

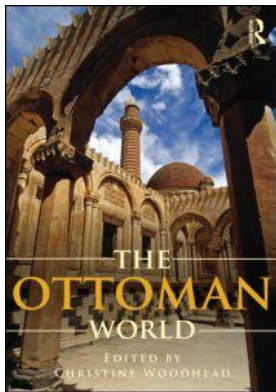
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## **The Ottoman World**

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### **Nomads and Tribes in the Ottoman Empire**

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PART I  
FOUNDATIONS



## CHAPTER ONE

NOMADS AND TRIBES IN THE  
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

*Reşat Kasaba*

## ORIGINS

The territories of the Ottoman empire intersected with what geographers refer to as the ‘sub-Arctic nomadic zone’, which extended from the Mediterranean littoral, through the Anatolian peninsula and the Iranian plateau, on to the mountains of Central Asia. For millennia, tens of thousands of tribes moved constantly across this belt of high mountains and dry steppes and deserts. Starting in the eleventh century, Turkic and Mongolian tribes arrived in Anatolia and eastern Mediterranean lands. They became integrated into the indigenous patterns of circulation and altered forever the social and political make-up and the history of these regions. As they passed through these lands, these tribes interacted with local communities; some melded into local relations and networks and abandoned their journey, while others continued to move. Superimposition of the long-distance migrations onto local structures and movements created a highly fluid social environment throughout this territory. Especially in Anatolia, between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries it became difficult to distinguish between the arriving, staying, or departing tribes, let alone between sedentary and nomadic communities. This was the context within which the Ottoman empire grew to become a world empire after the thirteenth century.

The integration of the goat- and sheep-herding Türkmen communities of the Anatolian peninsula and the camel-raising Bedouin and Arab tribes of North Africa and the Middle East created a fluid and heterogeneous society that defied simple characterization in ethnic, religious or administrative terms. At least initially, the Ottomans had neither the means nor the intention to settle permanently or discipline nomadic tribes. Instead, classifying tribes in their existing state appeared to be a more pragmatic approach. As their empire grew quickly in western Anatolia and the Balkans, the Ottomans continued to balance their interest in strengthening the empire’s administrative structure and its peasant base with the obvious need to define a clear place for nomads within Ottoman rural society. To this end, they developed special laws to monitor the activities of tribes and recorded tribal affairs separately in special documents.<sup>1</sup> Maintaining control over nomadic tribal communities was by no means an easy task. For one thing, the area across which the tribes moved could be quite large. One clan could

spend summers at the source of the Euphrates in the interior of eastern Anatolia and then move south to the Syrian desert for the winter, a distance of over 600 miles.<sup>2</sup> Some of the tribes were huge, with as many as 30,000 to 40,000 individuals and sometimes several hundred thousand sheep and camels.<sup>3</sup> Given that Ottoman law recognized 300 sheep as constituting a herd, and that the state used this as the unit of accounting in assessing the liabilities of tribes, these were indeed wealthy and formidable units.

The Ottomans not only kept the existing patterns of tribal migration intact, but they also encouraged mobility, making this an even larger part of the make-up of Ottoman society. For example, sedentary and nomadic communities were forced by the state to move across long distances, either as a method of punishment or as a way of settling newly conquered areas. It should be noted, however, that forceful relocation of nomadic tribes for punitive or strategic reasons did not automatically entitle them to land, since they were not necessarily encouraged or expected to adopt sedentary farming in their new places.<sup>4</sup> Instead, in line with established practices in their places of origin, these communities were allocated grazing lands, since it was assumed that they would continue their pastoral nomadism in the new regions.

## ADMINISTRATION

In administrative parlance, Ottoman officials referred to tribes as *aşiret*. In order to facilitate governance and taxation, they grouped the tribes in eastern Anatolia, Iraq, Syria, and further east in the Arab provinces as Türkmens, Kurds, Arabs or Bedouin. Those who had moved west of the Kızılırmak River in Anatolia and into the Balkans, and had increasingly engaged in settled agriculture and become semi-nomads (*yarı-göçebe* or *konar-göçer*), were referred to as *yürüks*.<sup>5</sup> Of the main groupings, those in the east were closer to being absolute nomads than their counterparts in the west.

The largest administrative units the Ottomans recognized among the Kurds and Türkmens were *il* and *ulus*.<sup>6</sup> The two largest of these were the *Boz Ulus*, consisting largely but not exclusively of Türkmens, and *Kara Ulus*, consisting largely, but not exclusively, of Kurds.<sup>7</sup> *Ulus* confederations were divided into smaller groups, in descending order, as *boy* (sometimes *taife*), *cemaat* and *kabile*. *Yürüks*, on the other hand, were spun off from Türkmens *kabiles* and were not organized in the larger units of *boy*, *il* or *ulus*. Instead, they were classified and registered as *kabiles* and *cemaats*, mostly on the basis of their tax and other obligations or of the places where they circulated.<sup>8</sup> For the most part, who was included in the *yürük* and Türkmens formations *ulus*, *il*, *boy*, *cemaat* or *kabile* was determined endogenously, with little influence from outside. These groups were given names and were recognized by the Ottoman administration only after they had already taken shape through their own internal dynamics. The tribal units which the Ottomans recognized for the purposes of administering could be very large yet territorially loose. In the sixteenth century, there were more than 100 separate tribes in various sizes registered as part of the *Boz Ulus* confederacy, whose population then is estimated to have been more than 60,000 tents with 2 million sheep. Their seasonal migrations covered an area extending from Mardin in south-eastern Anatolia all the way to Iran and Georgia.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to recognizing the existing groupings and regrouping them under new labels, the Ottoman government appointed high-ranking officers to administer the affairs of tribal communities and to assess and collect their taxes. Being at least partially

