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## *SHEIKH SAID CASE: REBELLION OR REVOLT?*

*Şeyh Said Vakası: İsyân Mı, Kıyam Mı?*

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## SHEIKH SAID CASE: REBELLION OR REVOLT?

Şeyh Said Vakası: İsyan Mı, Kıyam Mı?

**Dr. Öğrt. Üyesi Ebru Çoban**

### Öz

Türk siyasal hayatının en tartışmalı bir o kadar da önemli mevzulardan biri Şeyh Said hadisesi veya isyanıdır. Hadise ya da isyan kavramları siyasal tarihçilerinin konuya veya politik durumlarına göre değişkenlik gösterebilir. Öte yandan bir başka düşünce de olayı İslami bir kisve içerisinde ele alan ve bu olayın bir kıyam olduğuna yönelik bakış açısıdır. Olayın başlangıcı, yayılımı ve sona ermesi neticesinde kesin bir ifade konulamamasının sebebi de Şeyh Said'in hem Kürt asıllı olması hem de şeyh olmasından gelmektedir. Esasında Şeyh Said'e isyan eden ayrılıkçı veya Kürtçü olarak nitelendiren bakış açısındaki nirengi noktası da Cumhuriyet rejimine yönelik başkaldırıyla ilgili olan yorumlardır. Bu çalışmanın esas noktası Şeyh Said hadisesinin isyan veya kıyam olup olmadığına yönelik tartışmalar çerçevesinde bir eleştirel tutum üzerine inşa edilmesidir. Yine çalışmanın önemli noktalarından biri hadise devam ederken ele geçirilen mektuplar ya da hadise sırasında taraf değiştirenlerin birinci ağızdan aktardıkları söylemlerdir. Ayrıca, hadise sona erdikten sonra kurulan İstiklal Mahkemeleri'nin kayıtları incelenerek olayın arka planı ve çıkış sebepleri aydınlatılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın ana parametrelerinden biri de İstiklal Mahkemeleri'nde yargılananların hemen hemen tümü bu kıyama İslami emeller uğruna katılması, devletin şerî hukuktan ayrılması ve en önemlisi halifelğin kaldırılmasına tepki göstermek için isyanın başlamasıdır. Yine yargılananlardan bazılarının Kürt bağımsız hareketinin önderlerinden olması hasebiyle de bu hadiseye isyan kavramı etrafında bir söylem geliştirilmeye çalışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Şeyh Said, Kıyam, İsyan, İstiklal Mahkemeleri, Kürtler

### Abstract

One of the most controversial and significant issues addressed in the Turkish political life is the Sheikh Said incident or uprising. The concepts of “incident” or “rebellion” could vary according to the political historians’ approach to the issue or their political standings. On the other hand, there is another approach that addresses the incident within the Islamic context and claims it as a revolt. The main reason for the absence of an exact definition regarding the beginning, spread, and the end of the incident is the fact that Sheikh Said was both a Kurd and a sheikh. The focal point of this study runs on a critical approach within the framework of debates toward whether or not the Sheikh Said incident was a rebellion or a revolt. Furthermore, the letters captured and/or the statements narrated by those who changed the sides throughout the incident constitute one of the important points of this study. In addition, records of the Independence Courts established after the incident was examined to shed light on its background and reasons.

The main finding of the study is that almost all of those who were tried at the Independence Courts joined the uprising for Islamic purposes, and started it as a reaction to the state’s departure from the religious law and most importantly to the abolition of the caliphate. It has been also revealed that although the incident has an Islamic nature, it has been approached in the context of the concept of “rebellion” due to the fact that some of those tried were the leaders of the Kurdish movement.

**Keywords:** Sheikh Said, Revolt, Rebellion, Independence Courts, Kurds

## Introduction

The Sheikh Said incident that threatened the political system during the establishment of Kemalist system engineering shows that the problematic side of it continues in the shadow of polarized discourses and unanswered questions from the point of view of social scientists. So much so that, even though almost a century has passed since the incident, there are still important problems and questions waiting for answers. In the qualitative studies conducted to date, always some discourses that try to depict before and after the Sheikh Said incident have been created. However, because these discourses are usually replicas of each other, they have not left a lasting impact on readers. Moreover, the identity aspect of Sheikh Said has deeply influenced all the comments made by Islamic segments. In many evaluations made, the behavioral approach of the Azadi movement, which is included in the Kurdish national movement, in 1923 has not been also mentioned.<sup>1</sup> In parallel, the activities of the Society for the Rise of Kurds (Kurt Teali Cemiyeti) were reviewed in a cursory way. On the other hand, the fact that steps have been taken after the Treaty of Lausanne to regulate the central authority for Kurds exhibiting autonomy in the east of the country has been also one of the overlooked points in the anatomy of this uprising. Moreover, it should have been taken into account that Sheikh Said was a sheikh in the Naqshbandi tariqa, and this situation was intensively experienced in the neighborhoods where the rebellion broke out and spread. The harsh reaction of the state during the course of the incident was also not questioned. On the other hand, the legal dimension of the trials has become a secondary path that is still being discussed even today. In addition to all this, the calls of the Kurdish intellectuals about the language and the fact that they organized in the south of the country were among the reasons for the emergence of this rebellion.<sup>2</sup> Looking at the studies in the literature, it has been seen that evaluations are made accompanied by the triangulation points mentioned above, and even attempts are made to pontificate on this issue. It is believed that whether within the framework of official history or under the guise of anonymous history, subjective assessments will be made on the causes and consequences of this event in the future, as was done in the past and today.

It can be said that there is a systematic lack in the studies conducted in Turkey on the Sheikh Said Incident and that usually, micro-level evaluations have been made by considering only one side of the incident. In the mainstream, which is taken as a ground in the studies, the opinion indicating that this event is a separatist uprising occupies an important place. Another side, on the other hand, states that the incident was resistance, that is, the revolt. The book named "*The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheik Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*" which was written by Robert Olson and has been also cited as a reference by plausible and reasonable studies and by many national-level studies continues to be attractive even today. This popularity is due to its scope, historical depth, and most importantly, the fact that it expands the interpretations specific to the event and makes the analysis in a plane.<sup>3</sup> The study has also been translated into Turkish. The book named "*The Rebellion of Sheikh Sait and the Oriental Independence Court*" was written by Ahmet Sureyya Orgevren, who was also a prosecutor of the Independence Court and served as a deputy for a period, on the basis of a private conversation he had carried out with Sheikh Said in prison, and it is based on the main idea that the uprising was a Kurdish rebellion.<sup>4</sup> "*The Kurdish Islamic Uprising 1919-1925*", which was written by Uğur Mumcu to give the rebellion an Islamic side, also discussed the uprising in another dimension.<sup>5</sup> Garo Sasuni also describes the uprising

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<sup>1</sup> Paul J. White, *Primitive Rebels Or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish National Movement In Turkey*, Zed Books, London, 2000, s. 73.

<sup>2</sup> David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, s. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, University Of Texas Press, Austin, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmet Süreyya Örgüven, *Şeyh Sait İsyanı ve Şark İstiklal Mahkemesi*, Temel Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Uğur Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925*, Tekin Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1992.

as a Kurdish rebellion in his determination made based on the Troshak, a fully Armenian newspaper.<sup>6</sup> Yaşar Kalafat's work named "*Anatomy of an Uprising: Sheikh Said*" takes place among the important studies prepared by considering internal and external developments and making a general assessment. On the other hand, in studies discussing the rebellion at the national level, it is possible to see the concern of survival and the historiographic perspective. When the studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that the authors can prevent the full understanding of the rebellion with superficial and ethnic approaches.

In this study, it is not considered to focus on issues such as the inside story of the rebellion, the causes of it, the stage of its progress, Turkey's attitude towards the rebellion, or the consequences of the rebellion. As the title of the study suggests, in general, it will be tried to focus on whether this uprising is a rebellion or a revolt. Within the state imagination, where the nation and central government were strong, that the Kemalist system conceived, the point of view to the Sheikh Said incident would surely be similar too. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the Sheikh Said incident in two ways: on the one hand, the point of view of the Turkish State, on the other hand, the approach of the Kurds living in the region. The grounds of these two different attitudes will be included in this study. On the other hand, apart from these two groups, the approach of the Islamic sections is also important. This Islamic section stood aloof from the Sheikh Said incident until the 1950s due to the fact that in particular, he was a Naqshbandi sheikh; however, along with the Democratic Party government, some comments owning the incident or excluding Sheikh Said from this event started to emerge. There are even anonymous approaches in the style of "*Kurdish separatists are ready for rebellion*" and "*They used Sheikh Said*". Another aspect that is overlooked is the feudal side of the incident. Thus, the tribal order in the east of the region and the dominant policy of the Kemalist system, which aspired to eliminate this order, will also be included in this study. Perhaps one of the nuances that should be mentioned a little is the concussion experienced by the Kemalist regime and, in particular, the outbreak of the Thessaloniki syndrome. It is not difficult to guess that when considering the migration of the Turkish people living in the Balkans, which had been considered their homeland for centuries, during the Balkan Wars, there might have been some queries and concerns in the state administration due to the Sheikh Said rebellion.

One of the issues addressed in the study is the changing strategies of those who participated in the rebellion or revolt in the course of the incident. It is seen that there was a serious variability between the approach of tribes, sheikhs, and the people at the time of the start of the rebellion and their attitudes during the spread of the rebellion. The main reason for this is the difference between the state of public anxiety at the time the rebellion began and the state of public anxiety at the stage of the spread of the rebellion. Since it is obvious that the region was not fully involved in this uprising, the state of public anxiety also needs to be explained. One of the points to be discussed is whether imperialist states were involved in this event before the rebellion and at the stage of its development. In this regard, Mesut Yegen's study named "*Kurdistan in British Documents 1918-1958*", in which he examines British sources consistently, is important in terms of the point of view on the Sheikh Said incident. Another aspect of the Sheikh Said incident that needs to be examined is the perspective of whether it is the revolt expressed by the Islamic section or not. The reason underlying the reintroduction of the phrase "revolt" may be the claim that the Sheikh Said incident was related to the pressure on the Islamic section, the abolition of the caliphate, and basically the state's effort to create a secular image by purging it from a character.<sup>7</sup> In this study, an assessment will also be made on why the Sheikh Said uprising is called a revolt or a rebellion. The use of the word rebellion in most parts of the study does not indicate that this

<sup>6</sup> Garo Sasuni, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15. yydan Günümüze Ermeni Kürt İlişkileri*, Med Yayınları, İstanbul 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Bahadır Kurbaoğlu, *Şeyh Said: Bir Dönemin Siyasi Anatomisi*, Ekin Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, s. 22.

event was exactly a rebellion. On the contrary, an assessment will also be made about whether it was a revolt or not.

As will be mentioned in the body of the study, the press of the period also had a problematic nature. Almost all the press organs of the period formed a point of view on the incident as an element of instrumentalization. It can be said that evaluation of the incident through the rebellion perspective reveals that the press was fed through a single channel. This brings to the mind that there may have been an apocryphal aspect in the reflection of the incident by the press. The press of the period may have described the incident as a rebellion under pressure from the Ankara Government and with news coming from the region in an apocryphal style. This is an element that comes to the fore in the assessment of many researchers.

The lack of information about the sociological, political, and anatomical aspects of the incident in the conducted studies makes it difficult to reveal exactly whether it was a rebellion or a revolt. In this study, a general assessment will also be made about the overall situation of Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia after the suppression of the rebellion or the revolt, the socio-psychological mood, and the state's perspective on the region.

