A Literature Review: The Relationship Between the Ottoman Empire and Tribes in the XIXth Century

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Abstract

There is an extensive literature on the relationship between the Ottoman central government and tribal groups in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. In this article, I aim to provide a summary of prominent works written in this field. Tribal groups have been studied in different ways according to their relationship with the Ottoman central government. I will examine selected works under three headings. In the first group, tribes are treated as partners of the central Ottoman government. Accordingly, a significant number of studies have addressed the issue of tribes in the second half of the 19th century with reference to negotiation and partnership. In these studies, tribal groups have been presented as active agents engaged in a mutual discourse of power with the Ottoman central government. Another group of scholars have highlighted the role of tribes in sustaining the policy of Abdulhamid II that aimed to unify all subjects of the empire against the separatist movements. Secondly, I will focus on studies that examine the tribal groups as significant actors of the Hamidian era. Lastly, I will shed light on studies that consider the tribes as part of identity politics in the Ottoman Empire. This part will address tribes as part of complex mutual relations that formed ethnic identities in the late 19th century. Overall, by means of available studies in literature, this paper aims to provide an analysis of the relationship between the Ottoman central government and tribal groups in the 19th century.

Keywords: 19th Century Ottoman Empire, Tribes, Abdulhamid II, Kurdish tribes, Tribal leaders.

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Bir Literatür İncelemesi: XIX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Aşiretler İlişkisi

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Öz

XIX. yüzyıl Osmanlı merkezi yönetimi ve aşiretler arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanan oldukça zengin bir literatür vardır. Bu makalede, alanın öne çıkan çalışmalarının bir özetini yapmayı amaçlıyorum. Aşiret grupları Osmanlı merkezi yönetimi ile olan ilişkileri içerisinde farklı şekillerde ele alınmışlardır. Bu makalede değineceğim çalışmaları üç başlık altında inceleyeceğim. Araştırmacıların önemli bir bölümü XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve aşiretler arasındaki ilişkiyi müzakere ve ortaklık argümanı çerçevesinde ele almışlardır. Bu çalışmalarda aşiretler, Osmanlı merkezi hükümeti ile karşılıklı bir güç ilişkisi içinde olan aktif özneler olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Araştırmacıların dikkate değer bir bölümü II. Abdülhamid yönetiminin (1876-1908) imparatorluğun tüm tebaasını ayrılıkçı hareketlere karşı birleştirmeyi amaçlayan politikasında aşiretlerin rolüne önem vermişlerdir. İkinci olarak aşiretleri Hamidiye döneminin önemli aktörleri olarak ele alan çalışmalara odaklanacağım. Son bölümde ise, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu`nda aşiretleri kimlik siyasetinin bir parçası olarak ele alan önemli çalışmalara değineceğim. Bu bölümde, aşiretlerin 19. yüzyılın sonlarında etnik kimlikleri oluşturan karmaşık ve karşılıklı ilişkilerin bir parçası olarak öne çıktığı görülecektir. Bu makale, literatürdeki çalışmalar aracılığıyla, 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı merkezi yönetimi ile aşiretler arasındaki ilişkinin bir analizini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: 19. yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Aşiretler, II. Abdülhamid, Kürt aşiretleri, Aşiret liderleri.

I. Introduction

Tribes and their relations with the Middle Eastern states have become a mutual interest of both anthropologists and historians in modern scholarship. Even though substantial literature on the topic has been produced, there are some unresolved issues about the tribes in the Middle East. Currently, there is little agreement between social scientists as to what constitutes a tribe. Ibn Khaldun`s concept of *'Asabiyyah* – considered a classical definition – emphasizes unity, group consciousness, and a sense of shared purpose and social cohesion, originally used in the context of tribalism.[1] Dawn Chatty`s definition of tribe also constitutes importance. She defines tribe as sharing real or fictive blood ties that goes back to an apical.[2] In his significant study, Richard Tapper defines tribes as localized groups in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organization, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct.[3]

Nora Elizabeth Barakat criticizes the usage of several terms such as *Oymak, Boy, Cemaat,* and *Aşiret.*[4] She argues that these terms were used by Ottoman officials in imperial orders *(mühimme)* to describe diverse human communities linked by mobility.[5] In the administration of the Ottoman Anatolia between the XVII. and XVIII. centuries, Barakat claims that the tribe *(aşiret)* was a residual category used to organize human populations.[6] Moreover, this term identified the diverse group of populations as external to an increasingly regularized rural administration that operated based on the category of a village in a broader context of modern state formation. It is important to note that *"aşiret" (aşair* in Arabic) is an imagined word used to regularize human collectivities in relation to an increasingly bounded and territorial state.[7] However, Yoav Alon claims that whereas the term tribe in English carry negative connotations, such as divisiveness, rivalries, and sectarianism; in the Middle East it is used as a matter of

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1 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1958.

2 Dawn Chatty, "The Bedouin in Contemporary Syria: The Persistence of Tribal Authority and Control", in *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 1, 2010, p. 29-49.

3 Richard Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East", in *Tribes and State Formations in the Middle East,* Philip Khoury and Josep Kostiner (eds), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 48.

4 Nora Elizabeth Barakat, "Making Tribes in the Late Ottoman Empire", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 3, 2021, p.482-487.

5 Barakat, "Making Tribes in the Late Ottoman Empire", p. 1-2.

6 Barakat, "Making Tribes in the Late Ottoman Empire", p. 1-2.

7 Barakat, "Making Tribes in the Late Ottoman Empire", p. 3.

fact, as part of reality.[8] Moreover, the term also carries positive connotations for the local people and a sense of pride. In addition, people view them as building blocks of their society. Rather than being viewed as a major problem for modern governments, or as a relic of the past, tribal formations, at this point, can easily be seen as modern phenomena.

