

## Centralization and Provincial Government in the Ottoman Empire: A New Administrative Model the Province of Kurdistan (1847-1867)

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### Abstract

This study examines the establishment and evolution of the Kurdistan Province, which was established in 1847 and was part of the Ottoman Empire's eastern provincial organization. Formed within the context of Ottoman centralization policies, the Kurdistan Province presented a unique administrative model that differed from the classical Ottoman provincial system as it included local Kurdish beys in the administration, albeit for a short period. This period represents a multi-layered restructuring process in which the empire redefined the relationship between the center and the provinces, questioned classical administrative practices, and sought to increase the state's influence over the community. The Tanzimat Edict and its reforms formed the normative framework of this restructuring; however, the real effects of the reforms were felt more in the provinces. Particularly towards the middle of the 19th century, following the Bedirhan Bey uprising, the Diyarbekir Province was merged with the Van, Muş, and Hakkâri districts, as well as the Cizre-Bohtan and Mardin districts. The article discusses the province's administrative and legal status, the yurtluk-ocaklık system, the dynamics between central authority and local powers, and the dismantling of this structure during the Tanzimat Edict's centralization process in the 19th century.

**Keywords:** Ottoman, Province, Centralization, Tanzimat, Kurdistan.

### 1. Introduction

The 18th century in Ottoman history was a period when the empire's classical administrative and political structure began to disintegrate, while at the same time, intensive efforts toward modernization and centralization emerged, resulting in a renewed attempt at restructuring. From the first half of the same century onwards, the state's economically stable structure also came to an end, and the Ottoman Empire faced numerous crises.<sup>1</sup> This restructuring process was often addressed through reformist texts, legal regulations, and the strengthening of the central bureaucracy. In this context, the Ottoman Empire, which embarked on radical reforms, began to take certain measures. While dealing with market and tax losses due to the war with Russia on the one hand and the territorial losses suffered in other wars that

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Quataert, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu 1700-1922 [The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922]* (İletişim, 2003), 73; Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford University Press, 2016), 37.

ended in defeat on the other, the Ottoman Empire was also grappling with rising nationalism and independence movements among various ethnic communities.<sup>2</sup>

In order to eliminate the negative situations mentioned above and to liquidate the emirates, the Ottoman Empire began to pursue a systematic policy, embarking on a comprehensive process of change/transformation involving all elements of the state and society. The transformation experienced by the state was reflected in the administrative organization of the provinces and, of course, in the Kurdish geography. The movements of renewal and centralization that began with Selim III and continued with Mahmud II had consequences that affected all of Eastern Anatolia and the Southeastern Anatolia Region (including Kurdistan, although not yet officially). Although some emirates were abolished in the context of the transformation process, there were still *mîrs*/emirates that continued to exist until the early 19th century. The Baban Emirate, the Soran Emirate, the Behdinan Emirate, the Bohtan Emirate centered in Cizre, and the Hakkâri Emirate were emirates that maintained their autonomous structures within the Ottoman administrative system in the early 19th century.<sup>3</sup>

The aforementioned emirates remained minimally dependent on Ottoman rule until the mid-19th century. After the Battle of Chaldiran, the recognition of the sultan's authority by the Kurdish emirates was official in nature and did not affect the representation rights of the Kurdish governors under their rule, who were persons with the right of disposal over the lands granted to them through *yurtluk*, *ocaklık*, or government *sancaks*.<sup>4</sup> The existing order was preserved, and a more conservative policy of maintaining the status quo was pursued. This policy implemented by the Ottoman Empire served the interests of the semi-independent local power-holding elites.

The Kurdish *mîrs*, who were in a position of semi-autonomous power within the Ottoman Empire, had taken on the functions that a government would perform in their regions and had become effectively independent.<sup>5</sup> The measures implemented by the Ottoman Empire to eliminate this situation led to the disappearance of the autonomous emirates that had existed for centuries in a traditional manner and also caused major problems in the region whose effects lasted for many years.<sup>6</sup> The *Ekrad sanjaks*, which were administered by the *yurtluk-ocaklık* and government system in some areas of the region on the Ottoman-Iranian border that were later incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, were exempt from taxes, unlike other *sanjaks* in the Ottoman Empire, and were not obliged to send soldiers to the central government except in

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<sup>2</sup> Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi [State and Economy in the Ottoman Empire]* (Ötüken, 2013), 87.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, "Ağa, Şeyh ve Devlet" ["Agha, Shaikh and State"], Trans. Banu Yalkut (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 342; Metin Atmaca, "Three Stages of Political Transformation in the 19th Century Ottoman Kurdistan", *Anatoli. De l'Adriatique à la Caspienne. Territoires, Politique, Sociétés*, sy. 8 (2017): 44; İbrahim Özcoşar, *Osmanlı Merkezîleşmesi ve Kürt Emirlikleri (Bedirhan Bey İsyanı) [Ottoman Centralization and Kurdish Emirates (The Bedirhan Bey Revolt)]*, 2012, 101.

<sup>4</sup> BOA, A.MKT. MHM 756/16-11, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1852; Celil Celile, *XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kürtler [Kurds in the 19th Century Ottoman Empire]* (Öz-Ge, 1992), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Bruinessen, "Ağa, Şeyh ve Devlet" ["Agha, Shaikh and State"], 223.

<sup>6</sup> Mehmet Zeydin Yıldız, "XIX. Yüzyılda Hakkâri'nin İdari Yapısı" ["Administrative Structure of Hakkâri in the 19th Century"], konferans bildirisi presented at *Uluslararası Tarihte Hakkâri Sempozyumu [Paper Presented at International Symposium on Hakkâri in History]*, 2016, 189.

times of war.<sup>7</sup> During the reign of Mahmud II, it was not only the Kurdish emirates that were semi-independent. At the same time, influential families in the Balkans and some regions of Anatolia had taken over the functions of the government and had become de facto independent rulers. Even the governors sent from the center during the reign of Mahmud II acted independently and did not take Istanbul into account.<sup>8</sup>

It cannot be said that travelers who came to the region in the 19th century painted a flattering picture of the state's presence and authority in the region. Traveler M. F. Millingen reports that there were three major uprisings in the geography densely populated by Kurds, that the uprisings were mostly against the sultan's authority, and that they were suppressed by the Ottomans. Millingen also reports that the region's leaders placed special snipers in the mountains to prevent those who came to collect taxes on behalf of the state from doing so, and that this meant that tax collectors could not travel freely in the region.<sup>9</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, who served in the Ottoman army and was stationed in the region for a long time, recounts that the local emirs were constantly at war with each other, resisted Ottoman rule, refused to pay taxes, opposed the Ottoman recruitment of soldiers, and took refuge in the mountains as a last resort when fighting the Ottomans.<sup>10</sup> During this period, a French traveler in the region noted that the Kurds were ostensibly loyal to the Ottomans but avoided submitting to the sultan and other state officials.<sup>11</sup>

By the mid-19th century, with the proclamation of the Tanzimat Edict, centralization policies aimed to abolish the yurtluk-ocaklık and government sanjak systems in the region referred to as Kurdistan in sources, even though it was not yet officially named Kurdistan. This was because the restructuring of the land and tax system in Kurdistan was one of two important issues addressed by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to expectations that the region's inclusion in the Tanzimat would resolve the issues, the owners of the yurtluk-ocaklık and government sanjaks reacted to the centralization policies and launched a series of rebellions. Müküs Mîri Han Mahmud, Cizre Mîri Bedirhan Bey, and Hakkâri Mîri Nurullah Bey rebelled and were exiled as a result.<sup>13</sup> Following the exile of the Mîrs, the Tanzimat reforms began to be implemented in the provinces.