### **1. The Process Leading From the Kurdish National Movement to the Sheik Said Rebellion or Revolt**

During the period called the longest century of the Ottoman Empire (19<sup>th</sup> century), the developments towards the birth of the Kurdish national movement were becoming important. Especially when looking at the Kurdish uprisings that took place during the period of Mahmut II, it could be seen that there was a serious insurgency sequence. It is understood that seven Kurdish rebellions broke out during this period due to Mahmut II's approach, which rejected the autonomous approach of the Kurds and wanted to make the central authority to be strong.<sup>8</sup> These rebellions were as follows: 1. The Rebellion of Babanzade Abdurrahman Pasha (1806-1808, Suleymaniye), 2. The Rebellion of Babanzade Ahmed Pasha (1812, Suleymaniye), 3. Rebellion of the Zaza Tribes (1818-1820, Dersim), 4. The Revanduz Yazidi Rebellion (1830-1833, Hakkari and its environs), 5. The Rebellion of Mir Muhammad (1832-1833, Soran), 6. The Rebellion of K r Mehmet Pasha (1830-1833, Erbil, Mosul, Shirvan), 7. The Garzan Rebellion (1839, Diyarbakir).<sup>9</sup> Tribal chiefs and sheikhs were important actors in most of these rebellions.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the occurrence processes of these rebellions and the subsequent developments experienced have laid the foundation for the settlement of Kurdish national movements. After the rebellions, many families who allegedly led the rebellions were also exiled. The loosening that occurred on the Ottoman periphery can also be shown as one of the reasons for the emergence of these uprisings.<sup>11</sup> It is fair to say that mobility increased in the east of the country after Mahmut II. After the above-mentioned rebellions, the uprising of Bedirhan Bey (Bey of Cizre) with the effect of the accumulation of the Kurdish national movement marks an important point. The fact that the Tanzimat Edict of 1839 was applied especially to the whole country together with Diyarbakir provided an opportunity for Bedirhan Bey to rebel at the national level and provided the basis for the birth of a legitimacy tool for other beys to participate in this rebellion.<sup>12</sup> The administrative arrangements made in and around Diyarbakir seemed to be proof that the turn would come to the Cizre and Botan regions as well. The confidence crisis experienced between the Governor of Mosul Mehmet Bey and Bedirhan Bey, who played an active role in this process,

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<sup>8</sup> Edit r: G rard Chaliand, A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan, Kendal, "The Kurds Under The Ottoman Empire", Zed Books, London, 1993, s. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Veli Yadirgi, *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017, s. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2006, s. 54-55.

<sup>11</sup> Murat K yl , *Ge miŖten G n m ze K rt Siyasi Hareketi*, Hiperlink, İstanbul, 2017, s. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*, s. 63.



was among the reasons for this uprising.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, despite the fact that Bedirhan Bey opposed this status and reported the situation to the Sublime Porte, it seems that he rebelled when the solution points were blocked. The problematic behavior of the governors of the region towards Bedirhan Bey was also among the reasons for the rebellion.<sup>14</sup> The rebellion had taken a serious turn with the help of tribal chiefs and sheikhs, and it was suppressed harshly thanks to the measures taken by the Ottoman State.<sup>15</sup> However, in terms of addressing leadership concerns in the Kurdish community, the rebellion was an answer to the question of who would be the leader in a possible uprising.<sup>16</sup> The following discourse of Hakan Ozogul about Bedirhan is important: “*Bedirhan Pasha should not be considered a nationalist figure in Turkey. Bedirhan Pasha’s family later played very important roles in the development of Kurdish history and Kurdish nationalism. Many from the Bedirhan Pasha’s family played active roles in Kurdish cultural and political organizations that provided an organizational structure for the Kurdish nationalists of the future.*”<sup>17</sup> As Hakan Ozoglu has stated, Bedirhan Bey is important in terms of being the pioneer of the Kurdish national movement. Although similar uprisings occurred before Bedirhan Bey, many of them could not leave deep traces due to the fact that they were lack in terms of nationalism and discipline and were not leader-oriented. Considering this rebellion, it can be said that the Kurdish organization of the first period formed the basis for the uprising.

Robert Olson states that the Sheikh Said uprising occurred with the completion of its unique four stages. Accordingly, the four main stages of Kurdish nationalism can be depicted as follows: 1- Sheikh Ubaydullah and his movement led by his Kurdish League (This movement marks the emergence of sheikhs as the most important leaders among the Kurds and ended with his death); 2- The process that started from 1888 (also including the establishment of Hamidiye Regiments in 1891) and lasted until the outbreak of World War I; 3- The period from World War I to the Treaty of Sevres; 4- Developments after World War I and the Sheikh Said rebellion.<sup>18</sup> In this study, the developments before the Sheikh Said uprising will be evaluated by going Olson’s path and by improving it.

The fact that the tariqas, especially the sheikhs, became important actors during the reign of Abdulhamid shows parallelism with the rise of the Ubaydullah Nehri who was the Naqshbandi sheikh in the east of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy that Sheikh Ubaydullah called for an uprising by addressing the Kurdish nation for the first time and stating that the Kurds were a separate tribe and that they would no longer live under the rule of other nations.<sup>20</sup> The character of the Sheikh Ubaydullah and Sheikh Said rebellions shows similarity in this respect. The fact that both of them were Naqshbandi and rebelled against the existing order was one of the things they had in common. Sheikh Ubaidullah began to spread his justification for autonomy idea by meeting with the tribes and sheikhs living on the borders of Iran and Turkey before he started the uprising. The activities of the Sheikh Nehri towards Iran had even created contentment in the Ottoman Empire at first. However, the fact that Sheikh Ubaydullah directed his works towards the inside of Ottoman borders caused interest to arise.<sup>21</sup>

When inviting the tribes and sheikhs to rebellion, the sheikh mentioned the Hamidiye Regiments founded by Abdulhamid II and claimed that the purpose of these regiments was to

<sup>13</sup> Cabir Doğan, “Tanzimat’ın Diyarbakır ve Çevresinde Uygulanması Karşı Bir Tepki Hareketi Bedirhan Bey İsyanı”, *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Sayı XII, 2012, s. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Celile Celil, *XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Kürtler*, Özge Yayınları, Ankara, 1992, s. 127.

<sup>15</sup> *Hirmis Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds, And Ottomans*, Camria Press, Amherst, 2008, s. 272.

<sup>16</sup> David Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2015, s. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Hakan Özoglu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004, s. 72.

<sup>18</sup> Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, s. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Edgar O’Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-94*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2003, s. 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 54.

eliminate the Kurdish tribal chiefs.<sup>22</sup> The raid of the Sheikh Nehri on Iran was unsuccessful and the tribes acting together with the sheikh took refuge on the Ottoman side. The Ottoman State knew that this incident would harm it. The sheikh, on the other hand, had an intention to rebel against the Ottomans with the tribes by gathering Islam and the Kurds together under a tent.<sup>23</sup> Having gathered his supporters, Sheikh Nehri was faced against the Ottoman army but was unsuccessful. The Ottoman Empire exiled Sheikh Nehri and his children to Mecca, and he died there in 1883.<sup>24</sup> Foreign states may also have been involved in the development of this rebellion; some Russian sources claim that there was a direct influence of the Russians in the logistical support of Sheikh Ubaydullah and other tribes who rebelled against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>25</sup> The Ubaydullah rebellion is important not only because it marks the emergence of new political leadership in the east of the Ottomans, but more importantly because some have identified this rebellion as the source of the Kurdish nationalist struggle.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the rebellion led by Sheikh Ubaydullah is also notable in terms of symbolizing the rise of the sheikhs to supremacy within the Ottoman Kurdish community and in terms of bringing together 220 tribal leaders and supporters in Shamdinan and establishing the Kurdish Tribal Union.<sup>27</sup> In 1851, the Suleymaniye Baban emirate, which was the last Kurdish emirate, was abolished. The Kurdish emirates often had acted as arbitrators in solving disputes between tribes. The abolition of the emirates increased the number of conflict cases between tribes, and lawlessness became a major problem. Moreover, a serious authority gap had arisen. Sheikhs affiliated with the Naqshbandi and Qadiriyya tariqas, which were other important social groups within the traditional Kurdish society, were filling this gap. The sheikhs were using their religious prestige to be able to rule the tribes. It turned out that in these and similar rebellions, which would occur after that, both the identity and religious structures of the Kurds would be abused. This and similar rebellions had revealed that in rebellions, which would occur after that, both the identity and religious structures of the Kurds would be abused.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that the Kurdish national movement left the intellectual and individual base and became a batch occurred in the years of 1908-1922. Especially due to the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era and the relationship established with the Young Turks earlier, the Kurds experienced their most comfortable period after 1908. Of course, this comfort can be explained mainly by the becoming of the nationalization movement prevalent. It can be said that the Kurdish national movement had suffered a serious disruption due to the events that took place in the region before 1908 (e.g., the peaceless behaviors caused by the Hamidiye Regiments, and putting other tribes under pressure by some tribes thanks to the regiments ).<sup>29</sup> However, the fact that the Young Turks led the proclamation of the Constitutional Era in 1908 encouraged the Kurds, as did other tribes living under Ottoman rule. The movement, which was a continuation of the Young Turkish revolution and called the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), envisioned a state model in which each tribe would live its own culture autonomously by providing a wide space in the field of freedom.<sup>30</sup> However, the political attitude towards minorities after taking power led to a further increase in the rebellions that had already

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<sup>22</sup> O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-94*, s. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*, s. 77.

<sup>24</sup> Melike Sarıçioğlu, "İran Arşivlerine Göre Şeyh Ubeydullah İsyanı", *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, C. III, S. V, 2013, s. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Avyarov, *Osmanlı-Rus ve İran Savaşlarında Kürtler (1801-1900)*, Sipan Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1995, s. 122-124.

<sup>26</sup> Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, s. 75.

<sup>27</sup> Yadirgi, *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey*, s. 98.

<sup>28</sup> Djene Rhys Bajalan, "Early Kurdish Nationalists and the Emergence of Modern Kurdish Identity Politics: 1851 to 1908", ed: Fevzi Bilgin And Al Sarıhan, *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2013, s. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Naci Kutluay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, Beybun Yayınları, Ankara, 1992, s. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, *İmparatorluktan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, s. 199.



entered the nationalization period. In terms of the Kurds, on the other hand, some aspects (such as the process that took place during the reign of Abdulhamid, pacification of Hamidiye Regiments, and the motive of some people, such as Abdullah Cevdet and Ishak Sukuti in the Union and Progress Committee, to strictly protect the Ottoman State) helped the Kurds heave a sigh of relief. In fact, it should also be revealed that the Kurds had an identity problem before the 1908 revolution. While one side accepted the Kurds as an identity and emphasized the need for them to become a national state, the other side was maintaining the idea of remaining under Ottoman rule by taking into account being brothers with the Turks and Islamic sensitivities.<sup>31</sup> However, the transformation from the policy adopted by the Committee of Union and Progress at its foundation to the policy of Turkism after coming into power was important. Moreover, the nation-state-oriented point of view of the Committee of Union and Progress on events and the Kurdish national movements that wanted an autonomous life and governance especially in the east of Anatolia where was described as a black box, were a sign that a new era would begin in the state governance. The code of the policy of the Committee of Union and Progress for transforming the east of the country and bringing homogeneity to the forefront was the settlement. They thought about finding a solution by moving the Turks living in the Caucasus and the Balkans to the east and west of the country, and moving the Kurds living there to the west of the country. On the other hand, in the capital of the Empire, some Kurdish people such as Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, Sharif Pasha, Bediuzzaman Said-i Kurdi Ibn-i Mirza, and Suleyman Sudi Bey were trying to play an active role against the Turkism-oriented understanding of the Union and Progress Committee.<sup>32</sup> This transformed policy of the Union and Progress laid the foundation for the birth of ethnic awareness in the Kurdish nation.