I argue that in the XIX. century, the relationship between the Ottoman central government and tribes was not constant because tribes and tribalism constituted dynamic entities. In the second half of the XIX. century, the Ottoman governors were required to establish their authority over the tribes that had been semi-autonomously living in the distant regions of the empire. Moreover, they needed the support and loyalty of the tribes to maintain a stable regime. As the research addressed in the second part of the article reveals, this led to a cooperation between local tribesmen and the Ottoman governors. The Ottoman officers needed the knowledge and help of these rural notables to penetrate the tribal regions. Tribes in the Ottoman Empire were dynamic formations. Tribesmen could manipulate and expand their roles and interests in their mutual relationship with the Ottoman administration indicating that their relationship with the Ottoman government changed over the course.

There is a very rich literature on the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and tribes in the XIX. century. In this article, I will summarize some of these studies starting from the Tanzimat era. I will examine several selected works under three headings. The first group will include literature that considered tribes as partners of the central Ottoman government. As I will examine in the second section of this article, a significant group of scholars have addressed the issue of tribes in the second half of the XIX. century under partnership and negotiation arguments in Ottoman history. In these studies, tribes are viewed as active agents that engaged in mutual power relations with the Ottoman central government. Some scholars emphasized the role of tribes in the policy of Abdulhamid II which aimed to unify all other subjects of the empire against the separatist movements. Furthermore, I will focus on the studies that examine the tribal groups as significant agents of the Hamidian era (1876-1908). In this section, I aim to reveal the versatile policies of Abdulhamid II in integrating the tribes into the Ottoman central government. Lastly, I will concentrate on studies that consider the tribes as part of identity politics in the Ottoman Empire. These studies attribute that the complex mutual relations of tribes aided in formation of ethnic identities in the late XIX. century.

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8 Yoav Alon, "Tribalism in the Middle East: A Useful Prism for Understanding the Region", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 3, 2021, p. 477.

II. Tribes as Partners of the Ottoman Central Government

In the first half of the XIX. century, independence, and separatist movements began to affect the Ottoman Empire. To prevent these moves and re-establish the authority of the Ottoman Empire, sultan Mahmud II made great efforts. Martin Van Bruinessen argues that in this era, while the death knell was ringing for the Kurdish emirates, some of them attained unprecedented power and splendor.[9] When Mahmud II ascended the throne, the Kurdish emirs were not only semi-independent but also constituted big families that were influential in certain regions. Almost all over Anatolia, they took over the functions of the government and became de facto independent rulers. Even the appointed governors acted independently and did not take Istanbul into account.

Cengiz Orhonlu argues that big tribes in Anatolia constituted a significant problem for the Ottoman government during the Tanzimat era.[10] The Ottoman governors accelerated the resettlement policies to gain control over the nomadic tribes. Yusuf Halaçoğlu reveals that the idea in all these attempts was to compensate for the decrease in the agricultural income, which was caused by the deterioration of the tax system as well as the financial burden of long wars.[11] However, geographical area in the settlement agreement did not meet the needs of the tribes since it failed to provide the necessary requirements such as water for animals and fertile soil for agriculture. This caused the tribes to embrace nomadic lifestyle once again.

Bruinessen argues that Mahmud II, who initiated an energetic policy of centralization in the immediate aftermath of the Russian War of 1806-12, was largely successful.[12] He defeated the rebel pashas and feudal lords through a series of political and military initiatives and appointed state officers from Istanbul. The local leaders in Anatolia had been subjugated, and the suppression of Kurdistan could begin. From that point forward, Kurdistan would be ruled directly by the Ottoman governors on paper, but in practice the Ottoman administration would be very ineffective. Ottoman officers acquired power in the immediate vicinity, but they had no authority anywhere else.[13]

Botan was a significant emirate in the region and had a brief but bright period before disappearing. It was ruled by Mir Bedirhan Bey and many scholars consider his rule and uprising as the first expression of modern Kurdish nationalism. The

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9 Martin van Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* İstanbul: İletişim, 2003, p. 268.

10 Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu`nda Aşiretlerin İskânı,* İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1987, p. 113.

11 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskân Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014, p. 239.

12 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 269.

13 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 269.

defeat of the Ottomans by the Egyptian army under the command of Ibrahim Pasha in 1839, an event watched closely by many Kurdish chieftains, was regarded as further proof of the empire`s loss of endurance by many tribal leaders.[14] At the same time, Bedirhan Bey effectively controlled the region between Diyarbekir, Mosul, and Iran through military garrisons.

In middle Kurdistan, there were also Nestorians. About half of the Nestorians were tribally organized and had an independent lifestyle. Others were peasants attached to Kurdish aghas. Bruinessen argues that all of them, namely the Kurds, hoped to get rid of the permanent domination of the Muslims.[15] Many Nestorians believed that the European powers would help gain independence in the region. Due to the missionary activities in the area, many Kurds felt threatened. Some constructions such as schools and dormitories that were built by the American missionaries in Tiyari had dominated the whole area. This caused an increasing concern for the Kurds and raised the tension between Muslims and Christians.[16] When the Nestorians of Tiyari did not pay the annual tribute to Hakkari mir he sought the help of Bedirhan Bey.[17] A big force of tribal groups were sent to the region by Bedirhan Bey.[18] This resulted in a horrific massacre that was heard in Europe. The British and French officers pressed for the punishment of Bedirhan Bey and the prevention of the massacre of Christians. A strong army was sent to the region and Bedirhan Bey had to surrender in 1847.

In his study that analyzes and searches for background patterns in the Kurdish nationalist movements, Hakan Özoğlu argues that Bedirhan revolt can be seen as a response to the Ottoman centralization policies.[19] He reveals that due to the financial necessities required for such an overwhelming re-structuring, the Ottoman government had to find extra income.[20] The most proper way to fill the central treasury was to introduce a financial centralization policy in which the Ottoman governors collected taxes directly. For Özoğlu, such a centralization policy allowed the local Ottoman administration to get back at the Kurdish tribal leaders, whose loyalty was questionable.[21]

The immediate aftermath of the Bedirhan Bey revolt resulted in chaos and turmoil in the emirate where all hostile tribes competed. It was not possible for

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14 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 270.