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<sup>7</sup> Ayn Ali Efendi, *Kavânin-i Âl-i Osman* [*Laws of the House of Osman*] (İstanbul: Tasvîr-i Efkâr Gazetehanesi, 1863), 30.

<sup>8</sup> Bruinessen, "Ağa, Şeyh ve Devlet" ["Agha, Shaikh and State"], 269; Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, 228.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Major Millingen, *Kürtler Arasında Doğal Yaşam* [*Wild Life Among the Koords*] (Doz, 1998), 100.

<sup>10</sup> Von Moltke Helmuth, *Moltke'nin Türkiye Mektupları* [*Moltke's Letters from Turkey*] (Remzi Kitabevi, 1969), 188.

<sup>11</sup> Nihat Karademir, "Osmanlı'nın Son Yüzyılında Kürtler: Modernleşme", *Merkeziyetçilik ve İsyan* ["*Kurds in the Last Century of the Ottomans: Modernization*"], *Centralization and Revolt* (İstanbul: Nûbihar, 2017), 134.

<sup>12</sup> Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, "Ruling the Periphery, Governing the Land: The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in Kurdistan, 1840-70", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, sy. 1 (2014): 163.

<sup>13</sup> BOA, İ.MSM. 51/1297, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 1847; BOA, İ.MVL, 148/4190, Lef. 6, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 18BOA, İ.MSM. 51/1297, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [*State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*], 1847; BOA, İ.MVL, 148/4190, Lef. 6 [Encl. 6], Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [*State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*], 184949.

The question of how the reforms were implemented at the provincial level, how these implementations clashed with or reconciled with local social structures, has not yet been examined in sufficient depth in historical writing. The establishment of the Province of Kurdistan in 1847 and its abolition approximately twenty years later provides a critical example in this context for understanding the limits of Ottoman centralization efforts in the provinces. The Kurdistan Province was not merely the establishment of a new administrative unit; rather, this newly established province was the product of a fundamental transformation in the perception of Kurdistan. This geography, previously governed indirectly through local emirates and tribal leaders, was subject to direct intervention by the central bureaucracy for the first time during the Tanzimat period. In this respect, the Province of Kurdistan represents a transitional model between the classical Ottoman provincial administration and the modern vilayet system. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the Province of Kurdistan not as a short-lived administrative experiment, but as a management strategy developed by the Ottoman state mind in times of crisis. The study aims to discuss the long-term consequences of this experience by examining the military and political process leading to the establishment of the province, its administrative structure and borders, the appointments made to the province from the center, the social and economic effects of the province, and finally, the abolition of the province within its historical context. In this context, the study is based on three main arguments. First, the establishment of the Kurdistan Province was not the product of a planned and long-term reform program, but rather an urgent response to the administrative vacuum that emerged after the elimination of the Kurdish emirates. Second, although the province's failure is often explained by administrative inadequacies, the real problem lies in the fixed policies implemented by the central state without sufficiently understanding the social and political fabric of the region. Third, despite its short life, the Kurdistan Province left a lasting legacy in terms of understanding the form that Ottoman-Kurdish relations took in the modern era.

## 2. Methodology

The examination of the Kurdistan Province brings to the fore two important conceptual/theoretical debates regarding the Ottoman centralization process. The first is that centralization is not merely an administrative technique, but also an intervention aimed at transforming social relations. The state's new administrative approach, which directly addressed the individual, was incompatible with structures based on tribes and religious/sectarian communities. The second debate concerns the limits of centralization. The experience of the Kurdistan Province shows that the state was able to dismantle the local order by using military force; however, it struggled to establish a sustainable administrative structure after this dismantling. It is important to understand the structure of the period in order to comprehend the administrative, financial, and social structure of the Kurdistan Province, which was established as a necessary response to the administrative vacuum that emerged as a result of the elimination of Kurdish emirates through military interventions within the scope of central policies. In this context, the method applied was a scanning model based on bringing together and analyzing documents from the period scattered throughout the State Archives, which constitute the primary sources for the study, and interpreting them. The scanned documents

were examined, and sections relevant to the subject and field were noted. The noted documents were analyzed, comparisons were made, and duplicate data was filtered out. In addition to the archive records, modern academic literature and traveler's notes were compared, and inconsistent information was filtered out.

### 3. Literature Review

In this study, Ottoman State records/documents, State Yearbooks, and Mühimme Defterleri (Important Deeds), which are kept at the State Archives Presidency and contain fundamental sources for Ottoman history research, were used. The Mühimme Defterleri were kept after the sultan's approval of decisions concerning central-provincial relations. Furthermore, the Kadı Courts/Sharia Registers, which contain important information about the general structure of society in Ottoman history in terms of social, legal, economic, commercial, demographic, and many other aspects, play a significant role. Provisions related to appointments made in the administrative field were identified in the registers, and information was collected.

In addition to Ottoman Archive records, traveler notes were reviewed; modern research works on Kurds, Kurdistan, and the Ottoman administrative structure were examined, the scope of the subject was followed, and a literature review was conducted. Among the research works, Martin van Bruinessen's *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet* is the first comprehensive field study on the Kurds. Hakan Özoğlu's *The Ottoman State and Kurdish Nationalism* addresses the nationalist movements that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, their impact on the late Ottoman structure, and how the Kurds were affected by this. Wadie Jwadih's *The Historical Origins and Development of Kurdish Nationalism* examines the history of Kurdish nationalism and the development of the Kurds' traditional life and administrative organization up to modern times. Sinan Hakan's book, *Kurds, and Kurdish Resistance in Ottoman Archival Documents*, provides important information about Kurdish uprisings from the early 19th century to the late 19th century using Ottoman archival documents. The works of Russian historians Basil Nikitin, *Kurds*, and Vladimir Minorskiy, *Kurdish Nationalism*, provide important information on the history of the Kurds and Kurdistan.