According to Olson, the last period of the Kurdish national movement in the reign of Abdulhamid covered the periods of 1908-1918. The coming of the Union and Progress to power and the subsequent series of events paved the way for the organization of the Kurds in Istanbul through association. Kurdish intellectuals living in Istanbul established a society called the Kurdish Society for Cooperation and Progress “*Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti*”.<sup>33</sup> Among the founders of the society, there were people such as Emir Emin, Ali Bedirhan, Ferik Serif Pasha (from Baban family), Seyyid Abdulkadir, Damat (Müşir) Ahmet Zulkif Pasha, Babanzade Zihni Pasha, Halil Hayali, Sukru Mehmet Sekban, Naim B. Baban, Kürdizade Ahmet Ramiz, and Mirikatibizade Ahmet Cemil.<sup>34</sup> The society tried to spread its ideas under the name of the Kurdish Cooperation and Progress (*Kürt Teavün ve Terakki*) newspaper. Said Nursi and other intellectual Kurds also published articles in this newspaper.<sup>35</sup> In its declaration published in the first issue of the newspaper, the Society stated several main points as its purpose and stressed that it would make efforts to solve them. The first of the issues stated in the declaration is to explain the benefits of the Constitutional Monarchy to the Kurdish society and to protect the provisions of the Constitution, which is the document of the peace of nations. It was stated that the Kurdish people would be a community that had been able to realize development and looked forward to the future with hope thanks to the education that would be applied by modern methods. In this declaration, it was also stated that reaching a civilized compromise with other communities, especially Armenians, and getting on well in terms of nationality was one of the goals. Using such an expression as no society has superiority over each other, the rejection of the unequal policy carried out by the Ottoman Empire against the coexisting communities up to that period had also been critically stated. Striving for the increase of local authorization, and ensuring the rising and protection of the Empire were also mentioned among other purposes. In the unspoken issues, it

<sup>31</sup> Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 87.

<sup>32</sup> Kutluay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, s. 236.

<sup>33</sup> Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 93.

<sup>34</sup> Ayhan Işık, “Kürd Teavvün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi 1908-1909”, *Kürt Tarihi*, 2013, s. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Kutluay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, s. 220.

was said that the program of the Union and Progress Committee would be based on. In addition, the charter of the society also contained statements such as opening schools for Kurdish children and ensuring the development of the economy of Kurdistan. When looking at the articles published in the newspaper, it can be seen that the society had two goals; the first was (with the current terms) the modernization of the regions where Kurds were living, the enlightenment of Kurdish society, and the achievement of rights. The other was solving the problems that began between Kurds and the Armenians after the Tanzimat but continued especially during the reign of Abdulhamid II. It is stated that the society was closed in 1912.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the Kurdish Society for Cooperation and Progress, Kurdish lawyers and students came together and founded the Kurdish Hope and Student Society (*Kurt Hevi ve Talebe Cemiyeti*) based in Istanbul. The society was mostly providing for the getting of Kurds living in Istanbul together. Some of the founders of this society were Kadri Cemil, Babanzade Ricai Nuzhet, Dersimli Selim Sabit, Ekrem Semsettin, and Cemil Pasha Brothers.<sup>37</sup> They were subjected to very serious criticism by the Kurdish Society for Cooperation and Progress. The Society tried to discredit them by stating that the Kurdish Hope and Student Society did not propose any reforms for the Kurds or had no idea about how Kurds can be an independent state.<sup>38</sup> It is seen that the Kurdish Hope and Student Society was mostly active in the fields of literature, women, education, art, and culture.<sup>39</sup> The publications of the society were *Roji Kurd*, *Yekbun*, and *Netawi* magazines.<sup>40</sup> Apart from all these, between the Second Constitutional Era and World War I, societies and parties, such as the Kurdistan Teali Society, the Kurd Teskilat-I Ictimaiye Society, the Kurdish National Party, the Kurdish Women's Teali Society, the Kurdish Tamim-i Maarif and the Neşriyat Society, *Roji Kurd-Hateve Kurd*, were also established to form the base of the Kurdish national movement.<sup>41</sup>

While the Kurds carried out cultural organizations in this way, the Union and Progress administration was engaged in developing a strategy with the governors of the region for the alteration (*tebdil*) and banishment (*tenkil*) movement, especially for ending the monolithic form of administration established in the east of the country. Pirincizade Arif, Ziya Gokalp's uncle, and Feyzi often began to complain about the governor of the region, the administrative emirs, and Ibrahim Pasha to the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>42</sup> After that, the government decided to exile Ibrahim Pasha to Yemen with his family.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, the report of the Ministry of War that the tribal chiefs who were at the head of the Hamidiye Regiments were involved in the reactionism, that their activities against the Constitutional Monarchy posed many problems, and the education of the Kurdish tribes should have been increased to prevent this kind of issues is also important.<sup>44</sup> The government, on the other hand, was suggesting that the mentioned problems could only be solved by schooling and it was necessary to appoint good and resourceful civil servants to the region.<sup>45</sup> The Ministry of Interior (*Dâhiliye Nezareti*) was also asking the governors serving in the east for a report on what could be done.<sup>46</sup> As a result of the reports that

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<sup>36</sup> Malsımanjı, *Kürd Teavvün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi*, s. 52.

<sup>37</sup> Göktaş, *Kürtler-İsyân-Tenkil*, s. 25-26.

<sup>38</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler, İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, C. I, Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1988, s. 404-405.

<sup>39</sup> Malsımanjı, *Kürt Talebe-Hevi Cemiyeti, İlk Legal Kürt Öğrenci Derneği*, Avesta Basın Yayın, İstanbul, 2002, s. 57.

<sup>40</sup> Malsımanjı, *Kürt Talebe-Hevi Cemiyeti, İlk Legal Kürt Öğrenci Derneği*, s. 138.

<sup>41</sup> Bkz. Fethullah Kaya, *Kürt Basını*, Hidva İletişim, İstanbul 2010,

<sup>42</sup> Joost Jongerden, "Elite Encounters of A Violent Kind Milli İbrahim Paşa, Ziya Gokalp And Political Struggle In Diyarbekir At The Turn Of The 20Th Century", (Edit.) Joost Jongerden-Jelle VerHeij, *Social Relation in Ottoman Diyarbekir 1870-1915*, Brill, Netherlands, 2012, s. 64-66.

<sup>43</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi BOA YA Hus. 491/1. Lef 1; BOA. İ. Dâhiliye. 1325. L. 19/19.

<sup>44</sup> BOA, DH-SYS, 90/1-6, Varak No: 17.

<sup>45</sup> BOA, DH-SYS, 90/1-6, Varak No: 17.

<sup>46</sup> BOA, DH-SYS, 90/1-6, Varak No: 12/2.

reached the center, the Hamidiye Regiments were weakened by first being attached to the Tribal Light Cavalry Regiments and then to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in Erzurum by a decision taken by the Union and Progress administration.<sup>47</sup>

It can be said that while the Kurds were trying to achieve cultural organization in Istanbul, they received serious support from the Russians. It should be noted that cultural information lay at the basis of the relations of the Russians with the Kurdish tribes. The fact that the Institute of Kurdology was established in Russia and a lot of research studies were conducted on this issue was not accidental. The books "Kurds, Yazidis" by Aboyyan, "History of Russian-Kurdish Relations" by Chetoev, "Kurdish Grammar" by Justi, and "Kurds" by Minorsky can be shown as a few examples of the studies on Kurds. In order to prevent the cultural organization in Istanbul from turning into a political structure, the Union and Progress administration has attempted to bring some Kurdish dignitaries close to them in the region to their side. In this context, it is important that Hüseyin Pasha and Hasan Bey, who were from Bedirhanlis, were elected as deputies by the Union and Progress in the elections carried out in 1910 and 1912. In addition, Seyyid Abdulkadir, the eldest son of Sheikh Ubeydullah, was released after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy in 1908 and appointed as a member of the Ottoman Ayan Assembly (the Senate).<sup>48</sup> However, on the other hand, the Union and Progress administration took the decision to resettle the Kurdish tribes living in the east of the country at their congress held in 1913. In the telegram sent from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Trabzon, Sivas, and Erzurum on April 1, 1916, it was asked how many people from which Kurdish tribe were sent.<sup>49</sup> Despite this, when going to World War I, the problem could not be solved literally, and attitudes and behaviors towards that the Kurdish national movement wanted to achieve success through an uprising began to come to the fore. The Bitlis Incident, which occurred in 1914, can be shown as an example of this. The incident turned into a major rebellion due to the unhealthy communication between the Sublime Porte and the governors. A rebellion arose in the Bitlis region with the participation of Mullah Selim and the tribes of the region.<sup>50</sup> Due to the fact that Tahsin Bey, the Governor of Van, misunderstood the events in Bitlis, the incident was considered by the Ministry of Interior as a major riot. The government, considering that there was Russian influence in the rebellion, immediately took the necessary measures and declared martial law to ensure public order in Bitlis. However, the fact that the rebellious Mullah Selim and his friends took refuge in the Russian Consulate caused a diplomatic crisis to arise. While the government was negotiating with the Russians on the one hand for the extradition of the rebels, on the other hand, it had established a Court-Martial to punish those involved in the events. To prevent a possible crisis, Russia extradited Mullah Selim and his friends, and the Ottoman State also gave death sentences to these people to ensure public order in the region, and also sent those involved in the events into exile to places such as Sivas and Ankara.<sup>51</sup> In the same way, the fact that Sheikh Mahmud Berzinci rebelled in Mosul in 1914 in Ottoman geography shows that the ideal of independence was harbored within itself.<sup>52</sup>

In the final analysis, it can be seen that the Kurdish national movement entered into an Istanbul-based cultural and political organization, especially in the period between the Second Constitutional Monarchy and World War I, and the problems related to the Kurds were expressed through magazines. On the other hand, it is seen that the Union and Progress administration has introduced some sanctions and applications, especially population engineering, in order to prevent

<sup>47</sup> BOA, DH-ŞFR, 44/24.

<sup>48</sup> Hıdır Gökteş, *Kürtler-İşyan-Tenkil*, Alan Yayıncılık, İstanbul, s. 19.

<sup>49</sup> BOA, DH-ŞFR, 62/187; BOA, DH-ŞFR, 62/188.

<sup>50</sup> Abdülkadir Menek, *Kürt Meselesi ve Said Nursi*, Nesil Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2013, s. 56.

<sup>51</sup> BOA, MV. 237/126.

<sup>52</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s.112.

possible rebellions or riots that may occur in the east of the country.<sup>53</sup> When examined in terms of providing the basis for the Sheikh Said Rebellion, which is the subject of this study, it is also understood that Kurdish organizations were working actively during that period.

With the beginning of World War I, a serious nationalist Kurdish element was faced in the East, as in the whole of the country. In particular, by noting that the Ottoman Empire would be defeated in the war, the Kurdish intellectuals always tried to keep alive the belief that it would be right to start working to create a state as a result.<sup>54</sup> It was obvious that not all Kurds thought in this way throughout the war. Some Kurds also took charge in the army voluntarily for the continuation of the Ottoman Empire. In the reports of Memduh Bey, the Acting Governor of Bitlis, it is stated that some from the Bedirhan family took part in the Russian army during the Russian occupation of Bitlis, while names such as Kufravi sheikh Abdalbaki, Norshin Sheikh Ziyaeddin, Gaydali Sheikh Selahattin, and Said Kurdi also fought on the side of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>55</sup> In addition, in order to prevent the Russians from entering the interior, people such as Bishare Cheto, the head of the Pencira Tribe, Mutki, Hasenanli, Pervari, Kolyon Bey from the Zerikan Tribe, and Baba Bey also fought.<sup>56</sup> It is understood that throughout the war, the Union and Progress administration did not intend to engage in struggling with the Kurds too much. In fact, it would not have been useful for the Union and Progress administration to have a Kurdish problem when there was an obvious Armenian problem.<sup>57</sup> From this point of view, it can be said that the Union and Progress either connived almost all kinds of attitudes of the Kurds against the public order or went on a path to win them over.