15 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 271.

16 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 271.

17 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 271.

18 Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet,* p. 271.

19 Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p. 58-59.

20 Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* p.53.

21 Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* p. 60.

the Ottoman governors to mediate the situation. Because no tribe trusted them; moreover, they despised them. These governors lacked the power to enforce the laws and maintain order. In order to deal with this chaos, the settlement of the tribes in Southeastern Anatolia, which lacked any settlers, was discussed. A very large commission was formed for this purpose: *Fırka-i Islahiye*. There was a military unit under its command. The aim of the commission was to try to persuade the tribes to leave their nomadic lifestyle, whether in their highlands or winter quarters.

In the Tanzimat era, the Ottoman governors viewed the tribal groups as subjects that were living on the frontiers, the remote corners of the Empire as they were represented in the socio-political order – apart from the institutions of the empire. Eugene Rogan defines the frontiers as a contact zone between the Ottoman central government and the tribes.[22] By expanding the instruments of the Tanzimat to the periphery, as Rogan reveals, the Ottoman officers launched many reforms towards the tribes to secure their position on Kurdish and Arab frontiers. They tried to keep the tribal groups in the frontier zones under their control. The mobile structure of the tribes especially constituted an obstacle for governors' plans. At this point, Reşat Kasaba argues that the creation of a framework that guaranteed the continuing movement across special and social divides constituted an important extension of the Ottoman attempts made toward the tribes.[23] Kasaba claims that a more rigid insistence on management, statis, and legibility towards tribes became the norm for all the other states of that area.[24] Under these circumstances, many nomadic communities had specific aims in terms of sedentarization by the late Ottomans. However, it was not an easy mission. As Kasaba reveals, statis and mobility continued to exist simultaneously.[25] Consequently, Kasaba shows that nomads who incorporated sedentary forms of living, farming, etc... managed to comply with the laws of the Ottoman Empire without completely abandoning their nomadic lives. However, in his recent study, Sabri Ateş developed a counter argument to Kasaba.[26] He argues that the process of boundary making and the destruction of the Kurdish emirates fundamentally altered the dynamics of tribes, such as seasonal migrations, and forced them to choose the territorial base of their loyalties.[27] Moreover, according to Ateş,

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22 Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan 1850-1921,* Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 6.

23 Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees,* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009, p. 24.

24 Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire,* p. 25.

25 Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire,* p. 25-26.

26 Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman Iranian Borderland: Making a Boundary 1843-1914,* Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 77-78.

27 Ateş, *The Ottoman Iranian Borderland,* p. 77-78.

despite the attempts of the empire, it was only the finalization of the boundary and the routinization of modern state practices that brought tribal cross-border movements to an end.

Yonca Köksal examines the state control and settlement of tribes during the Tanzimat era.[28] In her study, which includes comparative cases, she reveals that the Ottoman government recognized that the most influential mechanism to consolidate the state`s control was a well-defined tribal chief.[29] She also draws significant conclusions about the Tanzimat policy towards tribes. She reveals that even within the same geographical area the Ottoman central government could combine direct and indirect rule – through coercion and mediation – to expand its control over sedentary and non-sedentary populations.[30] However, the decision of the Ottoman central government to use coercion or mediation was based on its interactions with the tribes.[31] In addition, the policies of the Tanzimat statesmen became contingent upon the geographical boundness and internal organization of the tribes. All of these factors played an important role in Ottoman Empire and tribe relations during the Tanzimat era.

Michael Eppel argues that the geopolitical location and their importance for the Ottomans gave the Kurdish tribes a relatively high degree of significance and power.[32] Starting in the late XIX. century, Kurdistan was exposed to the activities of Western merchants, missionaries, and military forces. However, he argues that in the first half of the XIX. century, the balance of power between the Ottoman government and the Kurdish emirates began to change.[33] He claims that the Tanzimat reforms but mainly the centralization of the Ottoman administration curtailed the tribes` authority to maneuver.[34] In other words, the Tanzimat policies eliminated the capacity of tribal leaders to act independently in this geography which was in the interest of foreign powers. Moreover, as Eppel adds, these policies allowed for many tribesmen to preserve their autonomy to an end.

In his study that focuses on the newly established Ottoman administrative and bureaucratic apparatus through the engagement of the local population,

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28 Yonca Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Settlement of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3, 2006, p. 469-491.

29 Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation", p. 475-476.

30 Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation", p. 486-487.

31 Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation", p. 486-487.

32 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," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2, 2008, p. 237-258.

33 Eppel, "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates", p. 237-238.

34 Eppel, "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates", p. 240.

Ahmad Amara claims that the modern state-making process was more complex and contingent on various socio-economic factors and imperial politics.[35] He argues that the Tanzimat – more than a top down imposition – was implemented largely by and through local communities.[36] Moreover, Yasemin Avcı claims that the principal goal of Tanzimat centralization was to integrate the local centers of power into the new administrative structure.[37] The Ottoman central government no longer preferred a rigid policy of authoritarianism, but tried gentle persuasion to promote tribal loyalty to the Ottoman state. Under the framework of these policies, the majority of the local tribal leaders managed to integrate themselves into the administrative structures as members of new boards such as the administrative and municipal councils.[38]

Hakan Özoğlu reveals that it is a serious mistake to think that the Kurdish tribesmen were passive agents in their relationship with the empire.[39] The Ottoman Empire supported the local notables, hoping to benefit from their prestige and knowledge within their tribal areas. Özoğlu argues that it eventually paved the way for the emergence of stronger Kurdish tribal leaders whose authority depended considerably upon the state`s patronage.[40] The Ottoman central government did not prefer to interfere in their succession and internal affairs, but they recognized the authority of the ruler. Similar to Özoğlu`s argument, Suavi Aydın and Oktay Özel revealed that the tribal organizations that established their legitimacy from within needed the role of suzerain power to further strengthen their positions.[41] This independent nature of the tribal structure mainly contributed to the interdependency between the tribes and the imperial powers. As the common narrative in the literature claims, the independent nature of the tribal groups created difficulties for the political center of the Ottoman Empire. It is important to note, however, that such interdependence was established on a fine balance of power between the Ottoman central government and the tribes. Uğur Bayraktar defines this case as flexible centralization which was based on

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35 Ahmad Amara, "Governing Property: The Politics of Ottoman Land Law and State-Making in Southern Palestine, 1850-1917," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2016, p. 312.

