

## DIFFUSION OF POWER IN OTTOMAN IRAQ: *SHEBĀNA* REGIMENTS AS A STATE INSTRUMENT IN POLITICS OF CENTRALIZATION\*

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With the impact of the Tanzimat Edict, from the second half of the 19th century the central administrators in the Ottoman Empire attempted to make the presence of state authority felt more extensively and firm. Since the 1850s *Shebāna* Regiments consisting of tribes “loyal” to the state and that were a paramilitary force, were formed in Iraq’s Baghdad and Basra provinces as a microscale part of this policy. Imperial drive for centralization has established multivalent, networked and vertical and horizontal linkages between the state and provincial actors. Various forms of practices have emerged as a result of the struggle between state and centrifugal forces of local intermediaries. The diffusion of central power also utilized various forms of state apparatus in the peripheries of the Empire.

I argue that *Shebāna* Regiments, as paramilitary forces, are founded on a mechanism where “loyal” tribes are mobilized against “mutineers”, hence they resemble the mechanism of the village guard system (*köy koruculuğu*) established with the advent of the Turkish Republic. In almost all studies done until now, Hamidiye Cavalry units were seen as the first version of the village guard system.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, it could be argued that *Shebāna* Regiments overlap with the village guard system more than the Hamidiye Cavalry units. Abdulhamid II aimed to address Armenian rebels by recruiting and mobilizing Kurdish tribes to the

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<sup>1</sup> See. O. Altay, *Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna*, İstanbul: Medya Güneşi Yayınları, 1992, p. 53-151; J. Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011; J. Klein, “Çevreyi İdare Etmek: Osmanlı Devleti ve Hamidiye Alayları”, *Türkiye’de Ordu, Devlet ve Güvenlik Siyaseti* (eds. E. B. Paker, İ. Akça), İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010, p. 105-24; E. B. Paker, İ. Akça, “Askerler, Köylüler ve Paramiliter Güçler: Türkiye’de Köy Koruculuğu Sistemi”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, 126 (2013), p. 7-34; M. van Bruinessen, “Kürtler, Devletler ve Aşiretler”, *Aşiretler ve İktidar: Ortadoğu’da Etnisite ve Milliyetçilik* (eds. F. A. Jabar, H. Dawod), İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013, p. 166-70; Murat Gökhan Dalyan, *Bir Osmanlı İç Güvenlik Teşkilatı: Kır Serdarlığı*, İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2016.

Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments<sup>2</sup>. Hence, ethnic difference and conflict in the region were aggravated by the Hamidiye Regiments, since they were composed of Kurdish tribes and targeted Armenians. However, *Shebāna* Regiments, identical to the village guard system, sought to create a distinction on the basis of loyalty to the state among the same ethnic and religious tribes upon which “rebellious” ones were contained by the “loyal” ones. Hence, *Shebāna* Regiments could be considered as the first primitive form of the village guard system in terms of function and administrative organization. Considering the missions and duty stations, they operate like the *Kapudankh* at the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, sharing similar characteristics with the Ottoman Flotilla (*ince donanma*) at Danube River<sup>3</sup> and it continued with its mission in the battalion of Iraq until the end of 18th century. Concordantly, this article will be closely examining the process of the *Shebāna* Regiments emerging as a result of the Tanzimat reforms, its progress, activities intended at establishing central authority in the region, and duties which changed over a period of time.

Any attempt to understand the *raison d'être* of *Shebāna* Regiments in Ottoman Iraq, including its evolution and functional changes, requires the contextualization of the centre-periphery struggle in the Ottoman Empire in general and Ottoman Iraq in particular. One of the main social and political parameters of the Ottoman Empire in its last century was the uneasy triangle relationship between the imperial drive for centralization, which reached its peak in the Tanzimat reforms, the subsequent centrifugal reactions to these centralization attempts, and the final recalibration of Ottoman officers to these reactions. Therefore, it is necessary to locate the *Shebāna* Regiments within the dynamic confrontation between central authority and provinces.

The nineteenth century was the era when the central bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire sought to diffuse its power in provinces for the consolidation of central authority. In this regard, politics of centralization of the Empire was carried out in the form of governance of localities and execution of administrative reforms, which mainly aimed to integrate and remodel<sup>4</sup> the provinces on the basis of the interests of imperial politics. One of the key strategies of the

<sup>2</sup> For further information on Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments see. Klein, *The Margins of Empire*; Klein, “Çevreyi İdare Etmek: Osmanlı Devleti ve Hamidiye Alayları”, p. 105-24; M. van Bruinessen, “Kürtler, Devletler ve Aşiretler”, p. 166-70; Altay, *Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna*, p. 53-151.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. n. 56.

<sup>4</sup> N. Özbek, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet, 1876-1909”, *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 16 (2004), p. 72.

Ottoman Empire was to create “winners” and “losers” within contending local groups by establishing linkages with the particular local intermediaries. *Shebāna* Regiments exemplified the intrusion of central authority as such in which the state apparatus sought to create loyal groups within the localities. Contrary to what was witnessed in Europe most of the time, the Ottoman state attempted to control this transformation not with direct conflict, but on the grounds of flexible agreements with the society.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the Ottoman Empire stabilized its position by negotiating with the groups that opposed centralization and those generally described as bandits (*eşkiya*), while at the same time creating loyal local groups.<sup>6</sup> As the social groups were divided into categories of opposition, it would be possible to prevent the groups cooperating against the central authority; procure discipline among the society and suppress full-scale uprisings. Moreover, meeting the demands of the villagers by establishing internal security in the rural areas, the central state would also strengthen its image as a “protector of the people.”<sup>7</sup> It is necessary to assess the *Shebāna* Regiments that were a part of the policy to use, in common terms the “loyal” tribes against the “insurrectionists”, in the context of this political framework.

*Shebāna* Regiments were a para-military organization whose function and institutional design overlapped with the Gendarmerie, an integral component of centralization policies of the Ottoman government. Therefore, it is essential to trace the evolution of the gendarmerie in order to contextualize *Shebāna* Regiments. The function and organizational structure of the military units (army, gendarmerie, police) were redefined and reorganized in the Ottoman Empire of the nineteenth century. In this regard, the police/gendarmerie forces were established as a separate unit from the army and their mission statement was redefined as a result of the state apparatus’ intrusion into the private sphere of individuals.<sup>8</sup> Even though Europe witnessed rapid industrial development and urbanization during the nineteenth century, the ratio of rural population was

<sup>5</sup> Y. Köksal, “Sosyal Kontrol Sistemleri: 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet-Toplum İlişkileri”, *Tarihsel Sosyoloji: Stratejiler, Sorunsallar ve Paradigmalar* (eds. F. Ergut, A. Uysal), Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2007, p. 117-118, 125-26.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”, *Bringing the State Back In* (der. P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer ve T. Skocpol), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 181.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on “centralization through local intermediaries” see K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: the Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1994, p. 1-23.

<sup>8</sup> F. Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis: Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Toplumsal Denetimin Diyalektiği*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004, p. 369; N. Levy, “19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı’da Kamu Düzeni Konusunda Çalışmak: Bibliografya Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme”, *Osmanlı’da Asayiş, Suç ve Ceza* (eds. N. Levi, A. Toumarkine), İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, p. 62.

still high until the First World War. Emergence of new cities led to the clash of class conflicts and deterioration of public order. Along the same line, the practices of the brigands (*eşkiyalar*) also jeopardized the security of rural areas. The Gendarmerie forces emerged within this type of European political climate in order to address the security threats to the public order.<sup>9</sup> Similar to Europe, the officials of the Ottoman Empire gave utmost importance to public security in order to consolidate their authority in the peripheries.<sup>10</sup> In this period where the European governments' attempts to manipulate local politics came into the fore, the Ottoman administration strived to reestablish its power throughout the empire with a set of administrative reforms, including the reorganization of homeland security.<sup>11</sup> For this aim, gendarmerie forces were conceived of as the integral state apparatus through which administrative and judicial aspects of centralization politics were realized.<sup>12</sup>

Until gendarmerie and police forces were institutionalised within an organization called *Asakir-i Zabiye* in 1840, the Ottoman government, similar to other European states, sought to establish public order and security through military and civil forces.<sup>13</sup> Until the foundation of *Asakir-i Zabiye*, the notion of homeland security (*asayiş*) was narrowly defined and aimed to tackle public unrest solely in urban settings and hence, military forces were the main instrument to suppress public disruption.<sup>14</sup> Police and gendarmerie forces gradually replaced the military units to fill the void left by the removal of the Janissary Corps in 1826. A separate police organization gradually emerged after the foundation of *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammadiye* (1826-47) which was established in order to replace

<sup>9</sup> C. Emsley, *Gendarmes and the State in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis*, p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet, 1876-1909", p. 73.