## 2. The Kurdish National Movement after World War I, and Preparation for the Sheikh Said Uprising

After the end of World War I, the fact that the victorious states began to invade various points of Istanbul and Anatolia gave some Kurds hope. According to them, the dream of independence could be achieved with the help of the British. Mehmet Serif Pasha, a Kurdish-born Ottoman bureaucrat who was exiled in Paris during World War I, informed the British in May 1919 that he was willing to become an Emir of an independent Kurdistan. Meanwhile, one of Sheikh Ubaydullah's sons, Kurdish Sayyid Abdulkadir, was appointed as president of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti).<sup>58</sup> The Sykes-Picot Treaty, signed during the war, was considered for many Kurds a turning point in terms of establishing a Kurdish state.<sup>59</sup> It is also known that during the same period, due to the revolution in Russia, the Caucasian Kurds also began to engage in a number of activities in order to get support from Lenin in a possible war for independence.<sup>60</sup> In fact, the Russians had even opened a school that taught with Cyrillic alphabet for the Kurds in Iran at the beginning of the war in 1919.<sup>61</sup> An attempt to found an independent state with the support of Russians and the British was the greatest dream of some Kurdish intelligentsia. However, the Kurds were living not only in Anatolia. They were heavily inhabited

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<sup>53</sup> Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, Remzi Kitapevi, İstanbul, 2000, s. 63-64.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Rubin, *Considerations for Kurds, Their Neighbors, and the Region*, American Enterprise Institute, 2016, s. 11.

<sup>55</sup> Sinan Hakan, *Türkiye Kurulurken Kürtler (1916-1920)*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2013, s. 19.

<sup>56</sup> Mehmet Evsile, "Birinci Dünya Savaşında Kafkas Cephesinde Aşiret Mensuplarından Oluşturulan Milis Birlikleri", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, XII, Ankara, Kasım 1996, s. 85.

<sup>57</sup> Zharmukhamed Zardykhan, "Ottoman Kurds of the First World War Era: Reflections in Russian Sources", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Jan., 2006, s. 72.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Mango, "Ataturk And The Kurds", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, Oct., 1999, s. 5.

<sup>59</sup> Kerim Yıldız, *The Kurds in Syria*, Pluto Press, 2005, s. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Hüseyin Can, *Sovyetler Birliği'nde Kürtler (1917-1956)*, Peri Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, s. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Michael A. Reynolds, "The Ends of Empire Imperial Collapse and the Trajectory of Kurdish Nationalism", edi: So Yamane and Norihiro Naganawa, *Regional Routes, Regional Roots? Cross-Border Patterns of Human Mobility in Eurasia*, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, 2014, s. 39.



in Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Britain, on the other hand, was looking for a way to take advantage of the Kurds living in the region for the south of the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the British were looking for a way to deal with the Kurds by contacting them through Major Noel.<sup>62</sup> They were stating that in exchange for the help of the Kurds themselves, they would be given support for establishing a Kurdish state in the region.<sup>63</sup>

It was mentioned above that after the Armistice of Mudros, the Society for the Rise of Kurds (Kurt Teali Cemiyeti) was established in Istanbul on December 17, 1918 under the chairmanship of Seyyid Abdulkadir.<sup>64</sup> The society is important in terms of being the pioneer of the early Kurdish national movement. Among the founders of the society, there were some people such as Seyyid Abdulkadir Efendi, Huseyin Sukru (Baban) Bey, Dr. Mehmed Sukru (Sekban) Bey, Muhiddin Nami Bey, Baytar Nuri, Babanzade Hikmet Bey, Kamran Ali Bedirhan, Necmeddin Hussein, Resid Agha, Urfali Tayfur, Kadizade M. Sevki, Arvasizade Mehmet Sefik, Mehmet Mihri, and Emin Feyzi. When expressing their goals, by stating “*to preserve and protect the legal rights of the Kurdistan population and to raise education, economics, and sociology of it, and to serve its development*”, they emphasized that the society was founded to protect all rights of Kurds living in the Ottoman Kurdish geography. In addition to Istanbul, the Society was also organized in places such as Malatya, Elazig, Dersim, Siirt, Mardin, Bitlis, and Urfa.<sup>65</sup> The name of the publication organ of the society was also Kurdistan. Moreover, in the same process, there was another structure established by women under the name of the Society for the Rise of Kurdish Women (Kurt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti) and affiliated to the Society for the Rise of Kurds. It was stated that this structure was aimed at increasing the effectiveness of Kurdish women in the family and in social life.<sup>66</sup> The name of the publication organ of this society was *Jin*. Immediately after the establishment of both societies, they visited the British, French, and American representation offices, informed them about the Kurdish movement, and reiterated their desire for independence.<sup>67</sup> The Government of Istanbul conveyed to the representatives of the society through various channels that it is uncomfortable with these activities of the Society for the Rise of Kurds. In addition, in the answer given by Mevlanzade Rifat Efendi, one of the leaders of the society, to the questions asked by the Istanbul government about “*why the society propagates these views*”, it was stated that every nation had the legitimacy to found its own independent state according to the Wilson principles, and the Kurds needed to create a state in which they would feel safe. The Society for the Rise of Kurds experienced a number of divisions over time. The reason for the division was that a polarization about independence or autonomy was experienced. The experienced polarization also manifested itself in the Sheikh Said Uprising, as in the early Kurdish national movement. In addition to this structure in Istanbul, the Kurds also formed a structure in Cairo called the Prince Sureyya Bedirhan Kurdish Independence Committee. On the other hand, in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, in January 1919, Sheikh Mahmud Berzenci was working for the Kurdish uprising.<sup>68</sup> The sheikh, in particular, was thinking about founding a Kurdish state based in Mosul, Kirkuk, and Sulaymaniyah. He had the understanding that he could get the tribes in the region on his side with the political and religious power that he obtained throughout the historical process.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Göktaş, *Kürtler-İsyân-Tenkil*, s. 29.

<sup>63</sup> Edward Charles Noel, *Kürdistan 1919, Binbaşı Noel'in Günlüğü*, Avesta Basın Yayın, İstanbul, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Bilal Altan-Mehmet Akbaş-Ercan Çağlayan, “Kürdistan Teâli Cemiyeti'nin Şubeleri ve Bağlı Kuruluşları”, *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi*, C. VI, S. I, 2019, s. 316.

<sup>65</sup> Altan-Akbaş-Çağlayan, “Kürdistan Teâli Cemiyeti'nin Şubeleri ve Bağlı Kuruluşları”, s. 318-320.

<sup>66</sup> Rohat Alakom, *Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti*, Avesta Basın Yayın, İstanbul, 2019, s. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Göktaş, *Kürtler-İsyân-Tenkil*, s. 31.

<sup>68</sup> David Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arabs and Britxons*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 2001, s. 99.

<sup>69</sup> Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, s. 70.

While the Kurdish national movement was proceeding on its own way, a national struggle had started from Samsun in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Considering that when Mustafa Kemal Pasha was the commander of the corps as the head of 2<sup>nd</sup> Army in Diyarbakir, he fought against the Russians at the Diyarbakir-Bitlis-Mus front, it should be not forgotten the fact that he had some thoughts about the Kurds. Therefore, after arriving in Samsun, he initiated diplomacy with the Kurdish Beys by telegram and letter.<sup>70</sup> Mustafa Kemal Pasha first sent letters to the Head of the Mutki Tribe, Haji Mustafa Mutki, and the Ottoman parliamentarian Kurd Kamil Bey.<sup>71</sup> Also, by emphasizing the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds in Diyarbakir during his communications with Cemilpashazadeler, he drew attention to their main enemies and advised them not to fall into the trap of the British and Russians. While Mustafa Kemal was trying to talk to the tribes and distract them from separatist ideas, he also warned the Istanbul Government. In his telegram to the Government of Istanbul, he said:

*“I have personally learned that unrest has increased between the Kurdish Club in Diyarbekir, which follows the idea of an independent Kurdistan, and other clubs that are supporters of the government; By writing telegrams directly and through the Corps to many famous Kurdish beys whose friendships and intentions I had rather acquired during the war that had an impact on the Kurds and Kurdistan, I made the necessary statements and gave effective advice on the main condition of the state. Considering some of the information I have received recently, it is necessary to be concerned and interested in the Kurdistan region; For this purpose, what are the districts that the British are interested in from the point of view of an Independent Kurdistan? and regarding the future, which regions do the British encourage the most? In this regard, I would like to request that the destruction of the information available to your High Office is allowed.”<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, Mustafa Kemal was also requesting the army commanders to give information to him about the activities of the Society for the Rise of Kurds. In particular, in a telegram sent to Kazim Karabekir Pasha, he stated about the necessity of closure of this society: “The Kurdish Club in Diyarbekir was closed because it was understood that it had the purpose of founding a Kurdistan under the auspices of the British with the encouragement of the British. His members are being prosecuted according to the law. In the telegrams I received from the famous beys of Kurdistan, it is stated that this closed Kurdish club does not represent any Kurds and is the result of attempts of several punks, and they expressed that they are ready to commit every sacrifice and to fulfill our orders for the sake of a completely independent and free life of the motherland and the nation.”*

Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who came to Erzurum to attend the Congress after the Amasya Circular, held a meeting with many Kurdish tribal leaders at the congress. It was significant that 22 of the 56 delegates who participated in the congress were Kurds.<sup>73</sup> At the meeting held after the congress, the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds, the goals of imperialist states, and even their expressions that the Kurds would be given autonomy were mentioned.<sup>74</sup> Of course, the accuracy of this had to be proved. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was thinking of establishing the trust he had established with the Kurdish leaders at the congress for all Kurds. He was communicating with the Kurdish intelligentsia on this issue. In particular, he was thinking of getting the Bedirhan family, the Cemilpasazades, and the Sunni tribes to his side.<sup>75</sup> Mustafa Kemal Pasha personally asked the tribal chiefs to open Associations for Defense of National Rights (Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri) in the provinces where the Kurds were living heavily in order to disband the Society for the Rise of Kurds. Mehmet Aga, the head of the Balaban Tribe, and Lutfi Efendi had been of great service in the creation of the Association for Defense of National Rights, which was established in Erzincan and worked in Dersim, Pülümür.<sup>76</sup> Also, a large number of Naqshbandi

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<sup>70</sup> Mango, “Ataturk And The Kurds”, s. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Mango, “Ataturk And The Kurds”, s. 6; McDowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 119.

<sup>72</sup> Göktaş, *Kürtler-İsyân-Tenkil*, s. 34.

<sup>73</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, Gareth M. Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul, 1997, s. 83.

<sup>74</sup> Ekrem Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, Beybun Yayınları, Ankara, 1992, s. 38.

<sup>75</sup> Malmisaniji, *Diyarbakirli Cemilpasazadeler ve Kürt Milliyetçiliği*, Avesta Basın Yayın, İstanbul, 2004, s 141-142.

<sup>76</sup> Vatan Özgül, “Kurtuluş Savaşı Sürecinde Alevi Aşiret Reislerinin Protesto Telgrafları ve Balabanlılar”, *Türk Kültürü Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, Sayı 56, Ankara, 2010, s. 167.



Kurdish sheikhs, including Sheikh Said of Piran, expressed their supports for Mustafa Kemal in the rescue of the caliphate from enemy domination.<sup>77</sup> The tribes also had an influence on the Association for Defense of National Rights, which was also established in Urfa, Siirt, and Siverek. Under these circumstances, there were also many Kurdish tribal chiefs, sheikhs, and dignitaries who declared their allegiance to the Istanbul Government. These allegiances were often reported in telegrams sent to the prime minister's office.