36 Amara, "Governing Property", p. 312.

37 Yasemin Avcı, "The Application of *Tanzimat* in the Desert: The Bedouins and the Creation of a New Town in Southern Palestine (1860–1914)," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6, 2009, p. 969-983.

38 Avcı, "The Application of *Tanzimat* in the Desert", p. 979.

39 Hakan Özoğlu, "State-Tribe Relations: Kurdish Tribalism in the 16th- and 17th-Century Ottoman Empire," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 23, no. 1, 1996, p. 5-27.

40 Özoğlu, "State-Tribe Relations", p. 15.

41 Suavi Aydın and Oktay Özel, "Power Relations Between Tribe and State in Ottoman Eastern Anatolia", *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3, no. 4, 2006, p. 51-67.

the partnership between the government and the tribal leaders.[42] By criticizing the reified dichotomies between a centralizing state and local notables, Bayraktar reveals that the success of centralization would lie with the integration of notables into the provincial administration which is mainly narrated as a unilateral act of the Ottoman government.

There is also the negotiation process between Arab Bedouins and the Ottoman governors. In this regard, there are two major perspectives in the literature. One group of scholars argue a unilinear process of the state domination between Arab tribes and the Ottoman central government. Eugene Rogan claims that with the instruments of the Tanzimat the Arab Bedouins were incorporated into the Ottoman state administration .[43] In this regard, he uses Michael Mann's term, infrastructural power – the capacity of the central government in penetrating the civil society and implementing some sociopolitical decisions. Furthermore, he claims that the Ottoman governors could establish their authority in Arab frontier zone by initiating the instruments of the Tanzimat.[44] In this unilinear relationship between the Arab Bedouins and the Ottoman central government, Norman Lewis` studies argue that such views that the nomads could be subjugated and integrated into the Ottoman administration were widely shared by the Ottoman civilian and military officers.[45] In reality, Arab Bedouins were able to use these instruments of the Tanzimat to their own advantages.[46] For example, while the Ottoman government extended its authority on the countryside, peasants and nomads moved into productive areas to acquire rain and water .[47] Thus, they could change their way of life.

In terms of the relationship between the Arab Bedouins and the Ottoman central governors, the second group of scholars claim that there was a process of negotiation between two sides. Mostafa Minawi examines the Ottoman imperial and provincial relationship with Bedouin tribes by focusing on the Hijaz Telegraph Line route.[48] Minawi reveals how anti-Bedouin rhetoric was used in the mutual relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Arap Bedouins to justify policies that were recommended by the local powerholders determined to

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42 Uğur Bayraktar, "Reconsidering Local versus Central: Empire, Notables, and Employment in Ottoman Albania and Kurdistan, 1835–1878", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 2020, p. 1-17.

43 Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire,* p. 11-15.

44 Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire,* p. 15-18.

45 Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan 1800-1980,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 28-32.

46 Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan 1800-1980,* p. 32-40.

47 Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan 1800-1980,* p. 41-43.

48 Mostafa Minawi, "Beyond the Rhetoric," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 1 / 2, 2015, p. 75-104.

establish the imperial government`s plans between Hijaz and İstanbul.[49] Ahmad Amara tries to examine the negotiation process between Arab tribes and the Ottoman central government by exploring the legal issues and policies surrounding Bedouin land ownership and dispossession in Negev.[50] By focusing on the colonial legal trajectory from Ottoman to British and to the current Israeli adoption, he reveals a complicated manipulation of historical legal policies that were used to displace thousands of Bedouin Arabs living in Negev today.[51] The incorporation of land and people into territoriality bounded them to the administrative law. In her forthcoming study, Nora Elizabeth Barakat examines how migrating Bedouins engaged in the process of the Ottoman state transformation. Barakat treats tribes as a category of the Ottoman administration system, and she reveals that the Arab Bedouins in the Syrian interior used this category to gain political influence and establish community resistance to continue control over the land.[52] Talha Çiçek, in his current study on the evolution of the mutual relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Arab nomads in the early 1840s, proposes a new framework to establish how partnership shaped the Middle East.[53] He claims that populations with tribal structures constituted a political challenge to the modernization process that inspired empires with novel ideas in the beginning of the XIX. century.[54] To deal with them, the Ottoman governors developed some techniques such as negotiation and mediation.[55] In this regard, he reveals that the Ottoman central governors had to collaborate with Arab tribes in Hijaz.[56] As Çiçek argues, the relationship between the imperial center and tribesmen was not only an imposition of rigid order, but it was a complicated and fluid process of negotiations.[57] He defines the relations between these two parties as mutual recognition in the early XIX. century. Gülseren Duman Koç, similar to Çiçek`s study, examines the negotiation between the Ottoman governors and notables in Muş region, arguing that the Kurdish local leaders of Muş had a variety of opportunities to negotiate, sustain, and enlarge their power due to the demographic and

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49 Minawi, "Beyond the Rhetoric", p. 75-80.

50 Ahmad Amara, "The Negev Land Question: Between Denial and Recognition", in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, no. 4, 2013, p. 27-47.

51 Amara, "The Negev Land Question: Between Denial and Recognition", p. 28-30.

52 Nora Elizabeth Barakat, *The Bedouin Bureaucrats: Mobility and Property in the Ottoman Empire",* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023.

53 Talha Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era 1840-1914,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

54 Talha Çiçek, "Negotiating Power and Authority in the Desert: The Arab Bedouins and the Limits of the Ottoman State in Hijaz 1840-1908," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no.2, 2016, p. 260-279.