### 4. Result and Discussion

#### 4.1. The Concept of Kurdistan

Used by many actors in different periods of history as a geographical description, an ethnic-cultural area, and sometimes as a political demand and project, Kurdistan has never been the name of a fixed and rigid political structure with clear borders and a homogeneous ethnic structure at any point in history.<sup>14</sup> The concept of Kurdistan remains controversial both in academic circles and in political debates. Despite frequent references in sources by geographers and historians, there is no consensus on the borders of Kurdistan, and the term Kurdistan has

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<sup>14</sup> Hakan Özoğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kürt Milliyetçiliği [Kurdish Nationalism and the Ottoman State]* (Kitap, 2005), 33; Basil Nikitin, *Kürtler [The Kurds]* (Örgün, 2010), 70.

generally been used to refer to regions with a high concentration of Kurds.<sup>15</sup> The definitions of Kurdistan by geographers and historians are detailed below.

The Greek historian and geographer Strabo (64 BC-24 AD), who lived during the Roman period, used the name *Gordyaia-ore* (Karduka) in his work *Geographika* to describe the mountainous region between "Muş" and "Diyarbakır".<sup>16</sup> On the world map drawn by Mahmud of Kashgar, who conducted studies on the Turkish language in the 11th century, the region densely populated by Kurds was referred to as *Erdu'l-Ekrad*, meaning the country of the Kurds.<sup>17</sup> The concept of Kurdistan was first used in an administrative sense in the 12th century during the reign of Sultan Sanjar, the Great Seljuk ruler, for the region between Azerbaijan and Loristan, with its capital in Bahar, northeast of Hamadan. Hamdullah Mustavf-î, who recorded the borders and annual revenues of Kurdistan, *stated that it "includes Arab Iraq, Kuzistan, Persian Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Diyarbakir. The revenues during the time of (Seljuk) Suleiman Shah Abuh were approximately 2,000,000 dinars in today's currency. However, the amount in the current records is only 201,500 dinars"*.<sup>18</sup>

According to the *Şerefname*, written in Persian in 1597 by the Emir of Bitlis, Şerephan, which is important in terms of Kurdish history, the borders of Kurdistan are as follows: *The borders of the Kurds' homeland begin at the coast of the Hormuz Sea, which separates from the Ocean; they extend in a straight line from there to the end of the provinces of Malatya and Maraş. Thus, the northern side of this line is formed by Persia, Persian Iraq, Azerbaijan, Lesser Armenia, and Greater Armenia. To the south lie Arab Iraq, Mosul, and the province of Diyarbakir. However, many peoples and tribes descended from these people have spread across many countries from east to west...*<sup>19</sup>

Islamic historians and geographers have used the terms *Bilad al-Ekrad*, *Memalik al-Ekrad*, or *Menatik al-Ekrad* for the regions where the Kurds lived.<sup>20</sup> In *Kamus-i Türki*, Şemsettin Sâmî describes Kurdistan as *"a place consisting of two sides of Hudud-u İmraniye in the Ottoman Empire and the northern eastern parts of Cezire"*.<sup>21</sup> Again, Şemsettin Sâmî, who compiled a dictionary of history and civilization, defines Kurdistan in *Kamus'ül Âlâm* as:

*Western Asia is a large country, the greater part of which is in the Ottoman Empire and a part of which is subject to Iran, and it is named after the Kurdish people who constitute the majority of its population. This name is not included in the administrative and political divisions; just as the "Kurdistan Province" in our country and the "Kurdistan Province" in Iran today do not encompass the entire region named thus, Furthermore, since the Kurds are*

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<sup>15</sup> Muammer Gül, "Tarihi ve Coğrafi Bakış Açısından Kürdistan kavramının Ortadoğu'daki Yeri" ["The Place of the Concept of Kurdistan in the Middle East from Historical and Geographical Perspectives"], *Birinci Ortadoğu Semineri* [First Middle East Seminar], 2004, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Strabon, *Strabon* [Geography] (Arkeoloji ve Sanat, [n.d.], 27.

<sup>17</sup> Kaşgarlı Mahmud, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk* (Kaşgarlı Mahmud, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk* [Compendium of the Turkish Dialects] (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985), 531. Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985), 531.

<sup>18</sup> Hamdullah Mustavfî Kazvini, *Nuzhetu'l-Kulub* [The Heart's Bliss] (G. Le Strange, Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1915), 22,23; Nazmi Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri* [Turkish Emirates in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia], 1982, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Şerephan, *Şerefname* [Sharafnameh] (Deng, 2009), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Belazuri, *Fütüh'ul-Buldan* [The Conquest of Nations] (Kültür Bakanlığı, 1987), 478.

<sup>21</sup> Şemseddin Sami, *Kâmûs-i Türkî* [Ottoman Turkish Dictionary] (İkdam Matbaası, 1899), 1151.

scattered and mixed with other peoples, it is difficult to completely define the borders of Kurdistan. Geographically, Kurdistan extends from the shores of Lake Urmia and Lake Van to the sources of the Kerhe and Diyala Rivers and the course of the Tigris, and from there northward to the north, following the course of the Tigris to the Karasu basin, which forms the Euphrates, and from there northward to the watershed separating the Aras Basin from the Euphrates and Tigris Basins. In this respect, most of the Musul Province in the Ottoman Empire, namely the areas on the left bank of the Tigris and the provinces of Van and Bitlis, as well as parts of the provinces of Diyarbekir and Ma'muratul-Aziz provinces, as well as the Dersim Sanjak, are considered part of Kurdistan. Similarly, in Iran, the province known as Kurdistan and half of the Azerbaijan Province, namely its southwestern part, constitute Kurdistan. Thus, Kurdistan is bounded on the northeast by Azerbaijan, on the east by Iraq-i Acemi, on the south by Loristan and Iraq-i Arabî, on the southwest by Jazira, and on the northwest by Anatolia. Within these borders, it extends between 34 and 39 degrees north latitude and 37 and 46 degrees east longitude, forming a large triangle, or more accurately, a pear shape with its pointed end facing northwest. The maximum length from the most northwestern point, where the Karasu and Murat rivers meet to form the Euphrates, to the border of Loristan is approximately 900 kilometers, and the width is between 100 and 200 kilometers. Although the distinguishing feature of Kurdistan is the ethnicity of its inhabitants, Kurds are not exclusive to this country; they are also found in the northern part of the Jazira, in the regions of Damascus, and Aleppo, throughout Anatolia, in the Mavara-i Kafkas provinces under Russian rule, and throughout Iran, even in Khorasan, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan. On the other hand, within the borders of Kurdistan, there are also populations belonging to Arab, Iranian, Turkish, and other ethnic groups. However, the majority can be determined within the aforementioned borders. Although the Loris, who are the inhabitants of Iran's Lorestan Province, are related to the Kurds in terms of ethnicity, they do not consider themselves to be Kurds because of certain differences in their language and animosity between them, and the Kurds are also reluctant to accept the Loris as their own. The total number of Kurds is estimated to be around two and a half million, with one and a half million in the Ottoman Empire, seven thousand five hundred in Iran, thirteen thousand in Russia's Transcaucasia Province, and the rest scattered throughout Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and other areas. Kurdistan is mountainous and rugged throughout, with only a few narrow plains in the river valleys. The flattest and lowest part is the southeastern part, namely the Sanjaks of Şehrezor and Süleymaniye and Kurdistan in Iran, where the mountains are lower, the valleys wider, and the plains more numerous...<sup>22</sup>