<sup>12</sup> N. Özbek, "Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme", *Jandarma ve Polis: Fransız ve Osmanlı Tarihçiliğine Çapraz Bakışlar* (eds. N. Levy, N. Özbek, A. Toumarkine), İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009, p. 15-16; N. Özbek, "Osmanlı Taşrasında Denetim: Son Dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Jandarma (1876-1908)", *Türkiye'de Ordu, Devlet ve Güvenlik Siyaseti*, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> N. Özbek, "Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the late nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire (1876-1908)", *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*, 40 (2008), p. 47, 51, Özbek, "Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme", p. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> Christoph Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak: Die Provinz Baghdad, 1817-1917*, Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2012, p. 224. *Nizam-ı Cedid ortaları* (local military companies) established in vilayets and sanjaks in 1802 and *asakir-i -i redife* (reserve army units) established in vilayets in 1834-35 could be analyzed within the same perspective. Özbek, "Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme", p. 14.

the Janissary Corps.<sup>15</sup> Starting from mid-nineteenth century, for the purpose of consolidating its power in localities, the Ottoman government utilized not only regular army units but also irregular soldiers (*başbozuk*). For the mobilization of irregular forces in rural settings, a distinct unit of Ottoman officials (*sergerde*) was assigned until 1860.<sup>16</sup> In the civilian context, the organization of guilds bore great importance in terms of policing duties.<sup>17</sup> Until 1846, public security in the capital of the Ottoman Empire was ensured through *İhtisab Ağalığı* and *İhtisab Nezareti*. Thereafter, the internal public order, which was previously within the jurisdiction of *İhtisab Nezareti* and regular military units, was assigned to *Şabtiye Müşiriyeti* (directorate of police) as a result of the reorganization of the provincial paramilitary police organization called *Asakir-i Şabtiye* units.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the assignments of public security were held and controlled by a single organization whose responsibilities had previously been exercised by *Seraskerlik* (Chief General Staff), *Tophane Müşirliği* (Directorate of Artillery) and *İhtisab Nezareti* upon the removal of the Janissary Corps.<sup>19</sup>

Ottoman internal security organization was fundamentally re-institutionalised during the post-Berlin Treaty period after the Ottoman-Russo War of 1877-78.<sup>20</sup> The provisions of the Berlin Treaty showed that any failures in implementing reforms on the organization of internal public security could jeopardize the future of the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire. In the post-Berlin Treaty era, the Ottoman officials came to the conclusion that any foreign intervention could only be prevented in so far as the Ottoman government was competent enough to ensure the sustainability of its internal security.<sup>21</sup> Concerning the possible public disruptions in the Balkans, Abdulhamid II sought to create a totally separate organization within the military units, which would be solely responsible for internal security.<sup>22</sup> In 1879, the *Asakir-i Şabtiye* organization taken from the *Şabtiye Müşiriyeti* and joined to the newly established Gendarmerie Department under the *Seraskerlik*

<sup>15</sup> Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis*, p. 83-131.

<sup>16</sup> Özbek, "Policing the Countryside", p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis*, p. 100.

<sup>18</sup> Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet", p. 66-68. For a detailed account on the foundation of *Şabtiye Müşiriyeti* see A. Sönmez, "Zabtiye Teşkilatı'nın Düzenlenmesi (1840-1869)", *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 39 (2006), p. 201-08.

<sup>19</sup> H. Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabta: Tarihi Gelişimi ve Bugünkü Durumu*, Ankara: Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Polis Akademisi Polis Tarihi Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2008, p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet", p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis*, p. 217.

<sup>22</sup> Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis*, p. 140.

and the *Şabtiye Müşirliđi* was changed into ministry (*Şabtiye Nezareti*) responsible for procuring law and order in Istanbul. Therefore, maintaining security and peace in the rural areas was the duty of the new Gendarmerie Department under the jurisdiction of the *Seraskerlik*.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that the Ottoman administration was successful in establishing police forces independent from the military in the provinces until the 1890s. Throughout this period, the rural security force organizations appeared as a divided and outdated even if reinforced system.<sup>24</sup> After the 1890s, the paramilitary gendarmerie regiments were employed in the centers of provinces, and maintaining security in the small districts and towns was assigned to irregular forces such as the Hamidiye Regiments or the mobile gendarmerie units.<sup>25</sup>

The inefficiency of the police organizations and the practice of assigning the duty of maintaining security in rural areas largely to the gendarmerie also continued during the period of the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>26</sup> The gendarmerie forces (*şabtiye birlikleri*) supposed to be legally responsible to the chief of provincial administration during the period between the foundation of *Şabtiye Müşirliđi* and its re-institutionalisation under the Directorate of Gendarmerie. However, the directorate of Gendarmerie could only be tied to the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the Second Constitutional era.<sup>27</sup> Since gendarmerie forces were not sufficient to ensure public order in rural settings, the Ottoman government utilized regular army forces until the mobilization of additional gendarmerie forces. For this aim, certain sections of the regular army detachments were turned into scout platoons (*tedib ve takib müfrezeleri*) whose duty was to contain brigands in provinces.<sup>28</sup>

The main function of the gendarmerie was to implement the policies of the central government in provinces in order to garner public legitimacy. For this aim, gendarmerie's statement of mission was defined as "ensuring public peace and

<sup>23</sup> Based on the regulations, Ottoman Gendarmerie was divided into legions or regiments in vilâets, into corps and battalions in sanjaks. Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet, 1876-1909", 75-80; Alyot, *Türkiye'de Şabta*, p. 94-99.

<sup>24</sup> Özbek, "Osmanlı Taşrasında Denetim", p. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Özbek, "Policing the Countryside", p. 52; Özbek, "Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme", p. 11, 16; Alyot, *Türkiye'de Şabta*, p. 119-120, 170-76.

<sup>26</sup> Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet", p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Özbek, "Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme", p. 10; Alyot, *Türkiye'de Şabta*, p. 280-84.

<sup>28</sup> Alyot, *Türkiye'de Şabta*, p. 272-73.

security” and “preservation of public law”. The Gendarmerie’s role in getting the legitimacy of the central government manifested itself in its active involvement in public emergency situations such as natural disasters.<sup>29</sup> In addition to that, the gendarmerie forces also militarily dealt with brigands.<sup>30</sup> Overall, gendarmerie forces had a wide range of responsibilities including the implementation of postal services, flow of commodities, and guaranteeing the security of industrial complexes, bridges, canals and ports.<sup>31</sup> In contradiction to the gendarmerie’s role as a protector of the people it was also deployed in the process of collecting taxes as the administration’s means of seizing the surplus produce from the rural regions. Due to this, the gendarmerie frequently encountered confrontations with the community. Although it appears that the Ottoman administration did not welcome the gendarmerie being included in the process of tax collection, due to the lack of financial and administrative means, this practice continued until the collapse of the Empire.<sup>32</sup>

In order to provide a full account on the emergence of *Shebāna* Regiments, the transition of Ottoman administrative structures in the second half of the nineteenth century is also essential. The territories of the Ottoman Empire began shrinking starting from the nineteenth century and the territorial losses reached a peak with the separation of lands in Bulgaria, Bosnia, and the Caucasus during the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russo War.<sup>33</sup> These lost lands were advanced especially in providing agricultural and commercial revenues and their loss led the Ottoman government to search for alternative sources to compensate for the financial burden. Thus, Ottoman Iraq gained utmost importance as a pristine revenue source. For the Ottoman government, Iraq, with its vast and potentially productive agricultural lands, could acquire the status of Egypt in terms of financial revenues. By introducing various reforms and public works involving agriculture such as river restoration and construction of new reservoirs, the fertile lands of Iraq would be opened to local farming, in this way there would be an increase in agricultural

<sup>29</sup> Özbek, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet”, 85-90; Alyot, *Türkiye’de Zabıta*, p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> Özbek, “Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme”, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Alyot, *Türkiye’de Zabıta*, p. 100-01, 159.

<sup>32</sup> Özbek, “Policing the Countryside”, p. 53; Özbek, “Tarih yazıcılığında Güvenlik Kurum ve Pratiklerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme”, p. 12. Low and irregular salaries of the gendarmerie paved the way for the misuse of their official posts and reinforced their attempts to collect taxes from the local population. Özbek, “Osmanlı Taşrasında Denetim”, p. 67.

<sup>33</sup> D. Quataert, “The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914”, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (eds. H. İnalcık, D. Quataert), VII, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 761-76.

productivity and volume of produce, in turn generating a substantial increase in surplus produce, in other words a source of income for the government.<sup>34</sup>

Agricultural reforms were not the only result of the Ottoman bureaucratic elites classifying Iraq as a substitution for the fertile lands lost to Europe. In the wake of the reforms involving agriculture and public works, this perspective made providing a labor force to work on the lands to be farmed inevitable. In response to this, the policy of adapting the tribes of Iraq to a settled life was launched in the period of Midhat Pasha's term as governor of Baghdad (1869-1872),<sup>35</sup> in other words "seizing their weapons and providing the tribes with farming equipment"<sup>36</sup> was implemented more extensively, or at least there was an intensified attempt to implement this policy from the 1800s and 1890s. Furthermore, the socio-economic structure that dominated the region generated a strong reaction against the policy of centralization that manifested as the reformation of the tribes, and making them dependent on the lands; this process that continued from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the collapse of the Empire was a period in which the tribes of the Iraq almost constantly rebelled against the government. This policy which the state attempted to implement under agricultural reforms made suppressing the "rebellious" tribes in question and the state penetrating the rural areas inevitable.<sup>37</sup> Despite several attempts, the central government was unsuccessful in "rehabilitation" of the tribes by regular armed forces in a region like Iraq, extremely rough in the geographical terms. Thus they created "loyal" tribes that were protected and awarded by the state by forming various paramilitary organizations as in the example of the *Shebāna* Regiments, and used these groups to penetrate the region by mobilizing them against the "rebels." The main purposes underlying the formation of the *Shebāna* Regiments in Baghdad and Basra provinces from the 1850s were the state's campaign for centralization and more efficient taxation.

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed account on the "question of reform" in Iraq, see G. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 24-48.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed account on the resettlement of local tribes, see A. Korkmaz, "Midhat Paşa'nın Bağdat Valiliği", MA Thesis, İstanbul, 2005, p. 76-104; E. Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2011, p. 132-75.