While the Committee of Representation established after the Erzurum Congress was on its way to the congress to be held in Sivas, Major Noel was working with the Istanbul Government and the leaders of the Society for the Rise of Kurds to bust the congress and arrest Mustafa Kemal. Haji Musa, the head of the Mutki Tribe, and Sadullah and Fevzi Efendi, the deputies of Bitlis, did not attend the congress held in Sivas. The pressures from both the Kurds and the Istanbul Government had a great influence on the fact that these two members did not attend the congress. But thanks to the measures taken, the plan made by Ali Galip, the Governor of Elazig, and other Kurdish beys could not be realized.<sup>78</sup>

One of the important milestones of the early Kurdish national movement was also the calls made by Kurdish intellectuals in the international community for the foundation of a Kurdish State after World War I and the conferences held in parallel with these calls. The Paris Peace Conference, convened after the war on January 18, 1919, to establish the content of the treaty to be made with the defeated states, was also an opportunity for the Kurds. On this platform, the Kurds would be able to tell the big states about their ideas of creating their own autonomous or independent state. On March 22, 1919, Serif Pasha, who presented two memoranda and a map to the delegation of the Paris Peace Conference as a representative of the Kurds, reiterated their wishes for independence. Major Noel was also supporting Serif Pasha in this regard.<sup>79</sup> Major Noel was expressing on every platform that the fact that Kurds would create a separate state organization was to the British's benefit.<sup>80</sup>

After this proposal, Serif Pasha, together with the Armenian representative Nubar Pasha, presented to the delegates of the Paris Peace Conference an agreement specifying the conditions for being two separate independent states.<sup>81</sup> It is understood that the British were cautious about these demands of the Kurds since they were hesitant about whether the Kurds would live as an independent state. These requests were neither rejected nor approved at the conference.<sup>82</sup> However, the conference was positive for the Kurds in terms of explaining the Kurdish national theses to the major states. Against this initiative of Serif Pasha, some Kurdish tribes who were with Mustafa Kemal declared to the newspapers that Serif Pasha did not represent them. While this demand was growing almost every day, the British were also dissatisfied with this news. In particular, Mustafa Kemal's cooperation with the Bolsheviks made them think that he could also cause problems for them in Iraq and other regions, as in the Caucasus. For this purpose, Serif Pasha began to be ignored. After the Paris Peace Conference, the treaties to be signed with the defeated states became clear. The Treaty of Sevres was going to be signed with the Ottoman Empire. While the treaty actually ignored the Ottoman Empire, it had extremely dangerous items in terms of containing unhealthy elements.

<sup>77</sup> Denise Natali, *Kürtler ve Devlet*, Avesta Basım Yayın, İstanbul, 2009, s. 128.

<sup>78</sup> Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s.129.

<sup>79</sup> Kadir Kasalak, Paris Barış Konferansı'nda Ermeniler ve Kürtler", *Fırat Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt: VIII, Sayı:1, Elâzığ, 2012, s. 113.

<sup>80</sup> Cengiz Kartın, "Binbaşı Noel'in Hava Bakanlığı ve Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arşivlerindeki Gönderilerinde Kürt-Ermeni Münasebetleri", *Yeni Türkiye*, Sayı 64, Eylül-Aralık 2014, s. 3887.

<sup>81</sup> Yadirgi, *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey*, s. 164.

<sup>82</sup> Mcdowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 124.

On the other hand, the treaty was a turning point for Armenians and Kurds. The Treaty of Sevres was providing an important basis for the Kurds in terms of founding an independent state.<sup>83</sup> Articles 62, 63, and 64 of the treaty had paved the way for local Kurdish autonomy, which could potentially lead to full independence.<sup>84</sup> The Treaty of Sevres, signed in 1920 between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Forces (British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan) of World War I stipulated the remaining of Kurdish region under the rule of Turkish domination. Six months after the entry into force of the treaty, the commission, consisting of three members elected by the British, French, and Italian governments, proposed a plan of local autonomy. The treaty also stipulated that the Kurds could petition the League of Nations to become an independent state within a year, thereby it was guaranteeing the possibility of creating a Kurdish state. In addition, the government of Istanbul had pledged that it would give up all rights and property claims on these lands if it is found appropriate by international organizations for independence.<sup>85</sup>

Although the Western powers signed this treaty, the idea of an autonomous and then independent state for the Kurds was not attractive to many people. The reason for this was that there were Armenians, Yazidis, Syriac Christians on the borders of the state that the Kurds intended to establish, and the possible conflict between these ethnic groups could have led to the emergence of new problems. Moreover, it was necessary to take into account the long-standing problems of the Kurdish tribes and their hostile attitude towards each other. The final treaty that was signed was a great success for many Kurds. However, especially from the point of view of the Sunni Kurds, it was being considered that this treaty was a harbinger of new problems. In his book named “*Kurdistan in the British Documents*”, prepared on the basis of British documents, Mesut Yegen notes that the Ottoman Empire looked warmly at an autonomous state of Kurdistan much earlier than the Treaty of Sevres. Based on the document F0371/4192 112204 in his study, Yegen says that immediately after the World War I, the Istanbul Government of the period warmly looked at the idea of the autonomy of Kurdistan. According to the document, “*At a meeting in the Prime Ministry on 10 July 1919, Haydari Zade, former Shaykh al-Islam and a member of the Cabinet of the period, promised to some Kurdish intellectuals and notables, including Seyid Abdulkadir, Emin Ali Bedirhan, and Mevlanzade Rifat, that a Kurdish governor and Kurdish officials would be appointed to Kurdistan and state that the Istanbul government was close the idea of an autonomous Kurdistan.*”<sup>86</sup> Ultimately, the Treaty of Sevres had served as an international document legitimizing the Kurdish aspirations for independence, but the Treaty of Lausanne is also important in terms of the fact that it invalidated the Treaty of Sevres.

When the Treaty of Sevres was progressing in an international dimension, most of the Kurds supported the struggle started by Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Anatolia, while some of them took action against it with the understanding of independence and the support of the Istanbul Government. The aim was to enact the Treaty of Sevres. The Kocgiri Tribe was the first to rebel on this path with the participation of other tribes. The rebellion was prepared by Alişan Bey, who had been appointed governor of Dersim by Mustafa Kemal, and Baytar Nuri supported it.<sup>87</sup>

At the beginning of the rebellion, Mustafa Kemal first tried to convince both of them.<sup>88</sup> But when he failed, he sent a force led by Nurettin Pasha, the commander of the Central Army, to capture those who attempted to rebel. With the support of other Kurdish tribes in the region, the

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<sup>83</sup> Benyamin Neuberger, “Kurdish Nationalism in Comparative Perspective”, ed: Ofra Bengio, *Kurdish Awakening*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, s. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, “A Tale of Political Consciousness: The Rise of a Nonviolent Kurdish Political Movement in Turkey”, ed: Ofra Bengio, *Kurdish Awakening*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, s. 137.

<sup>85</sup> Heidi Basch-Harod, “The Kurdish Women in Turkey: Nation Building and the Struggle for Gender Parity”, ed: Ofra Bengio, *Kurdish Awakening*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, s. 179.

<sup>86</sup> Mesut Yeğen, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan*, Dipnot Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, s. 18.

<sup>87</sup> Nuri Dersimi, *Dersim ve Kürt Milli Mücadelesine Dair Hatıratım*, Öz-ge Yayınları, Ankara, 1992, s. 110.

<sup>88</sup> Dilek Kızıldağ Soileau, *Kocgiri İsyanı Sosyo-Tarihsel Bir Analiz*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017, s. 188.

rebellion was prevented and the rebels were captured.<sup>89</sup> The harsh measures implemented after the rebellion were discussed in the parliament in Ankara, and Nureddin Pasha was criticized on this issue. The Kocgiri rebellion is of importance due to the fact that it was the first organized rebellion against the Kemalists. After the Kocgiri Rebellion, the Kurdish rebellions were not over. After that, significant uprisings such as the Ali Bati Rebellion, the Beytussebab Rebellion, and the Nasturi Rebellion also occurred. Generally, these uprisings considered the Treaty of Sevres as the legitimate field for them.

As a result, although the Treaty of Sevres had caused excitement among the Kurds, the strife experienced among them resulted in the disappearance of the excitement. Some Kurds supported the movement of Mustafa Kemal, while some continued their allegiance to the Ottoman Government, and some believed in the struggle for the creation of a fully independent state. Some Kurds also said that autonomy was more appropriate, while others wanted a solution to the problems between the tribes, such as tribal fights.

In the final analysis, on the course of the Sheikh Said Rebellion, the view that it would be more appropriate to prioritize the opinion that independence should be combined with religious discourse had begun to outweigh. However, it should be noted that the Kurdish national movement did not act in an organized way in early 1923. It can be said that at the time when the rebellion began, the mentioned issues were effective.

### 3. How Did the Sheikh Said Rebellion Begin and How Did It Spread? Before and after the Rebellion

Mustafa Kemal Pasha's bond with the Kurds was strengthened during the congresses. In particular, in the Amasya Talks, an autonomy was mentioned for supporting the allowing Kurds to achieve ethnic rights in a way that would provide them to develop freely in terms of social aspects.<sup>90</sup> The fact that this issue was never mentioned in the Nutuk brings to mind that this issue might have been brought to the forefront in order to prevent the vast majority of Kurds from rebelling in that process.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who had maintained his power with the support of the public including also Kurds during the period when the Treaty of Sevres had lost its legitimate importance, had achieved success in the struggle that he had started against the imperialist states. It was expected that the victory gained with the Great Offensive would now return to the diplomacy traffic. While Mustafa Kemal Pasha was becoming the only power in Anatolia, he did not want the sultanate to be a problem in a possible diplomacy traffic. However, the representatives of the conservative structure acting together with him did not want to characterize the sultan with any kind of betrayal. Therefore, they were not inconsistent about the separation of the sultan and the caliphate; even, they were willing to abolish the sultanate. In order to legitimize his military victory, Mustafa Kemal Pasha asked for the abolition of the sultanate during the meeting held in the Parliament in November 1922. With the support of deputies, the sultanate was abolished on November 1, 1922, and Abdulmecit Efendi from the Ottoman family was elected as the new caliph on November 19, 1922 for the fulfillment of religious duties.<sup>91</sup> The main purpose of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in this practice was that the caliphate checked whether the laws adopted in the parliament were in accordance with the Sharia.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, the Allied Powers decided to convene in Lausanne on November 13, 1922 by using the term Government of the Grand National Assembly for the first time. Until this date, Mustafa Kemal's Kurdish approach had been built more on unity,

<sup>89</sup> Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925*, s. 38.

<sup>90</sup> Ahmet Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene: Türk Ulusal kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, s. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making Of Modern Turkey*, Roudledge, London, 2002, s. 52.

<sup>92</sup> Ahmad, *The Making Of Modern Turkey*, s. 53.



togetherness, and Muslim brotherhood. However, the invitation of the Ankara Government to Lausanne also raised the idea that some things should change. In particular, in the nation-state building process, the homogenization of the parties was important. When going to the Lausanne Peace Talks under these circumstances, İsmet Paşa's basic understanding was that the Kurds wanted to live together with the Turks and the fact that Kurds did not send any representatives to these talks could be used as a trump.<sup>93</sup>

At the Lausanne Conference, the Mosul issue was to be discussed first. However, Lord Curzon made the Mosul issue to be postponed. After the Thrace issue was discussed, it was time for the Mosul issue.<sup>94</sup> The Turkish side did not accept the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres and demanded that Mosul in northern Iraq be given to Turkey by stating that it is completely within the borders of Turkey.<sup>95</sup> Turkey also based its legitimate claims of wanting Mosul and the surrounding area on the following grounds:

1) Arabs were only a small minority in the region, and Turks and Kurds could not be separated racially.

2) Turkey had historical rights from the past in these regions,

3) The illegal occupation of Mosul by the British after the Armistice of Mudros signed between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire, and the fact that the Kurds living here stated that they wanted to join Turkey.<sup>96</sup>

The British, on the other hand, said that the Kurds were of Iranian origin; they also stressed that although the Turks had agreed to separate some territory from Turkey because they had been defeated in World War I, they could not ask for Mosul and its surroundings. During the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, the British stated that they cooled towards the idea of creating a Kurdish state in order to appease Turkey's side.<sup>97</sup> Because, given the general tendency in Iraq, if a popular vote had been taken, a decision might have been made to create an independent Kurdish state, especially in Iraq.<sup>98</sup> As the Sheikh Said rebellion approaches, it was being observed that some Kurds had uprising attitudes both in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, where the problems were still unresolved.

While the problems related to Mosul and the Kurds were postponed to be solved later at the Lausanne Conference, the following words expressed by Mustafa Kemal at the press meeting in İzmit during the conference were meaningful: "*Rather than considering a Kurdishness on its own, there will already be some kind of autonomy in accordance with our Constitution (Teşkilât-ı Esasiye Kânunu). Then, if the people of which district are Kurds, they will govern themselves autonomously.*"<sup>99</sup>

After the Lausanne Peace Talks were completed, Mustafa Kemal was now the only dominant actor in politics. For this reason, he was also willing to take action to achieve the reforms he wanted. While carrying out the political transformation in the Assembly, he also included those who dissent to him in the People's Party that he established.<sup>100</sup> In this process, the government crisis, which was experienced for a short time, was resolved by the proclamation of the Republic;

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<sup>93</sup> Natali, *Kürtler ve Devlet*, s. 121.