In his book, *Lügât-ı Tarihiyye ve Coğrafiyye*, Ahmet Rifat describes Kurdistan as follows:

*Armenia, Al-Jazira, Arab Iraq, and Persia. It comprises the provinces of Shehrizor and Mosul, as well as part of the province of Baghdad. It is three hundred and eighty kilometers long and four hundred kilometers wide, containing high mountains and fertile valleys. Its*

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<sup>22</sup> Şemseddin Sami, *Kamus'ül-Alâm: Tarih ve Coğrafya Lûgati ve Tabir-i Esahhiyle Kâffe-yi Esmâ-yi Hassa-yi Camidir. A-Ahvas*. [*Kamus al-'lam: Dictionary of History and Geography*] (Mihran Matbaası, 1889), 3840.

*agricultural products include rice, wheat, barley, sesame, nuts, tobacco, cotton, and flax; its natural resources and minerals consist of sulfur and alum. And its estimated population of three hundred and fifty thousand, although mostly ignorant and uneducated and living in a state of nomadism, their courage, contentment, and hospitality are beyond reproach. His Majesty Sultan Selim I (Yavuz Sultan Selim) desired the annexation of Kurdistan to the Sublime State (the Ottoman Empire). He therefore sent the renowned Idris-i Bidlîsî, who was in Dersaadet (Istanbul), to the Kurdish leaders (mirs) in 1515 AD (921 AH). The aforementioned individuals (i.e., the mirs) were already Sunni Muslims, and there were about twenty or thirty Kurdish tribes. (the aforementioned individuals, i.e., the mirs) sent the renowned Idris-i Bidlîsî, who was residing in Dersaadet (Istanbul), to the Kurdish nobles (mir) in the year 1515 AD (921 AH). He urged them to gather (to his side) and incite them against Shah Ismail (teşvik) with effective advice (nesâyih-i müessere) the aforementioned tribes liberated their lands from the Persians through war and sought refuge with the Sublime Porte. Only the Diyarbekir region was taken with some fighting. The Kurds hesitated to accept some of the taxes of the Sublime Porte, so in 1845 AD/1262 AH, Field Marshal Osman Pasha was sent to Kurdistan with considerable force. After some pressure and minor skirmishes, the aforementioned (i.e., Field Marshal Osman Pasha) captured their first leader, Bedirhan Beg, along with his relatives and sent them to Constantinople, thus eliminating that hesitation. And the aforementioned mir (i.e., Bedirhan Beg) and his relatives were settled in various parts of the Sublime State (the Ottoman Empire) with a salary allowance...<sup>23</sup>*

Towards the end of the 18th century, Maurizio Garzoni, a Catholic priest and traveler from the Vatican who visited Mosul, stated that Kurdistan consisted of five large Muslim principalities/emirates and covered a large area from Bitlis to Hakkâri and then to Amediye.<sup>24</sup>

In his work *Coğrafya-yı Osmâni* (Ottoman Geography), Ahmet Cemal divided the territories belonging to the Ottoman Empire into three parts: Ottoman Europe, Ottoman Asia, namely the provinces located on the Kurdistan continent, and Ottoman Africa. Kurdistan, located in Ottoman Asia, is in the east of Anatolia and includes the region up to the border of Persia (Iran).<sup>25</sup>

#### **4.2. The Province of Kurdistan**

After II. Mahmud ascended the throne, he began to establish a centralised local administrative system in an effort to re-establish Ottoman rule over the provinces and reform them. In this context, the centralisation policies initiated by II. Mahmud in order to maintain his power caused centrifugal forces to mobilise and review their relations with the state. In particular, with the proclamation of the Tanzimat Edict, the privileged classes that did not pay taxes to the Ottoman Empire, and especially those who were not soldiers but received

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<sup>23</sup> Ahmet Rıfat, *Lügât-ı Tarihiyye ve Coğrafıyye* [*Dictionary of History and Geography*] (Keygar Neşriyat, 2004), 77.

<sup>24</sup> Maurizio Garzoni, *Grammatica e Vocabolario Della Lingua Kurda Composti Dal P. Maurizio Garzoni de'predicatori Ex-Missionario Apostolico* [*Grammar and Vocabulary of the Kurdish Language*] (Nella Stamperia Della Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, 1787), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Bekir Biçer, "Osmanlıların Coğrafya Ders Kitaplarında Kürtler ve Kürdistan" ["Kurds and Kurdistan in Ottoman Geography Textbooks"], *Medeniyet ve Toplum Dergisi* [*Journal of Civilization and Society*] 4, sy. 1 (2020): 54.

*exemptions* from the Ottoman sultans under the name of military letters of *exemption*, saw their interests greatly endangered.<sup>26</sup>

Mahmud II had begun efforts to reestablish central administration in regions governed by the *yurtluk-ocaklık* system and to establish a centralized system. The transfer of revenues from regions that had been managed under the *yurtluk-ocaklık* system for centuries to the treasury and the desire to establish a centralized financial system were met with resistance in many parts of the state, as well as by the landowners who had managed these lands under the *yurtluk-ocaklık* system for years.<sup>27</sup> Thanks to the *yurtluk-ocaklık sancak* system, landowners had not provided soldiers or taxes to the Ottoman Empire for years, except in times of war.<sup>28</sup> The desire to abolish the emirate/mirate system, one of the fundamental determinants of the *yurtluk-ocaklık* system, in the context of centralization meant restricting the autonomy of local power elements and transferring their revenues to the treasury under central control. Work had begun in many provinces in the Balkans and Anatolia, and many places had been brought under control.<sup>29</sup>

The emirates of Baban, Soran, Bahdinan, Cizre-Bohtan, and Hakkâri were not brought under the control of the central authority and continued to exist<sup>30</sup>. The decree enacted by Sultan Abdülmecid, who succeeded Sultan Mahmud II to the Ottoman throne, known as the Tanzimat, contained numerous financial and administrative reforms and was designed to eliminate regional power elements and reorganize the state according to new principles of governance. The owners of *yurtluk* and *ocaklık* ceded a significant portion of their lands to the administrators of the newly established administrative units and were rewarded, *while* others agreed to cede their lands to the treasury in exchange for a monthly stipend in return for the administration of *the villages they controlled through yurtluk and ocaklık*.<sup>31</sup>

State institutions encountered opposition while attempting to implement centralization policies and strengthen their control over the people/society; because local power elements holding authority were disturbed by impositions/threats and did not want to relinquish their entrenched power. In the context of centralization, practices such as reducing the power of local rulers to the minimum level or taking away their authority, subjecting the regions under their control to taxation, and conscripting the people into the army undermined the interests of those

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<sup>26</sup> Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)* [*The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age (1300-1600)*] (Yapı Kredi, 2003), 68.