<sup>36</sup> According to the famous poet Süleyman Nazif Bey, who served as the governor of three vilayets of Iraq upon the declaration of Second Constitution, resettlement of local tribes was defined as such. S. Nazif, *Çalınmış Ülke*, İstanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1924/1342, p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed account on the tribal uprisings in Iraq, see Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, p. 72-99; B. Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908-1914)*, İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2015, p. 347-449.



### **The Foundation of *Shebāna* Regiments**

Dating back to the reign of Davud Paşa who was the last Mamluk ruler of Baghdad, local governors (de facto semi-independent rulers) were usually to obtain assistance of Kurdish and Arab tribesmen in various parts of the province if necessary. These tribesmen were not units of the governors, but allied troops whose political and therefore military reliability fluctuated greatly.<sup>38</sup> This tradition of recruiting allied troops had continued for a while after the proclamation of the Tanzimat reforms. In 1848, as part of the Tanzimat reforms, a new army, called the Army of Iraq and the Hijaz (*Irak ve Hicaz ordusu*), was created. With the establishment of the Army of Iraq and the Hijaz, however, not all irregular forces had been replaced by regular troops. It might be assumed that at least until after the Crimean War (1853-56) there was an impromptu arrangement of regular and semi-regular forces with local irregular tribal militias.<sup>39</sup>

The *Shebāna* Regiments were established in the 1850's and continued to operate until the separation of Iraq from the Ottoman Empire. It is undetermined exactly when the *Shebāna* Regiments were established and why they were given this name. There is no clear information in Ottoman archive documents regarding what kind of selection mechanism was used in appointing the tribes that formed these regiments or the duration terms of their service. In addition, there is no evidence that the tribes in these regiments were employed due to any denominational membership. On the contrary, many of the documents in Ottoman archives indicate that the state assigned tribes from within the same region that they considered to be "loyal." It is clear from the scripts of Ottoman archives that the regiments were formed in the status of irregular soldiers independently from the regular army, and they continued to operate in the same way until the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Although the topic of the reorganization of the *Shebāna* Regiments to gendarmerie status arose in 1914, due to the outbreak of World War I this plan never materialized.

The *Shebāna* Regiments assumed various roles in maintaining security from the 1850's until 1915 in accordance with the political trends and local socio-political developments of the period, and the organization of these paramilitary forces was

<sup>38</sup> During the governorship of Davud Paşa, the number of these tribal forces, which were composed mostly from Uçayl and Ubayd Arabs and Kurdish tribesmen, were almost 4.000. Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, p. 227-28.

<sup>39</sup> Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, p. 244-45.

dedicated to various purposes defined by the central administration. However, in general terms it is true that the *Shebāna* Regiments were an equivalent to the gendarmerie. Initially, the Regiments were established as a force to carry out the duties of the gendarmerie and fill the gap in this field during the transition process over to this security body.<sup>40</sup> Later, the *Shebāna* Regiments were held responsible for certain duties assigned to the gendarmerie in geographic regions where these forces were unable to operate such as maintaining order and security on transport routes, preserving telegraph lines and poles, generally maintaining the means of communication, ensuring post was delivered between certain regions, and the collection of taxes.

The first time that the *Shebāna* Regiments were mentioned in the Ottoman sources was in 1856 in Baghdad for military purposes.<sup>41</sup> The establishment period of the Regiments in the Iraqi region was certainly no coincidence. The formation of these forces, in particular when penetrating the provinces that came to the forefront after the Tanzimat, should be associated with the initiative of establishing centralization via bureaucratic organizations and attempts of forming the *Asakir-i Zabiye* throughout the empire as a part of this concept. In this regard, *Shebāna* Regiments were one of the manifestations of Tanzimat reforms in Iraq.<sup>42</sup>

In general, the region around the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris were the main geographical sphere of duty for *Shebāna* Regiments. In its initial stages, they were stationed around the Euphrates and Tigris<sup>43</sup>, in Hillah and the *dīra* of Albū Muḥammad,<sup>44</sup> then after the Tanzimat reforms they were directly assigned to

<sup>40</sup> Since the head of *Shebāna* Regiments was *sergerde* in its stages, it serves as a confirmatory fact to this claim. BOA (Prime Minister Ottoman Archives), *ML.MSF.d* 11732; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 11931; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12026; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12917; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12929; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13065; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13931; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12990; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13029; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13157; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13218; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13519; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13829; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13885; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 14046; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 14111; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 14222; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15266; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15292; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15398; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15852; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 16468; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 16475.

<sup>41</sup> BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 11732; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 11931; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12026. The administrative jurisdiction of Baghdad mainly embraced the administrative borders of Basra in this time period. It was after 1876 when Basra was demarcated as a single vilāyet. M. Binzouba, "Vilayet Nizamnamelerinin Basra'da Tatbiki Meselesi (1864-1876)", MA thesis, İstanbul, 2009, p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed account to the application of Tanzimat reforms in Iraq, see Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, p. 4-10.

<sup>43</sup> BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12917; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12929; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13065; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13519; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13829; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 13885; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 14222; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 14841; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15620.

<sup>44</sup> The majority of the Iraq, with the exception of urban settings and irrigated lands, was compart-

the local administrations (*kaymakamlık*) of Samawah (later re-institutionalised as *müdürlük* in the *kaymakamlık* of Diwaniyah) Banī Ḥakem, Diwaniyah, and Amarah. The number of *Shebāna* Regiments ranged from 100 to 300, and they were comprised of influential loyal tribes of the region such as ‘Abūde, Ḥafaja and Banī Azir;<sup>45</sup> Their monthly salary fluctuated from 40 to 200 piasters depending on the degree of rank.<sup>46</sup> They were deployed in special boats, constructed by the Ottoman Army, called *tarrāde*, a kind of Arab fast paced boat whose origin dates back to the ninth century.<sup>47</sup> Initially, these boats were utilized for the purpose of transporting military ammunition and commercial commodities in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean.<sup>48</sup> *Tarrādes*’ involvement in military missions such as landings, pursuit, and defensive measures required the installation of paddling to supplement the sails.<sup>49</sup>

The main reason why *Shebāna* Regiments were using *tarrādes* was due to the geographical conditions of the region. The landscape of Baghdad and Basra mainly consists of numerous low level canals emerging as a result of the intrusion of rivers of Shatt al-Arab, Euphrates and Tigris into the vast, alluvium rich, plain

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mentalized into collectives, called *dīra* or *lāzma* owned by the local tribes. Every tribe in Iraq was given a survival area, called *dīra* which can be either used for pastoral farming or cultivation. These lands were cultivated on the basis of division of labour assigned within the tribe. The lands were considered as the collective property shared by the members of the tribe. These lands were divided into sub-sections such as *dīra* comprised of *muqata’a*, *qū’a* organized by *serkā*r and comprised of various *feddān* cultivated by farmers. To ensure fair allocation of lands, these lands were redistributed to the tribes on a yearly basis. R. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1993, p. 281; A. Jwaideh, “Aspects of Land Tenure and Social Change in Lower Iraq During the Late Ottoman Times”, *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Eds. T. Khalidi), Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1984, p. 334; C. Issawi, “Land Tenure in the Nineteenth Century”, *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914*, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1966, p. 165; M. I. Moosa, “The Land Policy of Midhat Pasha in Iraq, 1869-1871”, *The Islamic Quarterly*, VXII (1968), p. 147-48.

<sup>45</sup> These tribes participated in the *Shebāna* Regiments in the foundation stage. However, they had revolted several times against the Ottoman government after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy. For further details see Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra’sında Devlet ve Toplum*, p. 263-96. Unfortunately, there are no studies related to the activities of these tribes during Abdulhamid II period.

<sup>46</sup> BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15107; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15221; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15226; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15292; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15398; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15575; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15670; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15852; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15775; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 15842; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 16665; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17082; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17566; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17698; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17798; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17740; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17775; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17457; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 17944; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 18205; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 18173; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 18115.

<sup>47</sup> BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 11732; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 11931; BOA, *ML.MSF.d* 12026.

<sup>48</sup> V. Christides, “Islamic World Vessels”, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*, Vol 2, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 265-66.

<sup>49</sup> B. M. Kreutz, “Ships, Shipping, and the Implications of Change in the Early Medieval Mediterranean”, *Viator*, 7 (1976), p. 100.

inland.<sup>50</sup> The region also lacks any forests and mountains. Geographical landscape of the region was shaped by water floods, originating from the rivers Tigris and Euphrates that swamped the coast and inland.<sup>51</sup> These swamps (called *hawr*) last throughout six months of the year, and they were connected to each other through various canals.<sup>52</sup>

Another influential factor in the landscape of the region is the ebb- tide movements, which takes place twice a day. This geographical feature shape the landscape of the region, an area ranging from the straits of Fao up to Shatt al-Arab, Basra, its northern part Qurna, Uzair in Tigris region and Madina in the coast of Euphrates.<sup>53</sup> The aforementioned regions were constantly affected by water floods due to the tidel flow.<sup>54</sup> The transportation in these canals was often inhibited due to the shallow nature of the rivers and the emergence of small hills created by the deposit of alluvium in non-marine settings. Yet, at a time of tide, long range of commute was feasible from the straits of Fao to Basra through Shatt al-Arab.<sup>55</sup> Since regular military forces were not able to operate under these geographical constraints, *Shebāna* Regiments fulfilled its policing duties by utilizing the navigation skills of *tarrāde*.

