for sharpening, and purchased wedding chests, cabinets, and other furniture from carpenters working with the wood of the region's abundant walnut trees.[187]

Şimşim had a mixed population of eighty-two Armenian households, thirty-six Syriac households, and fourteen Muslim households. In the 1840s, about one-third of male subjects in the village were children, and most of the population was of the middle and lower classes. For example, among the village's Christian residents, only one paid the highest tax ('*ala*), while 96 villagers paid *evsat* (the middle), 129 villagers paid *edna* (the lowest tax), and 7 were considered *mande* (non-taxable, a category used for sick and disabled male subjects).[188] Except for those serving in the army, Muslim peasants in Şimşim were demographically similar to their Christian neighbors. Eight out of thirty-one Muslim male subjects were identified as taxable (*tuvana*), nine were non-taxable *musin* (similar to *mande*), and two were soldiers. In the early 1840s, there were only five male children in the Muslim community. Interestingly, when this survey was taken, seven Muslim peasants were out of the village. Since Şimşim was located on the local trade routes to Hınıs and Erzurum, it is likely that those individuals were muleteers or small-scale peddlers.[189]

Zengi (today's Dolunay) was a neighboring village about 9 km northwest of Şimşim. It was a small mountain village, and unlike Şimşim, it was inhabited by Zazaki-speaking (a dialect of Kurdish) Muslims. In the early 1840s, Zengi comprised 53 households with 146 male subjects. Children and non-taxable subjects made up more than 50 percent of the village's male population, and only thirty-six individuals were taxable. Another six were soldiers, and nineteen were absent from the village at the time of the survey. The existence of such detailed figures demarcates the growing capacity of the Tanzimat state in the rural areas of Kurdistan.[190] The village was surrounded by forests and grasslands, with limited arable land and running water. Irrigation was practiced only on farmlands to the south of the village, where the peasants grew cotton and vegetables, and kept a few walnut and fruit orchards. In this area, there were also groves

[187] This paragraph is based on an ethnographic interview with Bahriye Pehlivan, my mother, whose childhood memory provided a great number of details regarding socio-economic cooperation and interactions between the villages in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The interview was conducted on August 30, 2020, in Istanbul, Turkey.

[188] BOA, NFS.d 3732. [189] BOA, NFS.d 3732. [190] BOA, NFS.d 3732.

of poplar trees, which served as the main building material for the village and for those living in its vicinity. In early June, when running water began to substantially diminish in the village, peasants would elect one or two headmen, called *waraz* in Zazaki, to organize an irrigation schedule for the entire village. Wheat, barley, and chickpeas were cultivated on dry lands where a great number of almond trees grew as well. As there were not many orchards, fruit sellers visited the village regularly throughout the summer and early fall. Vineyards were located outside of village and the villagers used grapes to make molasses and other sweets that they consumed during long winter nights.[191]

Because Zengi was located at a high altitude with abundant grazing areas and forests, the peasantry possessed a considerable number of livestock, including cattle and sheep. Every peasant household owned two or three cows as well as a few sheep and goats; only 10 percent of villagers owned a pair or more of oxen. Some wealthy inhabitants owned horses, and almost every household in the village had a donkey, which was used for transport. During the sowing season, oxen owners often ploughed farmlands in exchange for labor to harvest grain crops or for cutting fennel, which required a large amount of muscle power. Peasants with large numbers of sheep and goats housed their herds in stables called *gom*(e) near the village, while cattle and other draft animals were kept inside peasants' homes in winter.[192] Since forests were abundant, peasants fed their livestock with dry fennel as well as fresh oak branches, or *velg* in Zazaki. The fennel was usually gathered cooperatively and bundled in spring. *Velg*, on the other hand, was cut by peasants collectively in August and September, and mounded into a circle in front of each family's home. *Velg* was the most important food for livestock during the winter. After animals ate the leaves, peasants used the dry branches as fuel for cooking and bread-making. In this well-wooded region of Kurdistan, wood was used for heating while animal dung served as fertilizer rather than fuel.

As arable land was limited, the peasants of Zengi also dealt in small-scale trade within the region. In particular, galls, harvested from the abundant oak forests nearby, were an important commercial item. As there were only a few looms in the village, most villagers spun their raw cotton and wool and then took their yarn to the neighboring village

[191] From the interview with Bahriye Pehlivan. The interview was conducted on August 30, 2020, in Istanbul, Turkey.