<sup>94</sup> Sevtap Demirci, "Turco-British Diplomatic Manoeuvres on the Mosul Question in the Lausanne Conference, 1922–1923", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, APRIL 2010, Vol. 37, No. 1, s. 60.

<sup>95</sup> Demirci, "Turco-British Diplomatic Manoeuvres on the Mosul Question in the Lausanne Conference, 1922–1923", s. 61.

<sup>96</sup> Othman Ali, "The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922–23", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jul., 1997, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1997, s. 522.

<sup>97</sup> Ali, "The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922–23", s. 521.

<sup>98</sup> Saad Eskander, "Southern Kurdistan Under Britains Mesopotamian Mandate: From Separation to Incorporation, 1920–23", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Apr., 2001, Vol. 37, No. 2, s. 161.

<sup>99</sup> *Mustafa Kemal, Eskişehir-İzmit Konuşmaları (1923)*, Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 1993, s. 104–105.

<sup>100</sup> Hasan Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*, Yapı ve Kredi Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul, 1973, s. 181.



Mustafa Kemal Pasha was elected President, while Ismet Inonu became Prime Minister. Mustafa Kemal Pasha's next goal was to build a nation-state-oriented state, and in order for the state to be secular, he met with the leaders of his party about the reassessment of the issue of the caliphate.<sup>101</sup> An important development that highlighted the abolition of the caliphate was the fact that a letter written by Aga Khan and Ameer Ali, who were from the Indian Muslims, to Ismet Inonu in order to state their position on the caliphate was published in the Istanbul press. Subsequently, it was an important development that the budget requested by the caliphate institution from the parliament was excessive and Mustafa Kemal Pasha intervened in this situation.<sup>102</sup> Then, on the motion of Siirt Deputy Sheikh Saffet Efendi and 53 of his friends, in accordance with Law No. 431 dated 3 March 1924, the caliphate was abolished and it was also accepted that people belonging to the Ottoman dynasty would be sent abroad.<sup>103</sup> Despite the fact that the caliphate was abolished bothered many people, the Kurds would show the main reaction.

In his book named “*A Modern History of the Kurds*”, McDowall states that the abolition of the caliphate has set the stage for the decoupling of the last ideological bond between the Turks and the Kurds. Abolishing the caliphate was important in terms of the fact that it formed the legitimacy of the Sheikh Said rebellion. Moreover, religious factors were the cement of the definition of citizenship between Turks and Kurds. While rebelling, Sheikh Said called people to rebel by speaking about the importance of abolishing the institution of the caliphate and closing lodges and zawiya. In particular, he also claimed that the state was engaged in practices leading to irreligiousness. This propaganda had a serious impact on the religious tribal chiefs and the Naqshbandi Kurds. One of the important developments before the Sheikh Said uprising was also the activities of the Kurdish Freedom Society (*Ciwata Azadiya Kurd*).<sup>104</sup> Immediately after the establishment of the Freedom (Azadi) Society, it began to be structured very seriously.<sup>105</sup> After the organization completed its civil structuring, it began to organize its military structuring.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Mim Kemal Öke, *Mustafa Kemal Paşa ve İslam Dünyası Hilafet Hareketi*, İstanbul, 1999, s. 124.

<sup>102</sup> Oğuz AYTEPE, “Yeni Belgeler Işığında Halifelik Kurumunun Kaldırılması ve Hanedan Üyelerinin Yurtdışına Çıkarılması”, *Ankara Üniversitesi, Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, Ankara, 2002, s. 22.

<sup>103</sup> BCA, 51.0.0.0/2.1.29.

<sup>104</sup> V. Minorsky, *Kürtler*, Weşenen Halepçe, Köln, 1988, s. 358.

<sup>105</sup> Erzurum'da Abdülhüda Cafer Bey İle Arslan Bey (Cafer Beyin Kardeşi), İstanbul'da Seyyid Abdülkadir Abdül Rahim (Avukat), Kars'ta Yüzbaşı Tefvik Efendi, Beyazıt'ta Şeyh İbrahim, Malazgirt'te Hüseyin Paşa (Hayderanlı Aşireti), Vahtava'ta Halit Bey, Hınıs'ta Rüştü Efendi Yüzbaşı Rüştü Efendi, Bitlis'te Yusuf Ziya Bey, Binbaşı Hacı Hasan Bey, Abdurrahman Ağa, Hacı Dursun Ağa, Van'da Molla Abdülmecid Efendi (Molla Said-İ Kürdi'nin Kardeşi), Saadun Bey, Binbaşı Arif Bey (Şemski Aşireti), Ali (Arif Beyin Kardeşi), Siirt'ten Yüzbaşı İhsan Bey, Hacı Abdullah Efendi, Derviş Bey, Kaymakam Rezzak Bey, Diyarbakır'dan Cemilpaşazade Ekrem Bey, Doktor Murat Bey, Kaymakam Arslan Bey, Doktor Nazif Bey, Binbaşı Mustafa Bey, Mardin'den Hacı Kadir Bey, Ramo Ağa, Eyüp Bey İsa Ağa (Dukori Aşireti), İbrahim Ağa (Dukori Aşireti), Mahmud Bey İbn İbrahim Paşa (Milli Aşireti), Dersim'den Kangorzade Ali Haydar, Bitlis'ten Hacı Musa Bey, Cemil Çeto, Şeyh Selahattin Mustafa Ağa, Ali Ağa, Van'dan Lezgin Ağa, Ebubekir (Lezgin Ağanın Kardeşi), İsmail Ağa (Gevdan Aşireti), Ömer Ağa (Memki Aşireti), İsmail Ağa, Simko (Şikak Aşireti), Şeyh Abdurrahman (Bervari Aşireti), Şahin Ağa (Bervari Aşireti), Yahya Ağa (Jirikan Aşireti), Yakup Ağa (Arup Aşireti), Şırmak'tan Ali Ağa (Hacıbayram Aşireti), Mustafa İbn Abdurrahman Ağa (Hacıbayram Aşireti), Şahin İbn Süleyman Ağa (Hacı Bayram Aşireti), Agid Ağa (Hacı Bayram Aşireti), Ömer Timur Ağa (Batvan Aşireti), Şeyh Tahit (Batvan Aşireti) were in charge of the organization. Levent Ayabakan, *Kürt-İngiliz İlişkileri (1918-1925)*, Sakarya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Sakarya, 2016, s. 262.

<sup>106</sup> Süvari Birlik Komutanları: Teğmen Nuri Efendi (Diyarbakır), Teğmen Muhammed Efendi (Harput). ALAY KAYMAKAMLARI: Kaymakam Adnan Bey, Kaymakam Cemil Bey, Kaymakam Ahmet Efendi, Kaymakam Faraidan Efendi. 2. BÖLÜK: Yüzbaşı Fahri Efendi, Yüzbaşı Ziya Bey 2. BÖLÜK İKMAL KOMUTANI: Abdullah Efendi. CİZRE SINIR BATARYASI:1. ALAY Abdülkadir Efendi, Yüzbaşı Fettah Efendi (Diyarbakır), Yüzbaşı Abdüllatif Efendi (Siirt), Teğmen Şevket Efendi, Teğmen Tefvik Efendi (Bitlis), Teğmen Abdul Bari Efendi, Teğmen Kazım Efendi Teğmen Yusuf Efendi (Cemilpaşazade), Teğmen Asin Efendi (Siirt-Derviş Bey'in kardeşi). 6. ALAY: Teğmen Akif Efendi, Teğmen Sadık Efendi. 18. ALAY:(Komuta Kontrol Ali Rıza Efendi), Binbaşı Fuat Bey, Kaymakam İsmail Ağa (Beytüşşebap), Yüzbaşı İhsan Nuri Efendi (Bitlis), Yüzbaşı Mustafa Efendi (Diyarbakır), Teğmen Ahmet Rasim Efendi (Van), Teğmen Furdaus Efendi (Mardin), Teğmen Tefvik Efendi (Mardin), Teğmen

The organization held its first congress in Erzurum. On the other hand, it also began to make negative statements against the Ankara Government. In particular, they expressed their discomfort with several steps taken by the Turkish government against the Kurdish national movement. The central government and the arrest of Kurdish national activists and intellectuals strengthened the national sensitivity of the Kurds.<sup>107</sup> Azadi (freedom), a national Kurdish organization founded in 1923, called for Kurdish independence by sorting out Kurdish demands to the Turkish government to spread its ideological message.<sup>108</sup> They contacted the Kurdish tribal leaders, mainly Sheikh Said, and suggested that they become the apparent leader of the rebellion. Sheikh Said coordinated the planning of the uprising and called on the tribes to join this uprising in the name of jihad against the Turkish secular government. Sheikh Said was only partially successful in bringing the rival tribes together. It cannot be said that he was successful in including some important Alevi tribes in this rebellion especially due to his status as a Sunni Naqshbandi sheikh. For example, the Alevis of Hormek and Lolan did not want to see a rebellion led by a Sunni sheikh succeed.<sup>109</sup> This was a negative situation for the rebellion. The Ankara Government, on the other hand, first arrested some members of the organization because it knew about the plans of Sheikh Said and the Azadi organization, and then increased its pressure on other members of the organization.<sup>110</sup> The Azadi organization had a distinctive feature compared to other societies and organizations that had been established by that time. The reason why they were focusing entirely on the Kurdistan issue was that they desired to undertake the management of Muslim Kurds completely and had a liberal Islamic perspective. They often emphasized Islamist law as a source of legitimacy, as well as the universal law.<sup>111</sup> In addition to the works of the Azadi organization, it is also important that the Kurdish independence movement, which had begun to mature since the Second Constitutional Era, had gained strength along with the activities of the Society for the Rise of Kurds.<sup>112</sup>

One of the important turning points of the Sheikh Said uprising was the administrative arrangements made for the nation-state structure with the proclamation of the Republic and the replacing process of the Kurdish governors in the region. According to David McDowall, the new candidates, who went to the eastern regions after the deputies resigned for the new parliament, were not at all welcomed by the Kurds. Likewise, the fact that all high-level administrative offices in the East were filled by undesirable people instead of the administrators loved by the Kurds, all references to Kurdistan were excluded from the official materials, and Kurdish place names had been changed to Turkish were the elements that triggered the events. Meanwhile, some Kurds who served in the army had already begun to complain of ill-treatment and psychological abuse. Moreover, the insistence on the use of Turkish alone in the courts and the official prohibition of Kurdish, including the use of Kurdish in schools, were important issues that increased the discomfort.<sup>113</sup> Martin Bruinessen refers to some issues that arose before the Sheikh Said rebellion as follows: “*There were doubts that by dispersing the Kurds to Western Anatolia, the government would attempt to resettle the Turks to their places; the use of the Kurdish language in schools and courts was largely restricted. The tolerance to Kurdish education shows that a Kurdish education system did not work. The word Kurdistan had been deleted from all geography books. The highest officials serving in the Kurdish provinces were mostly Turks, while the Kurds who worked in lower positions were carefully selected people. In exchange for the taxes paid, the government*

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Ümran Efendi (Çanakkale), Teğmen Mesut Efendi (Erzurum), Teğmen İmran Efendi (Arap), Teğmen Mustafa Efendi (Bitlis), Teğmen Nuri Efendi (Harput). Ayabakan, *Kürt-İngiliz İlişkileri (1918-1925)*, s. 263.

<sup>107</sup> Eli Amariyo, “The Dual Relationship Between Kurdish Tribalism and Nationalism”, ed: Ofra Bengio, *Kurdish Awakening*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, s. 74.

<sup>108</sup> Amariyo, “The Dual Relationship Between Kurdish Tribalism and Nationalism”, s. 75.

<sup>109</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, s. 424.

<sup>110</sup> Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, s. 34.

<sup>111</sup> Cuma Çiçek, *The Kurds of Turkey, National, Religious and Economic Identities*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2017, s. 63.