Historically speaking, Baghdad and Basra regions were subject to extraordinary military measures due to the aforementioned geographical conditions. For instance, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent had established the *Kapudanlık* of Tigris and Euphrates, similar to the Ottoman flotilla of Danube (*ince donanma*). In spite of the lack of feasible historical documents on the subject matter, it could be argued that the fundamental objectives of *Kapudanlık* of Tigris and Euphrates were as follows; transportation of military ammunition and cereal crops, sustainability of the commercial activities in the river routes, establishing public order in the face of tribal rebellions, and providing military assistance during the military struggles against Iran.<sup>56</sup> In this respect, *Shebāna* Regiments

<sup>50</sup> C. Orhonlu, T. İşksal, "Osmanlı Devrinde Nehir Nakliyatı Hakkında Araştırmalar Dicle ve Fırat Nehirlerinde Nakliyat", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, 17-18 (1968), p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> Hürşid Paşa, *Seyahatname-i Hudud* (eds. A. Eser), İstanbul: Simurg, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, Irak-İran Cephesi 1914-1918*, V.III/II, Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı, 2002, p. 27-31.

<sup>53</sup> Hürşid Paşa, *Seyahatname-i Hudud*, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Süleyman Nutki, *Basra Körfezi Rehberi*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Bahriye, 1317, p. 482.

<sup>55</sup> *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, Irak-İran Cephesi 1914-1918*, p. 36.

<sup>56</sup> R. Ünlü, *İnce Donanma*, İstanbul: Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 2005, p. 151-161; R. Ünlü, "Osmanlı Denizciliğinde İnce Donanma'nın Rolü", *Türk Denizcilik Tarihi: XVIII. Yüzyıl Başından XX. Yüzyıla Kadar* (eds. Z. Arkan, L. Sancar), V.2, Ankara: Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 2009, p. 44-46.

were the continuation of *Kapudanlık* of Tigris and Euphrates in terms of their functions and responsibilities. In some other respects, as explained in this article, they were the different product of the 19th century.

### ***Shebāna* Regiments during the era of Abdulhamid II**

*Shebāna* Regiments were given even more importance during the reign of Abdulhamid II. Police forces were the major instrument in the integration of peripheral provinces to the central authority during the era of Abdulhamid II.<sup>57</sup> In this regard, *Shebāna* Regiments, which could be regarded as the extension of police forces in Iraq, played a considerable role in the diffusion of central authority in rural settings where military units failed to wield its influence.

Another reason *Shebāna* Regiments were to gain prominence was the fact that wide-scale agricultural lands in Baghdad and Basra were confiscated by *Emlak-ı Seniyye* (Sultan's own lands).<sup>58</sup> Incorporating such large-scale lands in the *Seniyye* territories also generated the need to employ a labor force to farm these lands. There was an attempt to overcome this problem by settling the tribes in the *Emlak-ı Seniyye* in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra, and these estates were contracted to the larger tribes in the region in a way that would maintain the balance between the tribes.<sup>59</sup> However, the Ottoman government was not successful in fine-tuning the balance of power as the leasing of lands to particular tribes caused fierce struggles and violent conflict among competing tribes.<sup>60</sup> Here, the *Shebāna* Regiments were extremely important for the Sultan Abdulhamid II in terms of maintaining the security of the *Seniyye* lands that constituted a significant part of the Baghdad and Basra provinces, and preventing tribal uprisings in the region which posed the major threat to internal security there. These uprisings severely undermined the central authority and delegitimised the sultan's power in the eyes of the public opinion. Besides, tribal revolts costed the state and the sultan money by damaging the agricultural continuity at *Seniyye* Lands. Uprisings and conflicts among tribes could have paved the way for the possibility of foreign intervention.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis*, p. 370.

<sup>58</sup> For a full list of the areas that were confiscated by the *Emlak-ı Seniyye* of Baghdad and Basra in the era of Abdulhamid II, see A. Jwaideh, "The Saniyya Lands of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in Iraq", *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, (eds. G. Makdisi), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965, p. 328-30.

<sup>59</sup> S. Sert, "Bir Toprak Rejimi Olarak Emlak-ı Hümayun: Basra Örneği (1876-1909)", MA Thesis, İstanbul, 2006, p. 91; Arzu Terzi, *Bağdad ve Musul'da Abdülhamid'in Mirası: Petrol ve Arazi*, İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009, p. 86-91.

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed account on the inter-tribal conflicts, see Sert, "Bir Toprak Rejimi Olarak Emlak-ı Hümayun", p. 95-99; 132-49.

<sup>61</sup> For a detailed account on the subject matter, see Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, p. 92-

To address the security concerns in the provinces, *Shebāna* Regiments were utilized in multiple ways. One of their most crucial roles was to collect taxes.<sup>62</sup> Collecting tax revenues was a major problem in Iraq, as it is in many regions that are inhabited by tribes. But unlike other regions in Baghdad and Basra almost all of the lands were leased to influential tribes. Yet, these tribes were reluctant to pay their taxes and were ready to rebel against the government forces when they received a final demand for payment. For this reason, collecting taxes often required the assistance of security forces.<sup>63</sup> In this context, the presence of this body in the regions where a majority of the leased lands (*muqata'a*) were divided by borders such as Amarah and Muntafik and where the intervention of regular military forces was unfeasible, reveals the important role the *Shebāna* Regiments played in the collection of taxes in the Iraqi region. Furthermore, the fact that the large part of these tax farms were within the *Emlak-ı Seniyye* made the collection of taxes and maintaining security in the area even more important for the administration.<sup>64</sup>

During the era of Abdulhamid II, another function of *Shebāna* Regiments was to pursue and snatch the tribes “rebellious” against the central authority.<sup>65</sup> For instance, in 1892, *Shebāna* Regiments were assigned to hotly pursue Hātem bin Şayhūd, the leader of the Albū Muḥammad tribe which was one of the most challenging tribes for the central authority in the Basra-Baghdad area. Even though his castle was captured and the ammunition of his tribe was confiscated, he was able to escape the government forces.<sup>66</sup> Based on the intelligence reports indicating that Şayhūd was planning to cross over the swamps to go to Huwayzeh<sup>67</sup>, the Ottoman government mobilized 150-man *Shebāna* Regiments, at a monthly cost of 14000 lira, to pursue and to capture the leader of the Albū Muhammad tribe.<sup>68</sup>

Tribal rebellions were especially detrimental to the Ottoman government when they targeted the flow of transportation in rivers. In the region, the

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<sup>62</sup> BOA, BEO 1744-130754, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum*, p. 351-73.

<sup>64</sup> It is necessary to emphasize the disagreements between Saniyya officers and other civil servants. Süleyman Nazif Bey, who was in charge of governorship in the three provinces (Musul, Baghdad and Basra) of Iraq, even claimed that Saniya officials had dominated other officers. Nazif, *Çalınmış Ülke*, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> V. Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie: Géographie Administrative Statistique Descriptive et Raisonnée de Chaque Province de l'Asie Mineure*, V.3, Paris: Ernest Leroux Editeur, 1894, p. 200. For more information on the similar missions of village guards, see Paker, Akça, “Askerler, Köylüler ve Paramiliter Güçler”, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> BOA, DH.MKT 1984-97.

<sup>67</sup> BOA, BEO 84-6260, p. 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> BOA, DH.MKT 1984-97.

Hamidiye of the Ottoman Government and the British Lynch Corporation's Steamships were the main companies with the concession to operate ships in Shatt al-Arab, Euphrates and Tigris. In addition to them, some merchants also held licences to operate ships for commercial purposes.<sup>69</sup> Rebellious tribes were especially targeting the ships navigating in Tigris and Euphrates. There were also reports of widespread looting of these ships. Furthermore, telegraph poles were often destroyed in the region of Basra to cut communication between the central authority and the provinces.<sup>70</sup> *Shebāna* Regiments were assigned to cope with these practices of "rebellious" tribes. They were preferably stationed along the banks of rivers to protect the flow of commerce and transportation in the rivers.<sup>71</sup> Protection of the following routes was given utmost importance: the area starting from the straits of Fao to the river Shatt al-Arab, the area from the river Tigris to sanjak of Amarah, and the area from Euphrates to sanjak of Muntafik.<sup>72</sup> For instance, in November 1907, in order to cope with the attacks of the aforementioned leader of the Albū Muḥammad tribe, Hātem bin Şayhūd, *Shebāna* Regiments were assigned along the banks of the Tigris. The protection of commercial activities and the ship of Alus (a peddle steamer belonging to the Ottoman *İdare-i Nehriyye* Company) were provided by these *Shebāna* Regiments.<sup>73</sup>

During the era of Abdulhamid II, *Shebāna* Regiments, which were comprised of local tribes, were utilized in their local knowledge for guiding the military units during operations.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the *Shebāna* Regiments also assumed major strategic duties in procuring dialogue between the centre and local notables and strengthening the control of the central authority in the rural areas by providing a communication channel between the *müdürs of the nahiyes* and tribal leaders, and delivering official correspondence from *nahiyes* and *kazas* where there was no postal service available.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69</sup> For further details regarding the transportation in Euphrates and Tigris rivers and the scope of the private owned ships used for commercial purposes see. Burcu Kurt, *Osmanlı Irak'ında İngiliz Nüfuzuna Tepkiler: Dicle ve Fırat'ta Seyr-i Sefain İmtiyazı Teşebbüsü (1909-1913)*, İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2009, p. 23-51.