55 Çiçek, "Negotiating Power and Authority in the Desert", p. 261-263.

56 Çiçek, "Negotiating Power and Authority in the Desert", p. 265-270.

57 Çiçek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East,* p .55-58.

geopolitical features of the area.[58] The population of Muş was diverse not only in religion and ethnicity but also in life patterns.[59] Duman claims that the local tribal leaders who dominated the geographic and demographic characteristics of the region tried to maintain their social, economic, and political power by manipulating their imperial network of alliances.[60] In this sense, as Koç reveals, local power holders were not actors who did not reject or resist the reforms, but they could manipulate, shape, and negotiate imperial reforms according to their interests.

III. Tribes as Significant Agents of the Hamidian Era (1876-1908)

A significant group of scholars examine the role of tribes in the policy of Abdulhamid II, but before addressing these studies, it is important to focus on the internal and external dynamics of the Hamidian era. In 1876, less than eight months after Abdulhamid II ascended the throne, a war broke out between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In two years, the wars left much of Eastern Anatolia in ruins. The Ottoman governors witnessed the loss of important territories and non-Muslim populations. Hamidian government was afraid of losing one of the last areas where Armenians formed a significant part of the local population because many Armenians aided the Russians during the 1877-78 Russia-Ottoman war. One year later in 1879, the British put forth a reform program. Both of these were considered as an indication of the Ottomans impending loss of control in the eastern regions. Thus, Abdulhamid II accepted that his main mission was to find ways to revive the empire and its people after the devastating wars.

Armenian nationalism was also a growing force that challenged the authority of the Ottoman government over eastern Anatolia. Some nationalists started revolutionary organizations that aimed for equality within the Ottoman reforms; there were also formations of independence groups. The Ottomans` authority over the region was further tested by the local notables who were the urban magnates in cities like Diyarbekir and Van. The Kurdish tribal chiefs who were semi-independent as well as all other authorities prevented the Ottoman governors from ruling effectively.

Abdulhamid II tried to deal with the challenges from all directions by initiating a rigorous plan of centralization. He devised the famous carrot-stick policy to keep alternate sources of power balanced. He also promoted a program of modernization and developed a significant symbolic framework of loyalty to expand the

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58 Gülseren Duman Koç, "A Negotiation of the Ottoman Power during the Age of Reforms in the Ottoman Empire: Notables, Tribes, and State in Muş (1820-1840)", in *Middle Eastern Studies* 57, no. 2, 2021, p. 209-226.

59 Koç, "A Negotiation of the Ottoman Power during the Age of Reforms in the Ottoman Empire", p. 210.

60 Koç, "A Negotiation of the Ottoman Power during the Age of Reforms in the Ottoman Empire", p. 213-215.

ties of Sunni Muslims to the Ottoman central government and the palace. Engin Akarlı argues that Abdulhamid II placed greater importance than his predecessors to the provinces of the Ottoman Empire.[61] Aakarlı considers this strategy of the sultan as an attempt to expand the Islamic foundations of the empire. He argues that, in this sense, the continued support of Muslims was indispensable for the survival of the empire.[62] Furthermore, he examines the relationship between the sultan and the Muslim tribes as an integral aspect in Abdulhamid II policy to win over the heart and loyalty of the tribes. The Arab and Kurdish tribes constituted an important portion of the Muslim population, so Abdulhamid II especially strived to gain their loyalty. Suavi Aydın, Kudret Emiroğlu, Oktay Özel, and Süha Ünsal, who examined the relationship between the Kurdish tribes and the Ottoman government in Mardin, reveal that the sultan sent reform forces *(Kuvve-i Islahiye)* under the command of Vehbi Bey to manage the problems created by the tribes in the Syrian desert.[63] Stating that the Hamidian government obtained land and population census, the authors argued that Vehbi Bey was praised for his activities in opening primary schools and preventing tribal fights in Mardin.[64]

In his study, Selim Deringil argues that all the strategic attempts made by the Hamidian government toward the tribal groups resemble a "grab bag", which contains a variety of different approaches to problems for the intended outcome.[65] Deringil argues that the Hamidian approach to tribes can be viewed as "borrowed colonialism" since the Hamidian government clearly reflected its civilizing mission mentality and modernity project in provinces.[66] Furthermore, Deringil suggests that sometime in the XIX. century the Ottoman governors adopted their enemies' views and conceived its periphery as a colonial setting.[67] With this policy, the government tried to save tribal groups which were conceived as savages and heretics, by sending governors to invite the tribespeople to join the True Faith.

> Yet in their drive to achieve modernity, the Ottomans were not to build
> on a tabula rasa. In characteristically pragmatic fashion, the "Romans of
> the Muslim world," in the unforgettable words of Albert Hourani, were to
> dip into a whole grab bag of concepts, methods, and tools of statecraft,

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61 Engin Akarlı, "Abdulhamid II`s Attempt to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System", in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation,* David Kushner (ed.), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986, p. 74-89.

62 Akar, "Abdulhamid II`s Attempt to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System", p. 74-75.

63 Aydın, Emiroğlu, Özel, and Ünsal, *Mardin: Aşiret, Cemaat, Devlet,* p. 265.

64 Aydın, Emiroğlu, Özel, and Ünsal, *Mardin: Aşiret, Cemaat, Devlet,* p. 267.

65 Selim Deringil, ""They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate", in *Comparative Studies in Society and Histor,* 45, no. 2, 2003, p. 311-342.

66 Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery", p. 312.