<sup>27</sup> Halil İnalcık, "Tanzimat'ın Uygulanması ve Sosyal Tepkileri" ["The Implementation of the Tanzimat and Social Reactions"], *Bellekten* 28, sy. 112 (1964): 624; Kudret Emiroğlu, *Kısa Osmanlı Türkiye Tarihi* [*A Brief History of Ottoman Turkey*], 2016, 86.

<sup>28</sup> William Linn Westermann, "Kurdish Independence and Russian Expansion", *Foreign Affairs* 24 (1945): 680.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Quataert, "Tanzimat Döneminde Ekonominin Temel Problemleri" ["Fundamental Economic Problems During the Tanzimat Era"], in *Tanzimat Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 2006, 731.

<sup>30</sup> "...The Baban Emirate spread across the southern borders of the Süleymaniye and Zohap sanjaks; the Soran Emirate covered an area extending northward from there; to the west of Soran was the Bahdinan or Amediye Emirate; and to the north of the Soran Emirate lay the mountainous country of the Hakkâri or Shambo Emirate. Further west of Hakkâri and Bahdinan, the Emirate of Bohtan, known since ancient times as Bohtan and centered on Cizre, was located..." (Celile, 1992, p. 51)

<sup>31</sup> BOA, A. AMD. 85/63, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [*State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*], 1857.

in power.<sup>32</sup> The desire to attach Cizre and its surroundings to Mosul within the framework of the Tanzimat Edict and centralization policies led to objections from the long-time rulers of the region, the Bedirhan Beys ( Han Mahmud, and Bedirhan Bey). This was because centralization meant the arrival of a new army in the region, a new land order, and a new administrative order. Consequently, new measures, deportations, taxes, and compulsory military service would be implemented. Bedirhan Bey, alarmed by these measures, opposed the new administrative order, took action against the Nestorians in the region, and rebelled against the Ottomans, making it necessary to *establish order in the Kurdistan region*.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the collapse of the Soran Emirate in the early 1840s, the weakening of the Baban Emirate, and the loss of the former power of the Hakkâri Emirate had opened up a space for Bedirhan Bey to act freely.<sup>34</sup> Within the framework of *establishing order* in the region, the Ottoman army, under the command of Anatolian Commander Osman Pasha, confronted Bedirhan Bey in 1846. As a result of the campaign, Bedirhan Bey and a significant portion of the Kurdish beys were exiled and removed from the region.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Russia's growing influence in the region from the 19th century onwards and its efforts to maintain this influence by establishing contact with Armenians and Kurds forced the Ottoman Empire to implement new administrative policies in regions with large Kurdish populations. This was because Russia's advance southward and the fact that some tribal leaders were practically begging to become Russian subjects had changed the balance of power in the region.<sup>36</sup>

Following the capture and exile of Bedirhan Bey and other Kurdish beys; it was time to establish order in *Kurdistan, which had been conquered and subjugated* for the implementation of the Tanzimat Edict, the maintenance of public order, and the establishment of central authority.<sup>37</sup> After the elimination of Bedirhan Bey and other mirs, who were seen as one of the biggest obstacles to centralization, it was thought that there were no longer any obstacles to the implementation of the Tanzimat. As far as can be understood from the correspondence between the Sublime Porte and local power elements, it is clear that both sides had high expectations. It was hoped that the traditional structure that had continued in the region for centuries *would come to an end as if by magic and that new values would be easily embraced by all elements*.<sup>38</sup> Throughout Diyarbakir and in some places affiliated with Erzurum, some of the owners of homesteads and estates transferred the lands under their control to the treasury in exchange for a salary, while others accepted positions as administrators in the newly established

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<sup>32</sup> Sabri Ateş, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 65; Karen Barkey, *Eşkiyalar ve Devlet: Osmanlı Tarzı Devlet Merkezileşmesi [Bandits and the State: The Ottoman Style of State Centralization]* (Tarih Vakfı Yurt, 1999), 3.

<sup>33</sup> BOA, İ.MMS. 51/1316, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [*State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*], 1847.

<sup>34</sup> Metin Atmaca, "Politics of Alliance and Rivalry on the Ottoman-Iranian Frontier: The Babans (1500-1851)" (PhD Thesis, Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, 2013), 165.

<sup>35</sup> BOA, İ.MSM. 51/1297, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [*State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*], 1847.

<sup>36</sup> İ. P. Averyanov, *19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İnan Rus Savaşlarında Kürtler [The Kurds in the 19th Century Ottoman-Iranian-Russian Wars]* (Avesta, 2010), 44.

<sup>37</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [*Encl. 5-6*], 1846.

<sup>38</sup> Karademir, "Osmanlı'nın Son Yüzyılında Kürtler: Modernleşme" ["Kurds in the Last Century of the Ottomans: Modernization"], 67.

administrative units. Those who wanted to continue the traditional administrative structure resisted for a while but were unsuccessful, and later, most of them were expelled from their areas of control in the context of centralization policies.

For a long period, the abolition of emirates/mirates at the center of the government's sancak system in the name of centralization led to the emergence of a power struggle both in the region and among Kurdish tribes, creating a significant vacuum (Emiroğlu, 2016, p. 87). Different ideas were put forward on what needed to be done to fill the void and ensure centralization. Among these ideas, the views of Osman Pasha, Commander of the Anatolian Army, who commanded the army during Bedirhan Bey's rebellion and knew the region well, came to the fore. Osman Pasha stated that order could be restored by establishing a special and independent province to ensure security and control in the region. Furthermore, in a letter sent to the Sublime Porte, Osman Pasha reported that central authority could be established by merging the Diyarbekir Province, the Van, Muş, and Hakkâri Sanjaks, and the Cizre, Bohtan, and Mardin Kazas, and appointing a capable individual to govern them.