<sup>70</sup> Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, p. 86-98.

<sup>71</sup> Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asia*, V.3, p. 285; BOA, *Şura-yı Devlet (ŞD)* 650-12, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> BOA, *ŞD* 650-12, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> BOA, *ŞD* 650-12, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asia*, V.3, p. 285, 296-97. It could be argued that village guard systems fulfilled similar functions during the foundational years of the Turkish Republic. Paker, Akça, "Askerler, Köylüler ve Paramiliter Güçler", p. 16.

<sup>75</sup> Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asia*, V.3, p. 285; BOA, *DH.EUM.6.Şb* 54-2, p. 10.



Throughout the reign of Abdulhamid II, participation of tribes in the *Shebāna* Regiments was encouraged and supported by the government. The main stimulation for tribes to join the *Shebāna* Regiments was to gain financial and political supremacy *vis-à-vis* competing tribes. Hence, the balance of power among the various tribes of the region was altered in favour of the ones that joined the *Shebāna* Regiments.<sup>76</sup> Governmental support given to the *Shebāna* Regiments often manifested itself in the form of turning a blind eye to the improper practices of obedient tribes. For instance, tribe members of the *Shebāna* Regiment refused being counted in the population census conducted in the Basra province in 1891. In response the central authorities became concerned that this persistence would lead to a division in the regiments and therefore decided to exclude them from the census, including them in the census gradually afterwards.<sup>77</sup> Also, the ones who were successful in pursuit and investigation of brigands were financially rewarded by the government. Indeed, in 1897, some of the troops of the *Shebāna* Regiment based in the *mutasarrıflık* of Amarah (within the province of Basra) were rewarded for their success in tracking mutineers, as was another serviceman wounded in a confrontation with mutineers, with awards varying between 250-500 piasters.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, compared to regular military units, *Shebāna* Regiments were also given a relatively upper hand due to their strategic importance for the government. In 1905, in a small town of Baghdad called Shamiyah, a violent conflict erupted between the provisional forces of Karbala that were assigned to the region and *Shebāna* Regiments. The Grand Vizierate, as a mediator, summoned the provisional forces back to their original location and replaced them with new forces to resolve the conflict in favour of the *Shebāna* Regiments.<sup>79</sup>

Due to the diversification of the roles assigned to *Shebāna* Regiments in the era of Abdulhamid II, the governor of Basra, Abdurrahman Hasan Bey, requested to increase number of members in May 1907.<sup>80</sup> Abdurrahman Hasan Bey complained about the gap between the role of the *Shebāna* Regiments and the number of available members. Hence, he requested additional units to address the security issues of the region. For this aim, the 84-man First Central Battalion and 34-man Second Amarah Battalion were increased to 103-man for each, the

<sup>76</sup> That argument is valid for the tribes that abide by the terms of the village guard system. Klein, *Power in the Periphery*, p. 110; Paker, Akça, "Askerler, Köylüler ve Paramiliter Güçler", p. 15, 23-24.

<sup>77</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT* 1782-23.

<sup>78</sup> BOA, *İAS* 19-37, p. 1-2.

<sup>79</sup> BOA, *BEO* 2482-186085.

<sup>80</sup> BOA, *ŞD* 650-12, p. 2-3.



48-man Third Muntafik Battallion was increased to 71. Also, an additional 70-man Regiment was also assigned to Muntafik Battalion as an auxiliary force. In this regard, the 166-man Shebāna Regiments were increased to a total of 336 men.<sup>81</sup> The number of seven officers including clerks was increased to 11. The members of *Shebāna* Regiments, providing their own boats<sup>82</sup>, received monthly salaries ranging from 90 to 150 piasters.<sup>83</sup> *Shebāna* Regiments of Basra province were institutionalised as gendarmerie forces,<sup>84</sup> requested by the governor of Basra, Hasan Bey, and enacted on June, 1907.<sup>85</sup> The reorganization of *Shebāna* Regiments in Basra also partially affected the units in Baghdad. The height of monthly salaries of the Regiments in Baghdad were adapted to those paid in Basra. Also, the salaries of the *Shebāna* Regiments in Baghdad, which were previously provided by the Ministry of Treasury, started to be given by the local gendarme commandership.<sup>86</sup>

### ***Shebāna* Regiments in the Second Constitutional Era**

The re-enactment of the constitution in 1908, the so-called incident of March 31st in 1909, and the subsequent removal of Abdulhamid II changed the political climate and the functions of the state apparatus. During this period, the *Shebāna* Regiments continued the duties from the previous term, and as before undertook the important roles of collecting taxes in the Baghdad and Basra provinces, procuring communication between governors (*mūdars*) of sub-districts (*nahīyes*) and leaders of the tribes in regions where there was no postal service, ensuring security on the river, protecting the telegraph lines, and controlling the uprisings of the tribes.<sup>87</sup> The increase in the centralization attempts of the

<sup>81</sup> In the initial stage of the *Shebāna* Regiments, the number of its members range from 100 and 300 which confirm the claims that its numbers were gradually decreasing.

<sup>82</sup> *Shebāna* Regiments' transportation in this era was provided through small, pitched boats, called *mashūf*. BOA, *ŞD* 650-12, p. 5-7. *Mashūf* could carry 8-10 men and were mainly used for military purposes. Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, V.3, p. 200.

<sup>83</sup> According to the regulations, the monthly salaries of military units were as follows; 90 piastres for low rank soldiers, 100 piastres for non-commissioned officers, 110 piastres for sergeants, 150 piastres for clerks and 450 piastres for lieutenants. BOA, *ŞD* 650-12, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Based on historical sources, the timing of regulations is not clear when *Shebāna* Regiments were re-organized under the Gendarmerie forces. Yet, since there was no mention of *Shebāna* Regiments before this date, the aforementioned aims of the regulation to bring a systematic order to the Regiments show that *Shebāna* Regiments were tied to the Gendarmerie forces upon this regulation. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> BOA, *BEO* 3328-24953, p. 1; BOA, *İAS* 71-56, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.6.Şb* 54-2, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.6.Şb* 54-2, p. 10; BOA, *DH.SYS* 97—4-2, p. 42, 50; K. H. al-Sadun, *al-Awdā' al-qa-baliyah fi wilayat al-Basrah*, Beirut: al-Dar al-'Arabiyah lil-Mawsu'at, 2006, p. 94-99.

government and the resulting nationalist backlash against governmental intrusions reinforced the importance of *Shebāna* Regiments in this era. Collecting intelligence on “elites of brigands” was the new mission statement for gendarme forces<sup>88</sup> and it also affected the responsibilities of *Shebāna* Regiments, adding a different role: intelligence collecting in the provinces.<sup>89</sup>

However, in the Second Constitutional era the impact of disputes between the local notables and the Sublime Porte (*Babıali*) on centralization-decentralization issues led to the *Shebāna* Regiments becoming involved in local politics in the Basra province. Amidst this development, encouraged by the CUP, the *Shebāna* Regiments were employed as a kind of private, security intelligence in addition to the duties of maintaining order similar to the gendarme, and became a part of local attacks the Committee carried out. Thus, tribes connected to the *Shebāna* who remained loyal to the state and increased their power in the region in many aspects, also became targets for other forces in the region. Moreover, tribes composing the *Shebāna* Regiment were encouraged to side in local politics by the central authority, failed to get sufficient support from the state and were let down by the administration in situations where domestic balance was required.

Re-enactment of the constitution and the subsequent removal of Abdulhamid II changed the policies of the Ottoman Government towards the Arab provinces. In addition to Abdulhamid II displaying great importance to centralization, he also attempted to establish this centralization via local notables (*eşraf ve muteberan*)<sup>90</sup> Contrary to the previous period, the CUP implemented this policy by eliminating the local notables who used parliamentary regime very effectively in its own interest and held seats in parliament.<sup>91</sup> The policy changes in the form and content of centralization attempts led to a backlash among the circles of local leaders along the lines of decentralization and Arab nationalist fervour such as the social movement led by Sayyid Ṭālib al-Naqīb in Basra.

<sup>88</sup> Alyot, *Türkiye’de Zabıta*, p. 275.

<sup>89</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.6.Şb* 54-2, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> It is worthy to mention that tribal sheikhs could be seen among the local notables in Basra and Baghdad provinces. After the application of Tanzimat reforms, most of the tribal leaders became landowners and began to reside in the cities. Besides sheikhs’ direct contacts with urban politics and the complexity of relations between landowners-merchants and tribal sheikhs makes it essential to define them in this category. Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra’sında Devlet ve Toplum*, p. 38-39.

<sup>91</sup> The shift in the policy had manifested itself in the appointment of governors in both periods. The era of Abdulhamid II had been the dullest period in terms of the rank of the appointed governors. This problem was attempted to be fixed after the re-declaration of constitution. Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, p. 210-11.