67 Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery", p. 314.

prejudices, and practices that had been filtered down the ages. It is this
type of colonialism that I propose to call it "borrowed colonialism."[68]

For Stephen Duguid, the distinctness of the Hamidian period was due to
its attempts to form a Muslim unity.[69] He argues that the reform policies were
consistently subordinate to a higher felt need – the need for unity felt amongst
the Muslim population of the empire.[70] Abdulhamid II used the prevalent pan-
Islamic sentiments specifically for the tribal groups to consolidate his position
as the leader of the Muslims. In addition, Gökhan Çetinsaya stated that a similar
policy was also implemented in Iraqi provinces at the same time.[71] He reveals
that in Mosul, where the Sunni Kurdish population lived, religion was stressed
as a social bond that connected rulers to their tribes.[72]

Exploring the place of the Ottoman central governors and emphasizing the
center-periphery nexus in the context of tribal structure in Iraq, Ebubekir Ceylan
argues that the strong tribal organization was conceived as the most important
obstacle to the implementation of the reforms.[73] He defines the Hamidian policies
which were followed by the Ottoman governors as a carrot or stick game. In this
sense, the tools of the Hamidian governors considerably varied from recognizing
a rival chieftain within a given tribe, to the incorporation of the tribal structure
into the provincial political mechanism, and the use of military force.

Towards the end of the 1890s, the Hamidian government initiated new projects
to integrate the leading Muslim tribes of the empire into the Ottoman central
administration. A significant inititave within this new project was the Hamidiye
Light Cavalry Regiments formed by the Kurdish tribes in the eastern regions of
the empire in 1891. In her major research, Janet Klein focuses on the formation
of the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments as a significant reflection of the Hamid-
ian policy towards the Kurdish tribes. She describes the policy of Abdulhamid II
as a manifold mission[74] in order to emphasize its aims to protect the frontier, to
suppress the Armenian activities, and to establish an Islamic unity between the
sultan and the Kurds.[75] Klein argues that although the aim was mostly described

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68 Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery", p. 312.

69 Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: The Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia", in *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 2, 1973, p. 139-155.

70 Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: The Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia", p. 140.

71 Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908,* London; New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 72-99.

72 Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908,* p. 147-148.

73 Ebubekir Ceylan, "Carrot or Stick? Ottoman Tribal Policy in Baghdad, 1831–1876", in *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2, 2009, p. 169-186.

74 Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone,* Stanford; California: Stanford University Press, 2011, p. 20-52.

75 Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, p.4.

as the protection of the frontier from an external aggression by organizing and arming selected Kurdish tribes, as mentioned above, there were also several other objectives. As many scholars reveal, the Hamidian policy towards tribes included different strategies and aims that can be summarized as a carrot and stick analogy. While the project aimed to gain the loyalty of the leading tribes of the empire by offering them positions in the Ottoman administration, the Hamidian policy also tried to establish the tribal groups under the authority of the sultan.

Arab tribes were also incorporated into the Hamidian regime. At this point, the Rashidi of Najd constituted a notable structure. The Ottoman-Rashidi partnership in the Hamidian era deeply affected the order of things in Arabia.[76] As a result of this negotiation process, both Ottomans and Rashidi became significant agents in the local politics.[77] Talha Çiçek argues that the partnership between the Hamidian government and Rashidi made an important contribution to the increasing Ottoman authority in Najd and the Persian Gulf in the late XIX. century.[78] Moreover, the Rashidi family`s partnership with Abdülhamid II led to the emergence of the family as a regional power.[79] However, it is important to note that the cooperation between the Ottoman central government and Arab tribes was not restricted to the Hamidian period. As Şükrü Hanioğlu reveals, many Saudi tribes were given the district governorship during WWI.[80] Thus, the two groups sought to maintain their partnership during the war years.

IV. Tribes as Part of Identity Politics in the XIX. Century

Some of the tribal groups in the XIX. century Ottoman Empire were in mutual relationships with other ethnic groups in eastern Anatolia. Particularly, Kurdish - Armenian relations during Abdulhamid II's reign is a subject that has been extensively covered in the literature. Janet Klein examines the violence between two parties by situating it within the larger context of the era.[81] Contrary to the existing literature that subsumes much of the late Ottoman Armenian history into the larger genocide narrative, she reveals that the relations between Kurds and Armenians did not simply consist of violence, but it also included cooperation and mutual assistance. According to Janet Klein, a large part of the conflict took

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76 Talha Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners of Empire in Arabia 1880-1918", in *New Perspectives on Turkey* 56, 2017, p. 105-130.

77 Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners of Empire in Arabia 1880-1918", p. 106.

78 Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners of Empire in Arabia 1880-1918", p. 107-108.

79 Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners of Empire in Arabia 1880-1918", p. 125.

80 Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 15-20.

81 Janet Klein, "State, Tribe, Dynasty, and the Contest over Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century", in *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir 1870-1915,* Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (eds.), Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012, p. 147-179.

place over some concrete issues, and the land became a key component in the struggle.[82] In other words, for Klein, the nature of the relationship – whether it would be friendly or businesslike – between the Kurdish tribes and the Armenians depended on their own interests.[83] In this sense, violence went hand in hand with territorial conflict; but, ethnicity or political motives did not determine the totality of these relations.

In his influential study, Nadir Özbek considers that ethnic identities of "Armenian" and "Kurd" were shaped through daily life practices.[84] By examining the tax collection, Özbek argues that some fiscal and administrative problems intertangled with broader socio-economic issues and led to the birth of the Armenian question.[85] Increased taxes and violent attitudes of Hamidian regiments that were entrusted with collecting taxes in their regions raised the tension between the two groups. In this sense, as Özbek reveals, the mutual positioning of Armenians and Kurds in all these economic problems had affected the formation of ethnic identities.

> The ill-treatment of Armenian peasant farmers in the eastern provinces by Ottoman tax collectors, whether they were gendarmes or the new civilian collectors, was only one piece of a larger story. As we have seen, government collectors were mainly responsible for collecting the "special tax," which included the property and the military exemption taxes, and they also handled tithe-collecting positions that failed to find private buyers. Yet an important portion of the tithe was still being farmed out to private individuals, in addition to which powerful Kurdish tribal leaders and notables continued to impose their own customary taxes upon peasants in villages under their control. Therefore, any serious attempt to alleviate peasant oppression was going to require special attention to the problems caused by a system in which the tax farmers were mostly Kurdish notables, and after 1890, often leaders of Hamidian Light Cavalry regiments.[86]

In the collected study of Yaşar Tolga Cora, Ali Sipahi, and Dzovinar Derderian the multifaceted nature of the relations between these two communities are

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82 Klein, "State, Tribe, Dynasty, and the Contest over Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century", p. 150.