[192] Villa and Matossian, *Armenian Village Life before 1914*, 33.

of Şimşim to be woven into fabric. Not everyone in the village had their own land, and many poor or landless men in Zengi traveled to neighboring villages as daily agricultural laborers, while female family members worked as agricultural laborers within the village in exchange for grain, usually a *çap* of wheat (about 10 kg or 22 lbs.), seasonally. During summer and early fall, peddlers frequently visited Zengi to sell pears, apples, and occasionally, peppers. Additionally, an Armenian tinner visited the village every summer and remained for a few weeks.

Aşîta, Kızılağaç, Gıravi, Şimşim, and Zengi are the villages both in the mountains and plains of the landscape trilogy of Kurdistan. These villages display not only the geographic and environmental landscape of Kurdistan but also its social, economic, demographic, and cultural diversity. Economically, village life was based on sowing fields, harvesting crops, grazing livestock, weaving cotton and wool, making fabrics, and trading commodities. Socioculturally, it was a life that was not constrained by the ethno-confessional and ethno-linguistic boundaries of the residents; Muslims and Christians were interdependent. Everyday peasant life under the usual environmental and climatic circumstances in Kurdistan included both agricultural production and animal husbandry. In agro-pastoral zones where peasants possessed more livestock than land, animal husbandry was far more important than agricultural production. Animals carried significant weight in the agrarian economy of Kurdistan. Peasants, pastoralists, and their herd animals occupied neighboring pastures and in some villages they lived together during the long winters. Available examples indicate that the villages wintering Kurdish-speaking pastoralists were for the most part those of Armenian peasants. The social, economic, political, cultural, and emotional relationships between village peasants and pastoralists depended on a delicate balance.

CONCLUSION

Ottoman Kurdistan was characterized by a unique "landscape trilogy" of mountains, pastures, and plains. Although these landscapes represented distinct ecosystems, people, especially pastoralists, brought them into conversation. The region's vast geographic scale and significant variations in weather patterns made pastoralism an indispensable environmental and economic adaptation in the region. The geographic distribution and proximity of pasturelands across the region influenced socioeconomic exchanges and intercommunal relationships and also determined the

location and dimension of potential confrontations in times of environmental disaster. The landscape and geography of the region played a critical role in the structure of intercommunal relationships in Kurdistan.

Given political pressures on the Ottoman Empire generally by the mid-nineteenth century, and the constraints on reform specific to Kurdistan, the Tanzimat reforms produced mixed results. It is little wonder that Suavi Aydın and Jelle Verhejis argue that in Diyarbekir, the Tanzimat reforms were at best confined to the urban centers.[193] However, as will be shown in the following chapters, my research indicates that Tanzimat policies made deeper inroads into Kurdistan. Attempts to impose the Land Reform of 1858 and, more importantly, both central-state and local government officials' efforts to help the province's agrarian populations when they suffered the effects of environmental crises in the form of crop failures, food shortages, and locust infestations, did make an impact. Local citizens were involved as well: they petitioned the central government to make good on its promises of equality and fairness. Hampered by an array of local powers, limited resources, and insufficient capacity, these interventions did not always produce the desired results. Still, by the last decades of the century, Kurdistan witnessed the growing impact of the state, as officials consolidated power in new ways in both town and countryside.

Kurdistan's diverse landscape was inhabited by an extremely cosmopolitan and ethnoreligiously diverse population. Although Kurdish-speaking people were mostly pastoralists, and almost all Armenians were either peasants or town-dwellers, their differential forms of subsistence did not mean that these communities were living apart from each other. Under the usual environmental, economic, and political circumstances, a symbiotic relationship existed between the residents of the trilogy. As will be shown in the next chapter, Kurdistan's nineteenth-century economy was organized around these relationships and the regional economy grew out of collaboration between agrarian, herding, and urban inhabitants. In many parts of the landscape trilogy, there were beneficial networks between herders, agriculturalists, and commercial and industrial town-dwellers, and symbiotic exchanges functioned without a large-scale socio-political disruption or confrontation up until the late 1870s. Chapter 2 narrates the political economy of this collaboration in Kurdistan.

[193] Suavi Aydın and Jelle Verheij, "Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800–1870," in *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870–1915*, ed. Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 44.