The political climate of the Basra region was shaped by the political tension between Sayyid Ṭālib<sup>92</sup>, one of the most prominent and influential leaders of Basra, and the CUP, which reinforced its power after the 1913 Ottoman coup d'état (*Babiali Baskın*). The tension reached a peak with the subsequent re-enactment of the Provincial Law of 1913. Contrary to the demands for decentralization that began to emerge in the region, in the wake of the law that granted governors extensive authority in regional affairs, a cold war virtually broke out between Sayyid Ṭālib and the Committee. This tension led to polarization in the region and local actors taking sides with certain parties; lieutenant of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Shebāna* Regiment of the Basra province known to oppose Sayyid Ṭālib and leader of Banū Asad tribe, Sālīm al-Khayūn was included in this polarization by the side of the government. The CUP was initially planning to offer Sayyid Ṭālib to leave politics by providing him a passive role in the centre, but then, upon the infeasibility of this option, they tried have him assassinated in May-June 1913. For this purpose, the CUP received the support of the Lieutenant of I. *Shebāna* Battalion, Sālīm al-Khayūn, and the local leader, Ajaimī al-Sa'dūn.<sup>93</sup>

Ajaimī and Sālīm's opposition to Sayyid Ṭālib reflect the power dynamics of the region. Ajaimī al-Sa'dūn's aggression against Sayyid Ṭālib stemmed from the role of Ṭālib in the government's plot to capture the leader of the local tribe Muntafik, Sa'dūn Paşa. Sayyid Ṭālib's part was to help government officials capture Sa'dūn Paşa by summoning him to his office. His subsequent seizure and loss of his life during the trials vitalized the anger of his son, Ajaimī towards Sayyid Ṭālib.<sup>94</sup> In 1912, the close relationship between Sālīm al-Khayūn and Ajaimī al-

<sup>92</sup> Upon the declaration of first constitution, Sayyid Ṭālib came back to Basra and he established alliances with the sheikh of Mohammarah, Khazal, and sheikh of Kuwait, Mubarak al-Sabah, who were backed by the British. Eventually, Sayyid Ṭālib expanded his sphere of influence over the peoples of Basra with the assistance of his militarily equipped followers. Sayyid Ṭālib constructed a cult image in the eyes of the local population. BOA, *DH.SİS* 120-1, p. 143. Sayyid Ṭālib was elected in the parliamentary elections of 1908, 1912, and 1914 from Basra after the enactment of the second constitution. İ. Güneş, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi, I. ve II. Meşrutiyet*, Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Vakfı, 1997, p. 24; T. A. Barru, *al-'Arab wa al-Türk fi al-'ahd ad-dusturi al-'Utmani, 1908-1914*, Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyah, Ma'had al-Dirasat al-'Arabiyah al-'Alamiyah, 1960, p. 114-15; A. 'Azzawī, *Tarikh al-'Iraq bayna ihtilalayn: min sanat 1289 h.-1872 m. ila sanat 1335 h.-1917 m.*, Baghdad: Sharikat al-Tijarah wa al-Tiba'ah al-Mahdudah, 1956, p. 166, 222; H. H. Shalah, *Ṭālib Basha al-Naqib al-Basri wa-dawruhu fi tarikh al-'Iraq al-siyasi al-hadith*, Beirut: al-Dar al-'Arabiyah lil-Mawsu'at, 2002, p. 177-78; cf. also Eliezer Tauber: *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, London: Frank Cass 1993, p. 152-71.

<sup>93</sup> For a detailed account on the tension between the CUP government and Sayyid Ṭālib, see Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum*, p. 184-210, and Eliezer Tauber, "Sayyid Talib and the Young Turks in Basra", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25 (1989), p. 3-22.

<sup>94</sup> For a detailed account on the capture of Sa'dūn Paşa and the process of his trial, see Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum*, 280-305, and Tauber, *Emergence*, p. 155.

Sa'dūn attracted the attention of Sayyid Ṭālib. Immediately after the Committee of Union and Progress was removed from power by the movement of the Saviour Officers (*Halaskaran-ı Zabitān*), Tahir Efendi, *naib* of Basra known for his connection with Sayyid Ṭālib was assigned as deputy governor of Basra, then on the grounds of his relationship with Ajaimī al-Sa'dūn, Sālim al-Khayūn was dismissed from his post as Lieutenant of the *Shebāna* and replaced by his brother Bandar.<sup>95</sup> These changes in the administrative posts led to uprisings among the supporters of Sālim al-Khayūn, and the regent governor of Basra agitated the inter-tribal grievances in alignment with Bandar and his allies. Yet, Sālim al-Khayūn's power in the region could not be undermined in the face of the government's alliances.<sup>96</sup> As a result of the CUP regaining control by the 1913 Ottoman coup d'état (*Babıali Baskını*), in January 1913 Tahir Efendi was dismissed as deputy governor of Basra and replaced by Ali Rıza Paşa, commander of the 13th Corps (Baghdad). His first decree was to remove the previous decision taken by Tahir Efendi on Sālim al-Khayūn. On the decision of Tahir Efendi, both Sālim and Bandar were alienated from the government and in February Ali Rıza Paşa, who believed the order of the region was endangered, reassigned Sālim as Lieutenant of the *Shebāna* Regiment.<sup>97</sup>

After Sālim al-Khayūn's removal from the post of Lieutenant of *Shebāna* Regiments, Sayyid Ṭālib sent one of his close associates to Mosul to recruit supporters for the Basra Reform Society and consequently to increase his influence in the region<sup>98</sup>. The commander of Baghdad Gendarmerie forces interpreted this move as a policy against the alliance between Ajaimī al-Sa'dūn with Sālim al-Khayūn in opposition to Sayyid Ṭālib. Indeed, this coalition made things difficult in the region for the latter. When the commander stated that solving the Basra issue would be less difficult if Ajaimī and Sālim sided with the government, he was in fact pointing out the parties who were to form the opposition against Sayyid Ṭālib.<sup>99</sup>

These claims by the Baghdad Gendarmerie Commander in July 1912 were taken seriously by Istanbul. Possibly due to consultations between central

<sup>95</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 97—4-1, p. 21-22.

<sup>96</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 97—4-2, p. 42, 50, 86-87.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>98</sup> The Basra Reform Society was founded by Sayyid Ṭālib in Basra. The organization was committed to the notions of decentralization and Arab nationalisms, similar to other *cemiyets* in the region such as Beirut Reform Society and Decentralization Party in Egypt; cf. Tauber, *Emergence*, p. 121-47, 157-58.

<sup>99</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 114-2, p. 2.

authorities and Ajaimī / Sālim, Sālim al-Khayūn and Ajaimī al-Sa'dūn sent a telegraph to the local newspaper, *Duhūr*, a short while before the assassination attempt on Sayyid Ṭālib, addressing and criticizing the people of Basra who sided with Sayyid Ṭālib and his supporters, and brought attention to the efforts of the Ottoman administration in meeting the Arab demands.<sup>100</sup>

The attempt on Sayyid Ṭālib's life failed due to an early signal that he got in regards to these plans. He initiated pre-emptive measures by ordering to assassinate the commander of Basra division and *mutasarrıf* of Muntafik, Ferid Bey. These orders changed the balance of power in local politics.<sup>101</sup> This move was a turning point in the politics of the region until the eruption of World War I. The struggle between the proponents of the CUP and the followers of Sayyid Ṭālib intensified with the involvement of lieutenant of *Shebāna* Regiments Sālim al-Khayūn and his tribe. Yet, the CUP's active support to Sālim was considerably limited. Indeed, in the periods when the balance of power sided with Sayyid Ṭālib, the central authority chose to allow events to take their course and risked sacrificing the *Shebāna* Lieutenant Sālim al-Khayūn and his tribe. The CUP re-started to support Sālim when there was need of *Shebāna* Regiments during World War I.

After securing his power in the region following the assassination attempt, Sayyid Ṭālib launched a counterattack, and those involved in the plot on Ṭālib, including Sālim al-Khayūn were referred to the Basra appeal court and arrested for the murder of Ferid and Bedi Nuri Beys.<sup>102</sup> The arrest of Sālim al-Khayūn and his accomplices was met with strong opposition by prominent officials in the region.<sup>103</sup> After all on the notion that this decision would force Sālim, lieutenant of the *Shebāna* Regiment to cooperate with Sayyid Ṭālib,<sup>104</sup> and that Ṭālib al-Naqīb's power would increase in this means, Sālim was released on bail shortly after.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Percy Cox, "Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force-Memorandum", *Gazetteer of Arabian Tribes*, V.9, Farnham Common: Archive Editions, 1996, p. 238.

<sup>101</sup> For a detailed account on the clashes between the CUP government and Sayyid Ṭālib, see Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum*, p. 176-210.

<sup>102</sup> Shalah, *Ṭālib Basha al-Naqīb al-Basri wa-dawruhu fi tarikh al-'Iraq al-siyasi al-hadith*, p. 316; BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-4, p. 6; BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-1, 64-65. The officers of Basra judiciary were actually under the influence of Sayyid Ṭālib. For a detailed account on Sayyid Ṭālib's influence on the local, judiciary, administrative and military officers, see. Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum*, p. 105-27.

<sup>103</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-4, p. 2, 9; BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-1, p. 9, 143/5.

<sup>104</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-4, p. 2; BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-1, p. 143/5.