*...In order to ensure security and establish order in the Kurdistan region by placing it under a special and independent administration and entrusting it to a capable and knowledgeable person, that is, by merging the Diyarbekir Province with the Van, Muş, and Hakkâri sanjaks and the Cizre, Bohtan, and Mardin kazas and making it a province...*<sup>39</sup>

Osman Pasha's proposal to establish a new province was discussed at the Sublime Porte and found to be appropriate, and the Diyarbekir Province, the Van, Muş, and Hakkâri Sanjaks, and the Cizre, Bohtan, and Mardin Kazas were merged to form a new province called *the Kurdistan Province*.<sup>40</sup> With the establishment of the Kurdistan Province in 1847, the term *Kurdistan*, a geographical term used by the Ottoman Empire since its early years of rule in the region, was officially used as the name of a province for the first time within the administrative structure. With this new administrative arrangement, the Ottoman Empire's aim was not so much to recognize Kurdistan as a political geographical entity, but rather to incorporate the region directly into central administration. With the establishment of the province, the Ottoman bureaucracy's view of Kurdistan changed; it ceased to be *a region on the Iranian border* or *an area of local autonomy* and was defined as an area in need of reorganization. This view of the Ottoman bureaucracy necessitated the simultaneous implementation of administrative and military processes, and these military interventions against the Kurdish emirates were carried out not only for security concerns but also to pave the way for the new administrative order. The establishment of the Province of Kurdistan lies at the intersection of these military and administrative processes.

Following the establishment of the Kurdistan Province, the Meclis-i Vâlâ (High Council) awarded the title of *Conqueror of Kurdistan* to the sultan of the time, Abdülmecid, demonstrating the importance the Ottoman Empire attached to the region.<sup>41</sup> In addition to

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<sup>39</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [Encl. 5-6], 1846.

<sup>40</sup> BOA, C. DH, 235/11702, 1852.

<sup>41</sup> Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentleri'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* [Social and Economic Structures of Anatolian Cities During the Tanzimat Period] (TTK, 1997), 194; İbrahim Özcoşar, *Merkezileşme*

granting Sultan Abdülmecid the title of Conqueror of Kurdistan, *the Kurdistan Medal* was awarded to the governors of Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Mosul, Harput, and Sivas, as well as to the soldiers responsible for suppressing Bedirhan Bey's rebellion and to all those who rendered service. Four different medals were prepared, with Sultan Abdülmecid's seal on one side and Orak Castle, where Bedirhan Bey surrendered, and the Ottoman Turkish inscription "*Kurdistan 1263*" (1847 AD) on the other. In addition, shortly after the establishment of the province, one of the steamships of *the Hayriyye Company*, the first joint-stock company of the Ottoman Empire, was named Kurdistan.<sup>42</sup>

### 4.3. Provincial Capital

Following the elimination of most of the local power elements, a decision was made to establish a province. After the decision to establish the province, the question of where the provincial capital would be located came to the fore. Anadolu Army Commander Osman Pasha, who knew the region well and had extensive experience, went to Istanbul to discuss with Babıali officials the location of the provincial capital and other issues related to the region. As a result of the meeting held by Field Marshal Osman Pasha, Serasker Pasha, Fethi Pasha, Reis Pasha, Nazır Efendi, and Müsteşar Bey, it was decided that the town of Harput was suitable to be the provincial capital; however, since the town of Ahlat was close to both Iran and Russia and located *in the heart of Kurdistan*, it was also deemed suitable. This decision was later submitted to the military council, and the military council's decision was awaited.<sup>43</sup>

With the council's decision to establish the Province of Kurdistan, the reform of the province began in line with Osman Pasha's recommendations, and Esad Pasha, the Governor of Mosul, *who* was considered to possess the superior qualities that Osman Pasha particularly emphasized, *namely prudence and integrity*, was appointed as governor.<sup>44</sup> After the establishment of the Kurdistan Province, the question of where the provincial capital should be located was raised again. However, *since the Harput town, which was already the center of the Anatolian Imperial Army, was a suitable place for military garrison... it was decided to discuss the matter in the military council and then seek the approval of the imperial court before proceeding...*<sup>45</sup> the question of where the provincial capital would be located was left for later. A decree sent to the provincial judge in March 1848, with the passage *Teslîmât-ı fâ'ika iblâğıyla nümûde kılınur ki, indicates that the Province of Kurdistan was reorganized and restructured under the auspices of His Majesty the King, and that the government of the aforementioned province-i şer'iyyesi ber-vech-i mevleviyet uhdenize tevcih ve ihsân-ı şâhâne buyurulub ancak eyâlet-i mezkûrenin hâvî olduğu kazâlardan kangısı merkez-i ittihâz olunacağı henüz*

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*Sürecinde Bir Taşra Kenti Mardin (1800-1900) [A Provincial City in the Process of Centralization: Mardin (1800-1900)]*, 2009, 80.

<sup>42</sup> BOA, İ.DH. 227/13629, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı., 1850.

<sup>43</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [Enclosure: 5-6], 1847; Sinan Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Direnişleri, 1817-1867* [Kurds and Kurdish Resistance in Ottoman Archival Documents, 1817-1867], Doz, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [Enclosure: 5-6], 1847.

<sup>45</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [Enclosure: 5-6], 1847.

*kararlařtırılmamıř olduđundan* řeklindeki ifade eyalet merkezinin neresi olacađı konusunun hâlâ kesinleřmediđini göstermektedir.<sup>46</sup>

The Governor of Kurdistan, Esad Pasha, and the new Commander of the Anatolian Army, Mehmet Reřid Pasha, argued that Ahlat was too small and unsuitable for soldiers and government officials, requesting that the provincial capital be moved to Erzurum or Muř. Furthermore, according to Commander Mehmet Reřid Pasha, the structures in Erzurum were suitable for both soldiers and the administration of the province, and he stated that if the Docik region were to be attached to Erzurum and Erzurum to the Province of Kurdistan, the provincial capital issue could be resolved at little expense. In another report written later, Kurdistan Governor Esad Pasha stated that if the provincial capital were to be located outside of Ahlat, the new capital should be a place from which the province could be easily administered and communication could be facilitated. Esad Pasha reported that Muř was among the places that could serve as the provincial capital, noting that Muř was located right in the middle of the region and that the provincial administration and control could be more easily provided from there due to the region's location.<sup>47</sup> In 1851, the Diyarbekir Kaymakamlıđı was abolished and Diyarbekir was made the provincial capital, thus resolving the provincial capital issue.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.4. Appointments to the Province of Kurdistan