<sup>112</sup> Kemal Kirişçi-Gareth M. Windrow, *The Kurdish Questions And Turkey*, Frank Cass, London, 1997, s. 80.

<sup>113</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History Of The Kurds*, s. 191; Enis Güney, *Cumhuriyet Tarihinde Kürtler*, Paraf Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, s. 35.



was implementing a tactic of using this tribe against another. It was being claimed that Kurdish villages were being looted by soldiers and animals were being stolen, and rumors of bribery were circulating about the money and materials collected for the national mobilization. It was also being claimed that Kurds serving in the army were overburdened, they were mistreated, and they were often used for the most difficult and undesirable tasks.”<sup>114</sup> In all this process, the points mentioned by Bruinessen, in particular, became the source of legitimacy of the Azadi organization in propaganda.

One of the issues that needed to be addressed before the Sheikh Said uprising was the fact that Sheikh Mahmut Berzenci was struggling to establish an independent Kurdish state in Iraq.<sup>115</sup> Turkey was supporting the Sheikh especially in terms of keeping the British busy.<sup>116</sup> By carrying out airstrikes on the locations of supporters of Sheikh Mahmut Berzenci in Mosul and Suleymaniye, the British were also aiming to prevent the Kurds from supporting against Turkey in Lausanne.<sup>117</sup> During his meeting with the British, King Faisal stated that he did not want the Kurds to create an independent state. The British also agreed with the king. For this reason, they appointed Seyyid Taha, a pro-British Kurdish tribal chief, as an administrator in order to control places such as Suleimaniyah, Kirkuk, and Mosul and prevent Turkey from influencing this region.<sup>118</sup> Sheikh Berzenci continued his struggle to attract Kurdish regions to his side.<sup>119</sup> In particular, the British believed that Turkey was using Sheikh Mahmut in the Mosul issue and the center of its policies was being shaped at the request of King Faisal. With the support of the British, the Iraqi Government occupied the places under the rule of Sheikh Mahmut, and Sheikh thereupon established a Kurdish state in Sulaymaniya.<sup>120</sup> Sheikh Mahmut Berzenci, whose support was reduced by the Treaty of Lausanne and the Treaty of Ankara signed with Turkey, continued his struggle with the support coming from Iran. The benefit of this rebellion to the Sheikh Said uprising was that it contributed to the process of keeping the spirit of independence alive and active in the region.

In the process leading up to the Sheikh Said uprising, one of the important dynamics that accelerated this uprising was also the Beytusebap rebellion, which was understood to be organized by the Azadi organization immediately after the Turkish-Kurdish congress convened in Diyarbakir on August 1, 1924. It is not clear by whom the congress was organized. However, Olson notes that the congress was prepared by the Azadi organization.<sup>121</sup> Looking at the decisions taken, it can be seen that there were significant gains achieved for both societies. According to the decisions that were taken at the Congress: 1) a special form of government would be established in the Kurdish-majority regions, 2) the government would allocate special allowances to the Kurds from the budget, 3) a general amnesty would be issued for jailed Kurds, 4) residents of the region would not be conscripted for 5 years, 5) Sharia Courts would be re-established, 6) weapons collected from the public would be distributed back, and 7) some Turkish officers and civil servants serving in the region were to be relieved of their duties.<sup>122</sup> In return, the Kurds would promise to support Turkey in the Mosul issue. The Congress did run counter to the UK's interests.

<sup>114</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1993, s. 153-154.

<sup>115</sup> Jordi Tejel Gorgas, “Urban Mobilization in Iraqi Kurdistan during the British Mandate: Sulaimaniya 1918-30”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jul., 2008, Vol. 44, No. 4, s. 540.

<sup>116</sup> Ali, “The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-23”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jul., 1997, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1997, s. 525.

<sup>117</sup> M.R. Izady, “Kurds and the Formation of the State of Iraq, 1917-1932”, Editor(s): Reeve Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian, *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004, s. 105.

<sup>118</sup> Ali, “The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-23”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jul., 1997, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1997, s. 527.

<sup>119</sup> M.R. Izady, “Kurds and the Formation of the State of Iraq, 1917-1932”, s. 107.

<sup>120</sup> Ali, “The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-23”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jul., 1997, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1997, s. 530.

<sup>121</sup> Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, s. 92.

<sup>122</sup> Bruinessen, *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar*, s. 154.

The rebellion that occurred in Beytussebab right at the end of the congress was surprising. The rebellion was led by Ihsan Nuri, Vanli Rasim, Hertosili Hursid, and Mardinli Tevfik Cemil.<sup>123</sup> After the start and spread of the rebellion, on the instructions of the Ankara Government, Yusuf Zia was arrested in Erzurum on October 10 and sent to the Bitlis military war tribunal. After the confessions of Yusuf Zia, Haji Musa and then, Halid Bey, Cibran Sheikh, Norsinli Masum, and Hizanli Selahattin were also arrested.<sup>124</sup>

In such an atmosphere and in a previously planned way, Sheikh Said and those who accompanied him were seeking a suitable time and environment for the rebellion. Meanwhile, Sheikh Said was consolidating his personal power in the name of ensuring stability and cooperation in the region by traveling around the region. For this purpose, Sheikh Said went to the village of Piran, which is connected to Ergani, for the wedding of someone depending on him. The gendarmerie receiving information that two people from the Azadi organization were deserters in this village asked Sheikh Said for help. According to some people, after the Sheikh said that these deserters would surrender after the wedding, a mutual fire was opened and the rebellion began. According to other people, on the other hand, clashes and the rebellion began because soldiers wanted to seize deserters by force while the wedding is going on.<sup>125</sup> When talking about the occurrence of the Sheikh Said rebellion, Seyyid Ahmed Arvasi stated that the district commander came to the wedding while Sheikh Said was at a wedding and told him that they would arrest the guilty people at the wedding. As this would cast a shadow on the wedding, Sheikh Said promised that he would himself bring the guilty people to justice after the wedding. Ahmet Arvasi notes that despite this, the rebellion began with a mutual armed conflict after the persistent behavior of the district commander.<sup>126</sup> This incident, which took place in February 1925, was a turning point.<sup>127</sup> Under the leadership of a previously determined strategy, Sheikh Said captured places such as Genc, Mus, Elazig, and Palu in a short time. The tribes living in Tavasli under the command of Haydar Agha and the tribes living in Silvan under the command of Mullah Ahmed joined Sheikh Said.<sup>128</sup> Sheikh Said, who captured Daraeni and Elazig on February 6, 1925, reached the gates of Diyarbakir via Lice.<sup>129</sup>

At the first stage, the Ankara government had a hard time in terms of understanding this incident. The following statements of Ahmet Emin Yalman about how the incident was understood by Ankara when the Sheikh Said Incident first appeared are important:

*“The incident that occurred in the Genc town comprised of a few hundred digits despite it is a provincial center shows the tendency to grow. It is necessary to accept this incident as a struggle between the idea of the state and the system of feudalism and sheikhdom. By using words in the manner that he was appointed by Allah to restore the Sharia, Sheikh Said almost attempted to claim prophethood.”<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, Metin Toker, who conducted research on the rebellions that had arisen in Turkey, noted the followings about the influence of sheikhs and, in particular, Sheikh Said: “It is necessary not to consider the sheikhdom institution at that time (1925) in the East as just a religious institution. The sheikhs were not old people who lived in their lodges and made a living from the gifts brought by their disciples. The sheikhs were daredevil overlords who rode horses, were adept at using weapons and*

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<sup>123</sup> Bkz. Cemil Gündoğar, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı ve Şeyh Sait Ayaklanmasına Etkileri*, Komal Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1994.

<sup>124</sup> Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, s. 92.

<sup>125</sup> O’Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-94*, s. 15.

<sup>126</sup> S. Ahmet Arvasi, *Doğu Anadolu Gerçeği*, Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, İstanbul, 1986, s. 55.

<sup>127</sup> Yaşar Kalafat, *Şark Meselesi Işığında Şeyh Sait Olayı, Karakteri, Dönemindeki İç ve Dış Olaylar*, Boğaziçi Yayınları, Ankara, 1992, s.101.

<sup>128</sup> Şaban İba, *1925 Kürt İsyanı ve Kemalist İktidar*, Özgür Üniversite Kitaplığı, Ankara, 2011, s. 40.

<sup>129</sup> İhsan Şerif Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, s. 478.

<sup>130</sup> Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim Geçirdiklerim, 1922-1971*, C. II, Pera Turizm ve Ticaret A. Ş., İstanbul, 1997, s. 989.

swords, and were belligerent. They also had a religious influence on the people. They used to make their disciples do dhikr, and they had complete control over them.”<sup>131</sup>

Prime Minister Ali Fethi (Okyar) was trying to solve the uprising peacefully and desiring to use the channel of dialogue with the rebels by declaring martial law. Prime Minister Okyar resigned during the rebellion and the following words he said in parliament about the rebellion are significant: “I understand that my friends do not consider the measures taken by my government sufficient and want wider and more drastic measures to be taken against the rebellion. I believe that the measures required by the incident have been taken and that these measures are sufficient to suppress the rebellion. I don't want to get my hands on blood with more drastic measures. And because I believe that I have lost your trust, I am resigning from the duty of Prime Minister.” Ismet Inonu, who formed the new government, immediately declared martial law and sent the Third Army to the rebels. Sheikh Said was forced into retreat when he failed to capture Diyarbakir. The fact that Sırnak and Alevi tribes did not support the rebellion reduced its size.<sup>132</sup> Sheikh Said and his men, who were cornered near Varto, were captured.<sup>133</sup> After Sheikh Said and his men were captured, they were brought to Diyarbakir. After the hearings held in the Independence Court, Sheikh Said and 47 other rebels were sentenced to death.<sup>134</sup> The most important dynamic preventing this Kurdish rebellion in 1925 is that the uprising was not of a mass character, not all tribes participated in the uprising, and the number of people with different opinions among those who participated in the uprising is high.<sup>135</sup> From this point of view, the rebellion was already not expected to be successful. On the other hand, it should not be ignored the support of the tribes and Alevis who were on the side of the government. After the rebellion, in addition to applying for serious population engineering, efforts were made to develop the air force for Turkey. Turkey and the United Kingdom, which had confronted regarding the Mosul issue during the uprising, agreed between them and signed the Treaty of Ankara. On December 16, 1925, by the decision of the League of Nations, Mosul Province was granted to Iraq. However, it was stipulated that “Kurdish administrators should be appointed to the government, justice and educational institutions of the country and that the Kurdish language should be used as the official language in all these institutions”.<sup>136</sup>

#### 4. Rebellion or Revolt?

In accordance with the introduction in the title of our study, we should note that the question of whether the Sheikh Said Uprising was a rebellion or a revolt still continues to be relevant. It has been revealed in the whole of the above study that related to this issue, social scientists have different assessments from each other. Yes, Sheikh Said was a Naqshbandi sheikh. In addition, he was being introduced by some as a mujahid against the secular life that the Kemalist system was trying to bring to society. Perhaps, in this aspect, we can compare it with the uprising of Sheikh Ubaydullah, which occurred in 1878.

Sheikh Said was a Kurdish sheikh who had a wide popularity in the region, especially among the Zaza, and had become rich thanks to the commercial activities he had done. Sheikh, who was also known for his endeavors to reconcile the tribes in the region and had influence in many provinces, was living a life connected to Islamic sensitivities. The seal, which he used even when the rebellion arose and spread, highlighted his connection with Islam. One of the important reference points of those who defend Sheikh Said's uprising as the revolt is the following letter he sent to other sheikhs and tribes: “The destruction of this illegitimate administration of the Head of the Turkish Republic M. Kemal and his friends who have been trying to destroy the foundations of the religion of Ahmed (PBUH) (din-i mübin-i Ahmed) since the foundation day of the republic is fard for all Muslims because they are acting contrary

<sup>131</sup> Metin Toker, *Şeyh Said ve İsyanı*, Yenigün Haber Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1998, s. 38.

<sup>132</sup> Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, s. 148.