83 Klein, "State, Tribe, Dynasty, and the Contest over Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century", p. 151-152.

84 Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the Armenian Question during the Late Ottoman Empire 1876-1908", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4, 2012, p. 770-797.

85 Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the Armenian Question during the Late Ottoman Empire 1876-1908", p. 777.

86 Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the Armenian Question during the Late Ottoman Empire 1876-1908", p.783.

examined.[87] The different studies in the book bring influential approaches to the Ottoman East in the XIX. century. Cora, Sipahi, and Derderian mainly emphasize that the Ottoman East has stayed as a black hole in the middle of the historiographical map of the Ottoman Empire.[88] Due to the tribal confederations dominating the region for centuries and the relative scarcity of written sources, the Ottoman East has stood conceptually isolated from other areas of the empire.[89] The authors argue that it was due to the regions geographical position that had caused it to stay outside of the empire`s effective control for a long time; thus, providing the opportunity to see the social world in ways different from the vantage point of the Ottoman central government. For them, it also enriches our understanding of how the imperial pasts were experienced.

By criticizing essentializing identity and reifying the subject, Dzovinar Derderian investigates the shaping of Kurdish tribes and Armenian identities in a mutual relationship.[90] He reveals that the practices such as being illiterate although considered foreign to Armenians, was often represented in Kurdish culture. These two groups were to be molded as loyal subjects of the empire based on rigid boundaries drawn between the Kurds and the Armenians. By focusing on daily life examples, however, it is revealed that these categories are not strict in reality. For example, Derderian shows us that some shared practices between the local Kurds and the Armenians signify a contested area of power. He tells us that an Armenian man who wanted to take a second wife had the advantage to move between the Islamic and the Christian regulations. Such a position provided them with opportunities to deal with the church's superiority. As Derderian reveals, if the Ottoman governors or church wanted to establish its power, these contested areas would be eliminated. Dzovinar`s study constitutes importance since it portrays the reflections of the empire`s regulations or the gray areas between identities that were rigidly defined in the literature.

The other important study which examines the interaction of communities in the Ottoman East during the Hamidian era belongs to Edip Gölbaşı.[91] He focuses

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87 Yaşar Tolga Cora, Ali Sipahi, and Dzovinar Derderian (eds.), *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics,* London: I.B. Tauris, 2016.

88 Tolga Cora, Ali Sipahi, and Dzovinar Derderian, "Introduction: Ottoman Historiography`s Black Hole", in *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics,* Yaşar Tolga Cora, Ali Sipahi, D. Derderian (eds.), London: I.B. Tauris, 2016, p. 1-19.

89 Cora, Sipahi, and Derderian, "Introduction: Ottoman Historiography`s Black Hole", p. 2-3.

90 Dzovinar Derderian, "Shaping Subjectivities and Contesting Power through the Image of Kurds", in *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics,* Yaşar Tolga Cora, Ali Sipahi, D. Derderian (eds.), London: I.B. Tauris, 2016, p. 91-109.

91 Edip Gölbaşı, "Devil Worshippers' Encounter the State: 'Heterodox' Identities, State Building, and the Politics of Imperial Integration", in *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics,* Yaşar Tolga Cora, Ali Sipahi, and Dzovinar Derderian (eds.), London: I.B. Tauris, 2016, 133-159.

on the extent of growing state intervention in the everyday lives of Yezidi tribes that took place during the emergence of a new regime in the XIX. century Ottoman Empire. For the Ottoman governors, Yezidis constituted an indefinable community, and their loyalty to the empire was questionable. Gölbaşı argues that some practices such as conversion were adopted by the Hamidian governors to normalize, regulate, and discipline the abnormal and heterodox practices of Yezidis. At this point by focusing on modern bureaucratic practices, he reveals the growing presence of the Ottoman authorities in the daily life of Yezidis. As Gölbaşı claims, although Yezidis could maintain their cultural and collective identity, they, nevertheless, felt the growing presence and intervention of the Hamidian governors in their daily life.

In their recent study, Ahmad Mohammadpour and Kamal Soleimani deconstruct the word tribalism as a colonial category.[92] As they argue, tribalism has had a central place in Kurdistan literature.[93] Mohammadpour and Soleimani reveal that the use of tribalism as if it constitutes the natural component of Kurdish society has caused an important misinterpretation. Moreover, this also paved way for the oversimplified explanation of the social and political life in Kurdistan.[94] They reveal that both colonial power and nation states` interest on tribes and tribalism coincided with racial politics discourse.[95] So, as Mohammadpour and Soleimani reveal, the implications of tribe and tribalism must not be overlooked.[96]

The studies that focus on the tribes in the XIX. century Ottoman Empire as part of identity politics are not restricted only to the tribes. There is also an extended literature which focuses on Circassian refuges in the late Ottoman era. Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky reveals that Circassian as the refugees of the late Ottoman period were victims of nationalism, sectarianism, and colonialism.[97] In the final decades of the Ottoman Empire, many refugee waves from the Russian Empire`s North Caucasus immigrated to Transjordan, and they founded Amman and some other agricultural towns there.[98] By focusing on the settlement of North Caucasian refugees, he argues that their participation in the real estate market in Amman was the driving force behind the economic expansion in the late Ottoman era.

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92 Ahmad Mohammadpour and Kamal Soleimani, "Interrogating the tribal: the aporia of 'tribalism' in the sociological study of the Middle East", in *British Journal of Sociology* 70, 2019, p. 1799-1824.

93 Mohammadpour and Soleimani, "Interrogating the tribal: the aporia of 'tribalism' in the sociological study of the Middle East", p. 1800.