The fundamental logic of the Tanzimat policies was to bring the individual into direct contact with the state through centralization. Military service, the tax system, and social and legal responsibilities would be administered after the Tanzimat not through local power elements, tribes, or communities, but directly by officials appointed by the state from the center. In this context, the centralization efforts that began with the Tanzimat Edict resulted in the establishment of councils in the Ottoman provinces, laying the foundations for modern bureaucracy and increasing the number of local decision-making mechanisms.<sup>49</sup> With the approval of Sultan Abdülmecid, the grand assemblies were abolished and replaced by *Provincial Assemblies*,<sup>50</sup> modeled on the French *Conseils Départementaux*, and an assembly was also established in the Province of Kurdistan. The memorandum drafted at the Dar-ı Şurayı Askeriye was sent to the Province of Kurdistan, along with instructions regarding the implementation of the Tanzimat and the procedures for expenses. According to the instructions, there would be two or three clerks in the districts where there were district governors, accompanied by the defterdar, with a maximum of six. *...accompanied by the defterdar, finally, six districts would be assigned to the district governors, and there would be two or three clerks in each district, as needed...*<sup>51</sup> and, *depending on the size of the Kurdistan Province and the*

<sup>46</sup> 217 Numaralı Mardin Şer'ıye Sicili [Sharia Court Records of Mardin, No. 217], Milli Kütüphane, 1847.

<sup>47</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 52/1346 Lef:3,5 [Encl: 3,5], Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1847.

<sup>48</sup> BOA, A.MKT. UM, 66/46, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1850.

<sup>49</sup> Yasemin Avcı, *Deđişim Sürecinde Bir Osmanlı Kenti: Kudüs (1890-1914)* [An Ottoman City in the Process of Change: Jerusalem (1890-1914)] (Phoenix, 2004), 27.

<sup>50</sup> Çadrcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentleri'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* [Social and Economic Structures of Anatolian Cities During the Tanzimat Period], 218.

<sup>51</sup> BOA, C. DH, 239/11907, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1849.

importance of the office, they would receive a generous salary ...<sup>52</sup> appointments had been made.

High-ranking administrators appointed to govern the province were generally selected from among individuals with military backgrounds and close ties to the central bureaucracy. It appears that the primary reason for selecting administrators in this manner was from a security perspective. The Province of Kurdistan was considered a newly conquered region, and *it was essential that the state officials to be appointed be... experienced and proven in every respect...* care was taken to select them from among experienced, reliable, and knowledgeable individuals.<sup>53</sup>

Special importance was also given to the selection of the provincial governor, and it was stated that if *a capable and knowledgeable person* was appointed as governor, it would be possible to ensure central authority.<sup>54</sup> Musul Governor Esad Pasha, who had earned praise for his services during the Bedirhan Bey incident, was appointed governor of the province because he was an experienced individual who knew the region well.<sup>55</sup>

*...His Excellency Esad Pasha, the governor of Mosul, was entrusted with the new province due to his talent, intelligence, integrity, and honesty, as well as his long service in the region, which made him knowledgeable about the country's order and situation, and his status as a former Ottoman vizier...*<sup>56</sup>

The Province of Diyarbekir was also converted into a district, and Defterdar Süleyman Pasha was appointed as the District Governor of Diyarbekir.<sup>57</sup> Ali Efendi Medresesi Müderrisi Kırmırlı Mehmed Efendizade Mevlâna Ahmed Reşid Efendi was appointed to the Mevlevi Order of the Province of Kurdistan.<sup>58</sup>

The tax collection agency that collected state taxes was abolished and replaced by the district directorate established after the Tanzimat.<sup>59</sup> After the establishment of the province, Nurullah Bey was also given the title of Hakkâri Director.<sup>60</sup> He had problems with Esad Pasha, the Governor of the Kurdistan Province, and Field Marshal Mehmet Reşit Pasha wrote reports stating that Nurullah Bey was causing unrest in the region and was not paying attention to tax matters. As a result of these reports, Nurullah Bey was removed from the region.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> BOA, A. İ.MSM, 52/1350, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1847.

<sup>53</sup> BOA, A.MKT. MVL 17/99, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1848; BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [Encl: 5-6].

<sup>54</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310 Lef:5-6 [Encl: 5-6]

<sup>55</sup> BOA, A.MKT. 103/64, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1847.

<sup>56</sup> *Takvim-i Vekâyi* [Official Gazette of the Ottoman Empire], 1847.

<sup>57</sup> 3746 Numaralı Diyarbekir Şer'îye Sicili [Sharia Court Records of Diyarbekir, No. 3746], sy. 69a-1, Milli Kütüphane [National Library of Türkiye], 1848.

<sup>58</sup> 3746 Numaralı Diyarbekir Şer'îye Sicili [Sharia Court Records of Diyarbekir, No. 3746], 69a-691.

<sup>59</sup> Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentleri'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* [Social and Economic Structures of Anatolian Cities During the Tanzimat Period], 240.

<sup>60</sup> BOA, A.MKT, 114/82, Lef: 1 [Encl: 1], Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1848.

<sup>61</sup> BOA, A.MKT, 230/26, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1849; "BOA, İ.MSM, 13/1344", Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 1848.

With the Tanzimat, treasurers were sent to the provinces. In the provincial administrative unit, the treasurers were the third most important and influential figures after the governor and the army commander. The first task of the treasurer in the province to which he was assigned was to work with the registration officers to record the region's sources of income and present them to the governor. The governors would also submit the collection journal, the expenditure ledger, the expense certificates, and the annual accounting summaries to the council for approval and send them to the Ministry of Finance.<sup>62</sup> Tefik Efendi, the experienced treasurer of Erzurum, was promoted to the position of treasurer of the Province of Kurdistan due to the importance of his new role.<sup>63</sup> Considering the size of the province, a Kurdistan mullah who was knowledgeable about Sharia rules, avoided haram, and was pious was appointed for religious affairs.<sup>64</sup> The governor and bureaucrats sent to the Province of Kurdistan were allocated higher salaries than their counterparts in other regions of the state. For example, the Governor of the Province of Kurdistan received a salary of 80,000 kuruş, while the Governor of Mosul received 67,500 kuruş. Furthermore, while the District Governors of Diyarbekir and Cizre received 17,500 kuruş, the Treasurer of Kurdistan received a salary of 20,000 kuruş.<sup>65</sup>

#### **4.5. Changes in the Borders of the Kurdistan Province and the Abolition of the Kurdistan Province**

After the Kurdistan Province was established, its borders changed frequently. This situation shows that the administrative structure of the newly established province was not fully established and that the Ottoman Empire intervened according to developments in the region. In 1849, *with the separation of the Imadiye sanjaks and the Mahmudi District from the Kurdistan and Mosul Provinces...* the Hakkâri Province was established and separated from the Kurdistan Province.<sup>66</sup> Later, Hınıs was attached to the Erzurum Province.<sup>67</sup> In 1852, the borders of the Kurdistan Province were narrowed when Mardin was separated from the Kurdistan Province and attached to the Hakkâri Province. In archival documents after 1867, the Kurdistan Province was replaced by the Diyarbekir Province and the Mamuretü'l Aziz Province. With a reorganization in 1867, the Mamuretü'l Aziz and Kurdistan Provinces were merged, and the Diyarbekir Province was established. With the establishment of the Diyarbekir Province, the Kurdistan Province was officially abolished,<sup>68</sup> however, no document confirming the official abolition of the province can be found in the State Archives. The Kurdistan Province, established after the abolition of the tribal system, was created to fill the administrative vacuum

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<sup>62</sup> Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentleri'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları [Social and Economic Structures of Anatolian Cities During the Tanzimat Period]*, 221, 229.