<sup>133</sup> *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, 17 Nisan 1925.

<sup>134</sup> Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet*, s. 429.

<sup>135</sup> Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, s. 43.

<sup>136</sup> Bois-Minorsky-Mc Kenzie, *Kürtler ve Kürdistan*, s. 104.

to the judgements of the Qur'an, denying Allah and the Prophet and exiled the Caliph of Islam (Abdumecid Efendi). It has been decided with the consultation of many ulama and sheikhs that the property and lives of those who are at the head of the Republic and those who are subject to the Republic are halal according to the shari'ah of Ahmed (Şeriat-ı Garra-ı Ahmediye)."<sup>137</sup> In this letter, Sheikh Said was inviting people to the revolt by talking about the difficulty of living the Islamic religion due to the Ankara Government's actions that could be accused of irreligion.

Looking at the minutes taken by the Independence Court, it seems that he absolutely did not accept the allegations of creating a Kurdish state in the name of the Kurdish movement directed at Sheikh Said; he stated that the reason for the rebellion was the closure of madrasas, the abolition of religion and foundations, and the affiliation of religious schools to the Ministry of National Education, moreover, based on the idea that those who defamed the Prophet were running the government, he said that he would continue the struggle by rising up again if he had the opportunity.<sup>138</sup> The following answer that Sheikh Said gave to the questions and directions of Prosecutor Ahmet Sureyya during the trial about whether this rebellion was a Kurdish uprising or not is significant:

- "How did you decide to attempt the rebellion movement? Have you been inspired?

- Far from it! There was no inspiration. I have seen in the books that if the imam deviates from the Sharia, rebellion is wajib (obligatory). We had wanted to tell the government about the Sharia problem. At least we were going to request some of it to be implemented. Allahu Teala's fate has led me to this task. I fell into it and I couldn't get out again.

- "You have said that if the imam deviates from the Sharia, rebellion is wajib. Is there no condition for this?"

- I don't know its condition. It is called Sha'ran wajib. Would a Muslim rebel if this situation was caused by the imam? My intention wasn't like this. I said if he does not apply the Sharia requirements.

- So you did revolt because there was a deviation from the sharia. What was your goal?

- The book says that the revolt is wajib. The book prohibits those, such as murder, adultery, and alcoholic beverages. We are all Muslims. There was no Turkish-Kurdish discrimination."<sup>139</sup>

Sheikh Said's statement makes us look at this uprising as a revolt. However, at the trial of the Independence Court with Seyit Abdulkadir, it was stated that this uprising was carried out to ensure Kurdish independence.<sup>140</sup>

Kor Sadi, a man of Sayyid Abdulkadir, also declared in court that they had started this uprising for the sake of Kurdish independence.<sup>141</sup> Prosecutor Ahmet Sureyya Orgeevren, the deputy of Karesi who conducted the investigation of Sheikh Said, described Sheikh Said and the rebellion in his book as follows: "It was only a religious and follower of Sharia in terms of appearance. But in terms of its real identity, internal structure, spirit, and purpose of its organizers, it was nothing but a complete Kurdish nationalism and the desire for a Kurdish state and government! Sheikh Said was saying throughout the court with great insistence and stubbornness that the uprising was not a Kurdish case. (According to Orgeevren) Sheikh Said may have thought of this as a possible, albeit weak, way to avoid execution. According to another possibility, Sheikh Said was a great committeeman, an idealist, and a revolutionary who was loyal to his cause."<sup>142</sup>

Ekinçi did not consider the Sheikh Said uprising as a Kurdish national movement. While he mostly considered this to be an uprising carried out by people dependent on the sheikh and the Zazas, he summarized the incident as follows: "The Sheikh Said Uprising of 1925 cannot be shown as an attempt aiming for independence since it was not a movement in which all Kurdish tribes and beys participated. The

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<sup>137</sup> M. Şerif Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi*, Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayın, Ankara, 1983, s. 170.

<sup>138</sup> Behçet Cemal, *Şeyh Said İsyanı*, Sel Yayınları, İstanbul, 1955, s. 24.

<sup>139</sup> Mehmet Aydoğan, *İç İsyanlar ve Şeyh Said İsyanı*, Nokta Kitap, İstanbul, 2012, s. 414.

<sup>140</sup> Aziz Aşan, *Şeyh Said Ayaklanması*, İstanbul, 1992, s. 33

<sup>141</sup> Nihal Esen, "Şeyh Sait İsyanında Abdullah Sadi (Kör Sadi)'nin Faaliyetleri ve Yargılanması" *Fırat Üniversitesi Harput Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi Uluslararası Palu Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*, Elazığ, 2018, s. 100.

<sup>142</sup> Örgüven, *Şeyh Sait İsyanı ve Şark İstiklal Mahkemesi*, s. 40-41.



religious leaders and feudal lords in the regions of Bingol, Darahini, Hınıs, Mush, Palu, Piran, Hani, Lice, Maden, and partly Siverek (Sheikh Eyup Gurpinar of Karacadag), who were mostly dependent on the religious authority of Sheikh Said, participated in the movement. However, none of the tribes and beys of Urfa, Mardin, Siirt, Van, Ağrı, and Hakkari regions participated in the uprising."<sup>143</sup> Tarık Ziya Ekinci's findings generally emphasize that the majority of those who were hanged were sheikhs and religious leaders and that the main goal of those who started the uprising was having an Islamic character. Although Omer Kurkcuoglu supports the existence of the British factor in the emergence of the Sheikh Said Rebellion in his book named "Turkish-British Relations", he considers the abolition of the caliphate as the most important approach that pushed the Kurds to rebel: "The abolition of the caliphate played an important role in the uprising of the Kurds, as well as weakened the Turkish claim on Mosul, where the Kurdish element was in the majority. If it can be said that the Kurds of Mosul, who are alien to nationalist thought, preferred Turkey to Iraq, the main reason for this was their loyalty to the Caliph, that is, to Islam."<sup>144</sup>

In the book "Kurdish Rebellions in the Documents of the General Staff" prepared by the General Staff, it is stated that despite the fact that the Sheikh Said incident was considered a reactionary rebellion in the Nutuk, this uprising is a counter-revolution, that is, a revolt in the sense of opposing the system.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, it is emphasized that the purpose of Sheikh Said was to help the re-establishing of the Ottoman State by setting Abdulmecid Efendi up on the throne again.<sup>146</sup> It may be also necessary to say that there is ambiguity in many parts of this book and that the rebellions were usually written in a writing appropriate to the orthodox historical consciousness although they were covered in many ways. It is also interesting that Sheikh Said used the title of emir al-mujahideen throughout the uprising. The concept, which means "the caliph and the emir who orders and takes measures in the affairs of Islam", shows that people were invited to revolt in a religious motive. In a letter written to his brother Sheikh Abdurrahim during the rebellion, Sheikh Said stated the following things that Muslims should do when they attempt to revolt: "I would advise the Mujahideen to act within the limits of Islamic sharia. Let them certainly stay away from plundering the property of Muslims. If there is a state of necessity or if there is a difficult situation, the necessary supplies can be taken from the warehouses on the condition that a payment document is given. Then the goods or money equivalent to the amount received are paid to those people." From this letter, we understand that Sheikh Said was looking at this uprising as a revolt. Its purpose was paying attention to Islamic issues in this revolt equation and preventing harm to the lives of Muslims. During a significant part of his trial, when the prosecutor asked "What were you going to do after you captured Diyarbakir", Sheikh Said answered that they would contact the government and ask for Sharia.<sup>147</sup>

Given the documents at hand, the memories of those involved in the incident, and the records of the Independence Court, it is not easy to use a strict statement about the Sheikh Said incident. It is understood that at the beginning, the Azadi organization made strategies and plans in advance to create a Kurdish state, they used sheikhs and opinion leaders to hand over the leadership to a powerful figure, and they carried out religious propaganda and material power by bringing Sheikh Said, the Naqshbandi sheikh, to head of this movement. Sheikh Said stated in court records that this was not a Kurdish uprising, on the contrary, they rebelled for Sharia, that is, it was a revolt. The Kemalist system also conducted a propaganda in order for this uprising to be understood as a Kurdish uprising. On the other hand, based on the activities of the Azadi organization and being fed on the historical process, Kurdish nationalists consider it a Kurdish independence rebellion. In addition to all this, due to the Mosul problem that Turkey was experiencing with Iraq, the belief that this rebellion was organized by the British has always been kept alive. However, in the comments made based on the memoirs of many authors and British archival sources, it is stated

<sup>143</sup> Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Kürt Siyasal Hareketinin Sınıfsal Analizi*, Sosyal Tarık Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, s. 43.

<sup>144</sup> Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türk İngiliz İlişkileri*, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara, 1978, s. 98-99.

<sup>145</sup> *Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyanları*, Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992, s. 114.

<sup>146</sup> *Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyanları*, s. 120.

<sup>147</sup> İlhami Aras, *Adım Şeyh Said*, İlke Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992, s. 77.

that the British did not directly support this uprising, but followed the incident in the region moment by moment. The fact that Turkey gave up Mosul as a result of the Sheikh Said uprising is also a notable approach. There were also many tribes that did not support this rebellion and were on the side of Turkey from the beginning to the end of the rebellion. It was also observed that Alevi Kurdish tribes, notables, and some Sunni Kurds did not support this uprising.

### Conclusion

The Rebellion or revolt of Sheikh Said still maintains its ambiguousness in the current sense. The strategy it embodies, nationalism, and the use of religious symbols as propaganda bring uncertainty, while it also makes the definition of it precisely difficult. This must be the biggest reason for the dilemma experienced between the rebellion and the revolt. The fact that more than one actor was involved in the uprising made it possible for secularists to look at the issue as a Sharia uprising, and for nationalists to consider it a Kurdish nationalist uprising. For this reason, looking at the incident through today's perspective may make our job easier. We can easily say that this uprising was a revolt or a rebellion. Those who look at it as revolt (that is, as resistance) can pontificate on this topic by raising some issues such as the abolition of the caliphate and the closure of lodges and zawiya, which the Ankara Government had brought up about Islam. Likewise, by referring to the giving up the autonomy promised to themselves, banning Kurdish and Kurdish place names, preventing the use of another language other than Turkish in education, and above all, the arrest of many Kurdish nationalists, the Kurdish nationalists can also state that they started this uprising.

According to some commentators, on the other hand, Sheikh Said was a sheikh who was used by Kurdish nationalists and even forced to rebel. Necip Fazil considers Sheikh Said's uprising neither a movement made by the support of the British nor a resistance movement for the independence of the Kurds. According to him, Sheikh Said was a reputable, decent, characterful, and faithful person who acts only on his own and only for the sake of his faith. People such as Mahmut Gologlu, Ugur Mumcu, Ismail Besikci, and Metin Toker also support Necip Fazil. In particular, we should note that almost all of those on trial declared that they embarked on this revolt for the sake of Islamic ambitions and that they started this uprising to react to the separation of the state from the sharia law and (most importantly) the abolition of the caliphate.

In order to understand the revolt of Sheikh Said, it is necessary to understand the period in which he lived, his life, and his philosophy. Those who live with Sheikh Said state that he devoted his life to Islam. From another point of view, in the revolt that was started in 1925, Kurdishness was never the main goal. It had been stated from the very beginning that he would have asked the Ankara Government to restore Sharia if the revolt had been successful. The point that should not be ignored here is the fact that the Azadi organization had been organizing this revolt since the beginning and had put Sheikh Said at the center of this incident. There was a feeling in the Azadi organization that a Kurdish state should be established and it didn't matter if the government of the state was Sharia or not. Perhaps that is why the organization and Sheikh Said came side by side.

In the final analysis, after general research on the Sheikh Said Uprising, it is believed that discussions will continue about whether it was a rebellion or a revolt. The similarity of the means of propaganda in the hands of advocates of both concepts to each other is based on an undeniable basis. Besides all this, the micro or macro scale evaluations of both opposites can be considered significant. However, exact and active statements should be avoided in the social sciences. So, the presence of many unknown equations specific to Sheikh Said incident can make the researcher experience trouble about clear expressions.



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