<sup>105</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-1, p. 82

This was not the only price Sālīm al-Khayūn was forced to pay for siding with the government against Sayyid Ṭālib. Indeed, just a few months after his release, an operation was launched by İzzet Bey, the deputy governor and commander of Basra, against Sālīm al-Khayūn's tribe and family on the claim that they were involved in banditry activities, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of Sālīm al-Khayūn on charges of murdering his own brother Fāris. Nadir Bey, *mutasarrıf* of Muntafik, announced that he would award 100 lira to the person who captured Sālīm al-Khayūn dead or alive, so leaders of tribes opposing Khayūn applied to Basra province for the award.<sup>106</sup> Eventually, when Khayūn went to the central province of Basra to give a statement, the incidents calmed down for a while and İzzet Bey was forced to accept the situation.<sup>107</sup>

These were not the only operations launched against the *Shebāna* lieutenant Sālīm al-Khayūn and his tribe. The Sublime Porte that had sensed the process leading up to the First World War, allied with Sayyid Ṭālib, therefore causing a change in the stability of the region once again. This situation made it possible to plan a new operation against Sālīm al-Khayūn who fought against Sayyid Ṭālib on request of the CUP in the past. As a result of the changing balances in the region, when Süleyman Şefik Paşa came to office after being appointed and replaced İzzet Bey as governor, in January 1914 the *mutasarrıf* of Muntafik Nadir Bey proposed a military operation against Sālīm al-Khayūn. Although the governor of Basra stated that an operation of such would intensify the situation in the region even further and damage the image of the state, Nadir Bey launched a military operation against Sālīm al-Khayūn and his tribe on his own initiative and destroyed three of his strongholds around Shatrah.<sup>108</sup> In the meantime, a military operation was launched against the Ḥafaja tribe an ally of Sālīm al-Khayūn, so the Abūda tribe was left the only remaining tribe that supported al-Khayūn.<sup>109</sup> Although Şefik Paşa -the governor and commander of Basra- was disturbed by the military operations Nadir Bey carried out,<sup>110</sup> the policies he adopted led to an increase in the lack of

<sup>106</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 75-34, p. 3. Nadir Bey's policy actions were also sported by the provisional governor of Basra, Nadir Bey. BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 89-46, p. 27.

<sup>107</sup> BOA, *DH.SYS* 120-4, p. 17, 20-27, 41.

<sup>108</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 89-46, p. 19, 28. Sālīm al-Khayūn's raids brought the naval transportation between Shatrah and Nasiriyah to a halt. Then, Nadir Bey ordered additional military forces from the governors of Basra and Baghdad but his order was not met. BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 81-18, p. 19.

<sup>109</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 78-23, p. 5. Ḥafaja and 'Abūde were one of the first loyal tribes to the *Shebāna* Regiments.

<sup>110</sup> According to Şefik Paşa, the head of Muntafik initiated a miscalculated military raid and hence, he only fueled the conflict rather than a resolution. Thus, Şefik Paşa sent a request to headquarters to appoint a different person to replace Nadir Bey. BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 81-18, p. 17.

public security and encouraged Şefik Paşa to consider organizing an operation against Sâlim al-Khayûn and the Hâfaja tribe.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, not only were many of the weapons seized by the Hâfaja tribe during the operation; some of the Ottoman forces lost contact with Shatrah and the transportation of provisions to the military from Nasiriyah became impossible.<sup>112</sup>

In view of the changing alliances in the region, this made the situation even more complicated, and as a result of the Sublime Porte's policies towards both Sayyid Tâlib and the opposition not "alienating from the central authority" and maintaining the balance of power, peace was eventually reached when Colonel Subhi Bey, was assigned to replace Süleyman Şefik Bey as deputy governor and commander of Basra.<sup>113</sup> When considering the situation from this angle, it may be suggested that the CUP's attempt to have Sayyid Tâlib assassinated for totally different reasons had various repercussions on the region and that the CUP was unsuccessful in controlling the developments which occurred in its wake. Nevertheless, as a consequence of this policy not only did the intention of maintaining order in the Basra region fail, but it also aggravated conflicts between the local actors.

Indeed, the outbreak of the First World War enhanced the significance of the *Shebāna* Regiments in terms of central authority, and the *Shebāna* Regiments were mobilized against the British occupation of Iraq. Initially, the Ottomans planned to take advantage of the tribes, in particular the *Shebāna* Regiments on the Iraqi front. In the context of this plan, the passivation on the front opposing Sâlim al-Khayûn produced favourable outcomes, and Sâlim al-Khayûn and his tribe sided with the Ottoman Empire during the British invasion of Iraq.<sup>114</sup>

By virtue of the plan to mobilize the *Shebāna* Regiments in World War I, Muhammad Bey, lieutenant of the Amarah *Shebāna* Regiment imprisoned in the Baghdad prison for murder in 1915, was released on the grounds that his

<sup>111</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 81-18, p. 3-4, 18, 22; BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 70-45, p. 1-2; BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 78-23, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Hüsameddin Paşa sent the auxiliary forces to Shatrah to sustain the imagery of power of the government. Yet, he thought that the issue of Muntafik mainly stemmed from the maladministration of the Basra governor and requested the removal of the governor from the post. BOA, *DH.EUM.EMN* 78-23, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> BOA, *DH.ŞFR* 42-220.

<sup>114</sup> S. Beyoğlu, *İki Devir Bir İnsan: Ahmet Faik Günday ve Hatıratı*, İstanbul : Bengi Yayınları, 2011, p. 197.

deployment in the war would be beneficial.<sup>115</sup> As the need of the *Shebāna* Regiments became more intense on the Iraqi front, the regiment's power increased and the *mutasarrıf* of Diwaniyah requested the designation of a further 80 *Shebāna* soldiers to restore order on the condition that these were individuals selected from among the tribes. The reason for this request by the *mutasarrıf* was due to attacks on the postal service between Diwaniyah-Hillah, the telegraph posts providing contact between the administrative headquarters and the province, and attacks on the gendarmerie transporting weapons and money sent from Shamiyah to Diwaniyah by tribes who were cooperating with the English forces.<sup>116</sup> The Commander of Gendarmerie Department (*Umum Jandarma Kumandanlığı*) considered this request to be appropriate, and the new *Shebāna* soldiers assumed duty in the middle of June.<sup>117</sup>

One of the major developments concerning the *Shebāna* Regiments in the process that began with the Second Constitutional period was the scheme regarding the reorganization of the Regiments by conjoining these with the Gendarmerie. In May 1914, emphasizing that the *Shebāna* Regiments were not bound to any specific order, uniform or employment; that some of these lacked the required qualities due to the low salary, the Basra province demanded a raise in the salaries in order to benefit more from the regiments. In fact, almost a year prior to this request made by the governor of Baghdad, the Baghdad Gendarmerie Command demanded that these regiments be conjoined with the gendarmerie corps on the allegation that the *Shebāna's* duty of collecting taxes had been abolished and the duty of these regiments was reduced to solely enforcing order. This issue was addressed by the Council of Ministers (*Meclis-i Vükela*), and it was decided that this scheme should be debated by a commission consisting of gendarmerie officers and civil servants. However, no regulations regarding the *Shebāna* Regiments of the Baghdad province were administered. The Ministry of Finance re-raised the proposal made by the Baghdad Gendarmerie Command in 1913, and recommended that the *Shebāna* Regiments should either be incorporated with the gendarmerie corps immediately, or otherwise that the regiments should be abolished.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>115</sup> BOA, *BEO* 4336-325158.

<sup>116</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.4.Şb* 24-5, p. 3-4.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

<sup>118</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.6.Şb* 54-2, p. 10-11.



The Ministry of Finance's suggestion that the *Shebāna* Regiments be redrafted met with opposition in the sanjaks of Diwaniyah and Karbala where the majority of the *Shebāna* Regiments were located. By raising concern that the area was a geography inundated with water, the Diwaniyah Gendarmerie Command emphasized that it would be impossible for cavalry and infantry to operate in the region.

“In the same way that the gendarmerie is of no benefit in terms of providing security to the *Shebāna* Regiments which are deployed at the present, they are unable to carry out the duties required in these kinds of issues, and are insufficient even as an assisting force to the *Shebāna* Regiments. Individuals of the *Shebāna* force undertake extremely important missions for the government that the gendarmerie is unable to accomplish. In that the districts consisting of the whole of the kaza of Shamiyah, most of Samawah, Daghara, Afak and al-Badr, the return from Hillah to Shatt lies of fields and land generally covered in water, and in the same way that cavalry operations would be impossible here, it would also be impossible for members of the infantry to travel without a rowing boat. In regions as such, crucial services such as delivering extremely important correspondence between neighbouring districts and the centre of the province government, tribal leaders and *serkārs* by walking and swimming in the waters, collecting taxes and submitting these taxes to the officials can only be fulfilled by the *Shebāna* Regiments...”<sup>119</sup>

In view of the reasons emphasized above, the Diwaniyah Gendarmerie Command that believed there was no benefit in abolishing the *Shebāna* Regiments and incorporating these with the gendarmerie requested that the regiments continue to operate as usual, and as the Baghdad province requested previously that these regiments be subjected to certain regulations.<sup>120</sup> The *mutasarrif* of Diwaniyah was of the same opinion. The *mutasarrif* affirmed the Gendarmerie Command's views regarding the *Shebāna* Regiments and suggested that the gendarmerie would be of no avail in these reorganizations.

“If the *Shebāna* Regiments are abolished and conjoined with the gendarmerie, as the individuals of the *Shebāna* Regiments, who are all in fact members of tribes, would be obliged to give blood money and penalties in compliance with tribal customs. Under the circumstances it is certainly not possible for the gendarmerie

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

to benefit from their services. Furthermore, as the *Shebāna* Regiments would be inactive in the duties they carry out at the present, the administrative transactions of the provinces would be interrupted and tax collection operations would certainly become extremely difficult, it is essential that the *Shebāna* Regiments retain their present status...<sup>121</sup>

For the given reasons, the *mutasarrıflık* requested that the *Shebāna* Regiments should maintain their present status, that regulations should be enforced to improve the conditions of the regiments and that numbers of the forces should be increased. Indeed, although the troop numbers were sufficient in the *kaza* of Shamiya, the numbers of *Shebāna* forces particularly in Samawah and central province were inadequate. Regarding this, the *mutasarrıf* of Diwaniyah requested a further 30 soldiers to be deployed to the existing *Shebāna* forces in Diwaniyah and Samawah.<sup>122</sup>

The views of the Karbala Gendarmerie Command were no different from those of the Diwaniyah Command. Karbala Command also demanded that the present status of the *Shebāna* Regiments should be maintained on similar grounds of that presented by the *mutasarrıflık* and Gendarmerie Command of Diwaniyah.