94 Mohammadpour and Soleimani, "Interrogating the tribal", p. 1810-1812.

95 Mohammadpour and Soleimani, "Interrogating the tribal", p. 1815.

96 Mohammadpour and Soleimani, "Interrogating the tribal", p. 1820.

97 Vladimir Hamed Troyansky, "Circassian Refugees and the Making of the Amman 1878-1914," in *Middle Eastern Studies,* 49, 2017, p. 605-623.

98 Troyansky, Circassian Refugees and the Making of the Amman 1878-1914", p. 610.

Several refugee waves of North Caucasus during the middle of the XIX. century was also used by the Ottoman governors to benefit the empire. Caner Yelbaşı claims that the Ottoman state aimed to place the Circassian refugees on its southeastern frontier in order to establish taxation, security, and state authority in the region.[99] He also adds that the placement of Circassian refugees was important because the state control could not be established in the eastern frontiers as the Ottoman governors had hoped.[100] In this regard, Yelbaşı reveals that Circassian refugees that were settled in Mardin, Ardahan, Çıldır, Kars, and Erzurum constituted an instrument for the Ottoman central governors to secure the eastern frontier of the empire.[101] As a recent approach to the issue, Samuel Dolbee sheds new light on the modern state formation by tracing locust and revealing how they shaped both the environment and people`s imagination.[102] By providing a new perspective on the modern Middle East based on popular resistance, state violence, and environment, he follows the movements of locust and their links to people in motion, including Arab, Kurdish, and Circassion nomads.[103]

V. Conclusion

There is an extensive literature ragarding the relationship between the Ottoman central government and the tribes in the XIX. century. In this article, I tried to summarize the significant studies in the literature. The sources used in this article examined the tribes differently based on tribes' relationship to the Ottoman central administration. I tried to classify tribes under three headings according to their role and place in the XIX. century Ottoman Empire: tribes as partners of the central Ottoman government, tribes as significant agents of the Hamidian era, and tribes as part of identity politics in the second half of the XIX. century.

The studies examined in the first group, overwhelmingly argue that the tribal groups were viewed as partners of the Ottoman central government in the XIX. century. Scholars such as Yonca Köksal, Suavi Aydın, Oktay Özel, Hakan Özoğlu, Talha Çiçek, and Uğur Bayraktar address the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the tribes through negotiation and partnership. They indicate that the tie between the two parties was based on a mutual power relation in the XIX. century Ottoman Empire. Because they did not have enough information regarding the tribal regions such as their social dynamics, language, local power balances, etc., the Ottoman governors needed the help of the tribesmen to

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99 Caner Yelbaşı and Ekrem Akman, "From 'brothers in religion' to 'bandits': Chechens in Mardin in the Late Ottoman Period", in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2021.

100 Yelbaşı and Akma, "From 'brothers in religion' to 'bandits'".

101 Yelbaşı and Akma, "From 'brothers in religion' to 'bandits'".

102 Samuel Dolbee, *Locust of Power: Borders, Empire, and Environment in the Middle East 1856-1979,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.

103 Dolbee, *Locust of Power.*

effectively rule the distant provinces of the empire. However, as scholars argue, it was not a constant or friendly relationship because tribal leaders became active agents within this negotiation process and could manipulate the governors based on their own interests.

In the second category, I tried to examine the role of the tribal groups during the Hamidian era (1876-1908). During the reign of Abdulhamid II, Muslim tribes of the empire became especially important to the Ottoman governors. The overwhelming loss of non-Muslim population due to devastating wars, made the Muslim Arab and Kurdish populations of the empire prevalent. Arab and Kurdish tribes who lived in the distant provinces of the empire had a vital role under the pan-Islamic policy of Abdulhamid II. To gain their loyalty, the Hamidian government initiated significant projects such as the Hamidian Light Cavalry Regiments. As Deringil reveals, the Hamidian policy towards the tribal groups can be viewed within a "grab bag" conception, which suggests different tools for different aims. The scholars that I addressed in the third section argue that the policy of Abdulhamid II towards tribes can be evaluated with a carrot and stick analogy. While they tried to win the loyalty and hearts of the Muslim tribes, the Hamidian government also aimed to ensure the authority of the sultan over these tribes.

The recent group of scholars examine the tribal groups as part of identity politics in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the XIX. century. They addressed the tribes, especially the Kurdish tribes, in reference to the Armenians. Through rigid boundaries, these two groups were to be molded as "Kurdish" and "Armenian" in their daily life relations. As Nadir Özbek and Dzovinar Derderian discuss, these boundaries were not rigid in reality. According to their interests, relations of tribesmen with the Ottoman central government and other ethnic components in Eastern Anatolia took different forms.

The studies in these three groups reveal that the relationship between the Ottoman central government and tribes was not constant. The scholars in the first group examine the tribal groups as partners of the Ottoman central administration, the studies in the second category focus on the increasing importance of the tribes for the Hamidian government, and the researchers in the third group that examine the tribal groups as part of identity politics highlight that tribalism was a dynamic entity. This categorization of the studies reveals that the relationship between the Ottoman central government and tribes changed almost in every era because the tribespeople became active agents during these interactions. They could manipulate and expand their roles and interests in their mutual cooperation with the Ottoman Empire and other ethnic groups in the XIX. century. In order to reveal the active participation of tribespeople in negotiations with the Ottoman central administration, most of the scholars have focused on the reconciliation

process between the two sides. In this schema, the researchers that study the role of the tribal groups in the Hamidian era have consulted the studies in the first group in order to understand the modern administration techniques that started to inspire the Ottoman governors in the early XIX. century. The studies in the third category paved the way for us to see this negotiation process from several different perspectives of ethnic groups. Moreover, based on the studies in the Ottoman historiography which consider the existence of several ethnic groups since the beginning of 2010s, the relationship between the Ottoman central government and tribes have been discussed from the viewpoints of different ethnic tribes. In this changing conjecture, recent ethnographic and anthropological studies have focused on how the tribes in the XIX. century lived.

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