<sup>63</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310, Lef: 8 [Encl: 8], Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1846.

<sup>64</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 51/1310, Lef: 8 [Encl: 8].

<sup>65</sup> BOA, A, İ.MSM, 52/1350.

<sup>66</sup> BOA, C.DH. 235/11743, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1848.

<sup>67</sup> BOA, MKT. NZD. 61/65, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1854.

<sup>68</sup> BOA, A.MKT. MHM. 387/5, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı [State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye], 1868; *Salnâme-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye [Yearbook of the Sublime Ottoman State]*, Def'a 3, Milli Kütüphane [National Library of Türkiye], 1868.

that emerged after the Kurdish emirs and to connect the region to the center; however, the establishment of the province did not produce a sustainable solution.

## 5. Conclusion

One of the greatest problems faced by the Ottoman Empire from its founding to its collapse was the issue of centralization. Although Ottoman elites took measures in the context of centralization and modernization before the 19th century, they were unsuccessful. By the 19th century, alongside administrative reforms, the relationship between the classical center and the provinces was questioned, problems were redefined, and fundamental solutions were sought in the context of centralization policies. With centralization policies, the Tanzimat Edict was proclaimed in 1839 with the aim of creating a new army, controlling economic resources, and weakening the power of local forces in the provinces. The centralization policies that began with the Tanzimat Edict aimed to fundamentally transform the legal and financial spheres and, most importantly, the provincial administration as part of a process of reform and modernization. In this context, the regions densely populated by Kurds stood out as one of the areas with the most limited central authority. Kurdish emirates, which had been governed in a quasi-autonomous manner for centuries, began to be seen as both an administrative and military problem for Ottoman centralism by the mid-19th century. The administrative vacuum created by the dissolution of these emirates necessitated the establishment of a new administrative structure directly linked to the center, a process that culminated in the creation of the Province of Kurdistan in 1847. The autonomous structure of the Kurds within the Ottoman Empire, which began during the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim and continued until 1847, had lasted for more than three centuries. With the establishment of the province, this autonomous structure, built upon the Kurdish emirates after the Battle of Chaldiran, came to an end. Kurdistan was used for the first time in Ottoman history in an official sense rather than as a geographical term. The Kurdistan Province, which served as a response to the administrative vacuum resulting from the elimination of local power elements through military interventions, abolished the emirate model of governance that had continued for centuries.

The Province of Kurdistan was reflected in Ottoman archival documents as *hutta-i Kürdistan/havâli-i Kürdistan* (the country/region of Kurdistan) and, in the context of modernization, began to be rebuilt in line with the centralist state concept. Looking at the Ottoman archive records regarding the establishment of the Kurdistan Province, it can be seen that this province was established differently from other provinces. It is seen that the emphasis on order, security, and public safety came to the fore. This emphasis shows that the province was primarily designed as a security and control mechanism. Furthermore, compared to other provinces, the Province of Kurdistan was seen as strategically, economically, and socially important to the Ottoman Empire. Strategically, the province's importance lay particularly in its location in a key region for campaigns against Iran. To this end, measures were taken to ensure Ottoman-Iranian border security, and the necessary funds and permits were issued for the repair of some roads near the border, highlighting the province's importance. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire sought to prevent a possible uprising, easily control local power elements (tribes), and bring the tribes together under the province's umbrella. It is clear that the attempt

to unite the tribes under the provincial umbrella was not something the Ottomans could achieve alone. There needed to be a local footing and power that took the state into account. Although it may seem paradoxical, after the province was established, some emirs were given the title of governor. However, after a while, these emirs also attempted to revolt, making it difficult to establish a sustainable administrative structure and demonstrating that the region was not fully ready for the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms. This was because when the Tanzimat Decree was announced, there were no innovative, qualified personnel to explain the content of the Tanzimat to the wider public and to clarify what was to be done. These shortcomings delayed the implementation of the Tanzimat system in the region and led to administrative problems. These developments showed that the centralization process, which intensified in Kurdistan with the Tanzimat, could not be carried out as desired, that there were shortcomings in the implementation and reforms, and that this situation made it difficult for the Ottoman Empire to establish legitimacy in the field. The reason for the irregularities in implementation and reform was that centralization policies did not take sufficient account of the local context and dynamics. As a result, a new reorganization was carried out in 1867, and from that period onwards, the archives refer to the newly established Mamuretü'l Aziz and Diyarbekir Provinces instead of the Kurdistan Province.

#### **Any conflicts of interest or ethical considerations**

This study was conducted in accordance with scientific research and publication ethics. The authors declare no conflicts of interest with any individual or institution. As the research is based on archival documents and literature review, ethics committee approval was not required.

#### **Article type**

This study is derived from a doctoral thesis titled Administrative and Social Structure in Hakkâri in the First Half of the 19th Century (1800-1850, which was accepted by Mardin Artuklu University University in 2022. It is a research article that examines the administrative structure of the Eyalet of Kurdistan, established in 1847, and its strategic role within the centralization policies of the Tanzimat era. The primary objective is to analyze, from a scientific perspective, how the authority vacuum in the region—following the dissolution of local emirates—was filled and the subsequent process of integrating local dynamics into the central bureaucracy.

The article holds original value as it rectifies chronological errors in existing literature and analyzes the administrative evolution of the Kurdistan Eyalet through a micro-historical method based on primary sources. The methodology is built upon qualitative historical analysis; within this framework, primary sources obtained from the Presidency State Archives of the Republic of Türkiye (Ottoman Archives- BOA) and secondary academic literature have been evaluated comparatively. Ultimately, this study demonstrates the pace of Ottoman state-building in peripheral provinces through the case of the Eyalet of Kurdistan, in an evidence-based and objective manner, while taking the region's unique dynamics into account.

### **Confirmation of Originality and Exclusive Submission**

This article is an original work developed from my doctoral dissertation and has not been published previously in any form or language. I hereby declare that this manuscript is being submitted exclusively to your journal and is not currently under consideration for publication by any other journal or media.

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