“As it is impossible to maintain control of the members of the *Shebāna* Regiments in the same way that the gendarmerie is controlled, they also refuse to live a life style which the duty of the gendarmerie entails. Under the existing conditions with their own traditional style of dress (without the obligation of wearing official uniform), they are only able to carry out duties such as delivering documents and apprehending criminals. As the *Shebāna* Regiments can enter all areas without difficulty and obtain information, it was suggested that they could be used when acquiring intelligence regarding security issues is necessary in certain regions, and it is already evident that a majority of the regiment members do not agree to being directly incorporated into the gendarmerie corps from their response to proposals made on several occasions...<sup>123</sup>

The Baghdad province also supported these negative views presented by Karbala and Diwaniyah regarding the *Shebāna* Regiments being changed into gendarmerie forces, and asked Istanbul to execute their request for reorganization

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

of the regiments submitted in May.<sup>124</sup> Following the adverse opinion of the Baghdad province, *Umum Jandarma Kumandanlığı*, controlled by the Ministry of War, stated that there was a misunderstanding regarding the regulation of the *Shebāna* Regiments and that the regulations were simply to incorporate these troops into a system.<sup>125</sup> Although the requests of the Ministry of Finance were defined in the correspondence which continued between *Umum Jandarma Kumandanlığı* and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the months of September-October of 1914, no major steps were taken regarding the reorganization of the *Shebāna* Regiments.<sup>126</sup> Presumably, there were plans to discuss the *Shebāna* Regiments in the drafts of the new Gendarmerie Law. In this scheme, it was stated that a mobile gendarmerie regiment should be present in the desert and places where the tribes roamed, and the territories where these were positioned should be affiliated to a regional squadron, troop and regiment command post.<sup>127</sup> However, the Gendarmerie Law scheme was not put into effect and there were no administrative reorganizations regarding the *Shebāna* Regiments.

### Conclusion

Considering the foundation, development and functions of *Shebāna* Regiments, they are regarded as a crucial state apparatus in the consolidation of central authority in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra. However, it is highly questionable to what extent they accomplished these objectives.

*Shebāna* Regiments, overall, played a crucial role in the diffusion of power in the peripheries especially in the era of Abdulhamid II and Second Constitution when centralization politics were at a peak. On the one hand, the regiments were reinforcing the central authority in the region, while on the other they damaged the endurance of peace and security which in return damaged the sustainability of central authority in Iraq. *Shebāna* Regiments actually underpinned the tribal structure of the region which eschewed intrusion of government in localities. The creation of distinction between rebellious and loyal tribes led to the maintenance of local intermediaries among state and society which prevented the establishment of any direct linkages amongst the central government and the individual. The distinction between “mutinous” and “loyal” tribes created further schisms among

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> Alyot, *Türkiye’de Zabta*, p. 293.

tribes, which in turn created a strong sense of us/them distinction on the basis of degree of loyalty to the central authority. Moreover, in the era of the Second Constitution, the CUP government's agitation of inter-tribal grievances fuelled the already existing clashes in Iraq and in turn jeopardized public order and security including the reputation of central authority in public opinion.

Therefore, I argue that even though *Shebāna* Regiments had sustained public order in places the regular military units failed to control, in the long run their function led to consequences that contributed to undermining the central authority in the provinces of Iraq.

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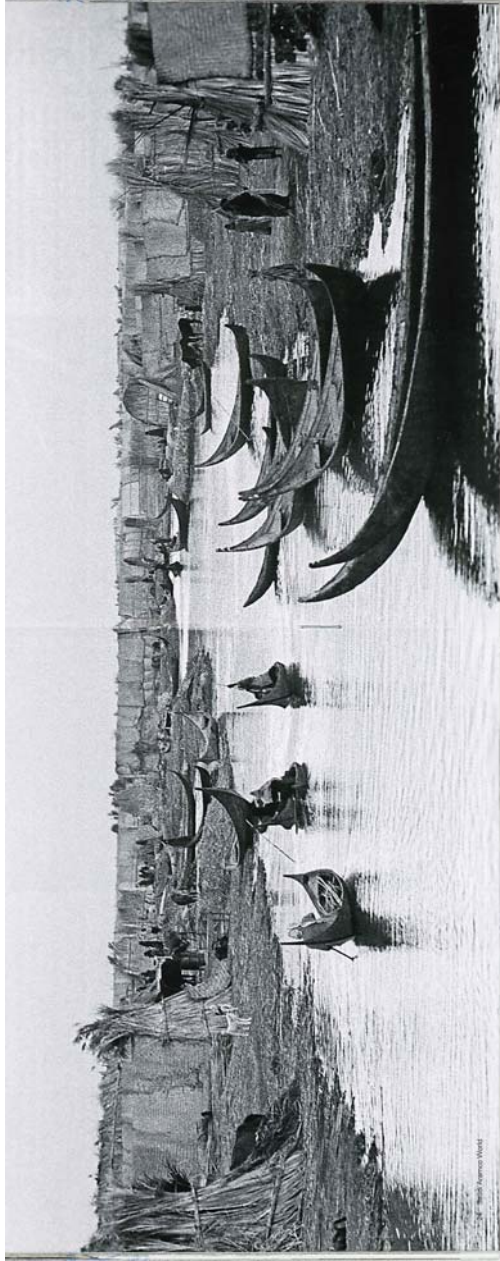
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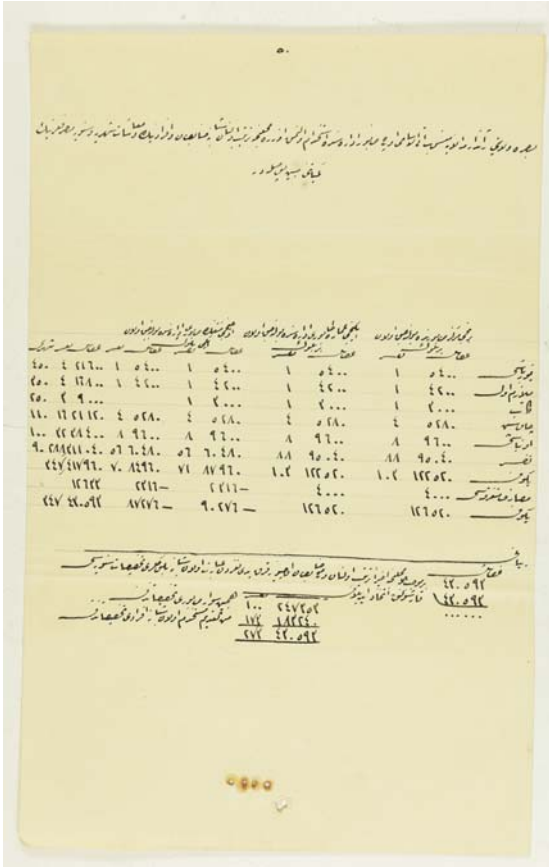
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## APPENDICES



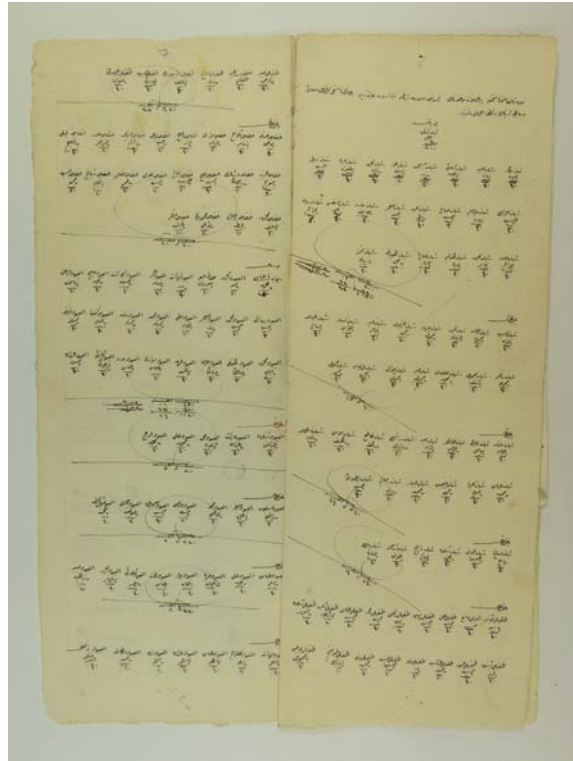
**Appendix 1:** A current photograph showing *mashūfs* which enable transportation through *hawas* of Baghdad and Basra.  
Saudi Aramco World, May/June 2013, 1.



**Appendix 2:** The governor of Basra, Hasan Bey's request for increasing the existing number of *Shebāna* Regiments. 25 May 1907. BOA, ŞD 650-12, 1 and 11.



Appendix 3: Proposal for improvement of the conditions and increasing the existing number of *Shebāna* Regiments. 5 January 1908. BOA, İAS 71-56, 1.



**Appendix 4:** Records showing the salaries of *Shebāna* individuals. 3 August 1857. BOA, *ML.MSfd* 12906, 2 and 5.