mobile, tribes were not subject to the authority of the *sancak beyi* (district governor). Typically, *ulus* units were governed by *voyvodas*, and *cemaats* by *kethüdas*, whereas tribes who were registered into the army were supervised by *seraskers*. Like other administrative units in the empire, each confederation of tribes was also assigned a *kadı* (judge), who served as the direct representative of the central government and also adjudicated in intra- and intertribal matters. As a further indication of the government's willingness to accommodate these communities, these *kadıs* would sometimes accompany the tribes as the latter went through their seasonal cycles of migration.<sup>10</sup> Even though the titles of the officials who were in charge of tribes and those who were responsible for peasant households and villages were identical, there were important variations in the way in which the two sets of administrators were appointed. Perhaps more importantly, while the central organization of the Ottoman administration and its application in sedentary rural areas were highly centralized and hierarchical, there was a strong element of bottom-up initiative and indigenous identification which shaped the nature of Ottoman administration in tribal areas.

Of the indigenous tribes which the Ottomans came to dominate, the Kurdish communities constitute a special category. They were one of the largest ethnically distinct and predominantly Muslim communities whose presence in this part of the world long predated the Ottoman empire. The Ottomans were aware of the local power of this community and their policies contributed to the long-term survival of the Kurds as a distinct people. They used a policy of accommodation sometimes referred to as *istimalet*, which consisted of making generous concessions to win over the Kurds, while helping consolidate the power of local chiefs.<sup>11</sup> This was the same policy that was used towards Christian communities in western Anatolia and the Balkans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup>

In general, Ottomans favoured Sunni Kurds over their Alevi counterparts. Most of the favours and preferential treatment were directed at them. Sunni Kurds were also encouraged to form a buffer against Iran and as an ally in lengthy struggles with the local Shi'i communities (Kurdish and otherwise), some of whom supported the Iranian rulers. Some Kurdish chiefs took advantage of these conditions and used their ties with the Ottoman government to amass fortunes and extensive power in eastern Anatolia. So powerful did some of these chieftains become that they were able to influence Ottoman policies and affect the shape of military campaigns in their areas.<sup>13</sup> Murad IV (1623–40) issued a series of imperial orders in 1632 and 1633 recognizing the power of the Kurdish chiefs, reinforcing the hereditary nature of Kurdish tribal chiefdom, and prohibiting local military commanders and governors from harassing the Kurdish tribes.

Generally, nomadic tribes were exempted from many of the taxes and dues that were levied on most peasant households. Even with the special taxes that were imposed on them, the tax burden on nomads ended up being lighter than the obligations of sedentary farmers. The most commonly imposed tax on all pastoral nomads was *adet-i agnam* (sheep tax), which was determined on the basis of the size and quality of the herds owned by a particular tribe or confederation of tribes. Nomads were also required to pay a series of fees for their grazing lands and pastures, as well as special dues if they harmed or lost their own or other people's animals or slaves. Along with the rest of the peasants, nomads also had to pay marriage tax (*resm-i arus* or *gerdek akçesi*). As was the general practice, most of these taxes were assessed and the obliga-

tion of nomads was determined by taking into consideration whether the payer was well off and also whether he was single, married, living with his parents or living alone.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, nomads were aware of their special status, and they used it in raising complaints against officials who sought to impose additional dues on them. In such complaints they insisted that they were not tax-paying subjects (*reaya*) but had special status because of the specific services they were performing for the sultan.<sup>15</sup> Here, the special status and power of the tribal leaders became particularly important, since they played an important role in negotiating with the government and affecting the outcome of such complaints.

## NOMADS IN OTTOMAN STATE AND SOCIETY

While the Ottoman land system was premised on the existence and preservation of peasant households (*çift-hane*), this same system also preserved and incorporated the large number of nomadic tribes and regulated their interaction with sedentary farmers. In Braudel's words, far from being a residual category that was simply contained, transhumance was 'institutionalized in the Ottoman Empire and was protected by the state with special safeguards, rules, and privileges'.<sup>16</sup> Numerous laws and regulations were issued by Ottoman officials to regulate the migratory routes of nomads and to guarantee their livelihood and safety.<sup>17</sup> Even the laws protecting the rights of peasants against the incursions of nomads and their animals did not leave the nomadic population without any safeguards. In many regions, there were specially designated paths along which the tribes were expected to herd their animals, but the peasants were also required to mark their lands clearly and to build fences around them if these lands were on the migratory routes of a tribe.

Before the eighteenth century, the settlement activities promoted and enforced by the Ottoman government were limited in focus and purpose. Most typically, they were carried out in order to (re)populate newly conquered areas in the Balkans and to enhance security in frontier zones. Even then, tribes were not necessarily required to abandon nomadism entirely. Otherwise, the only other large-scale resettlement carried out before the eighteenth century targeted not the nomads but the peasants who had fled in the face of the *celali* uprisings in the seventeenth century.<sup>18</sup>

Official tolerance towards tribes was rooted in the fact that pastoral nomadism had become integral to the organization of the Ottoman empire in a number of different ways. For one thing, land was relatively plentiful. This meant that in most regions, especially in parts of western Anatolia, there was a shortage of labour, which became particularly pronounced during harvest time. Migrant labour belonging to various nomadic tribes moved over long distances to participate in various harvest activities in the west. Workers coming from northern and eastern Anatolia could be found in and around Bursa and Izmir. They routinely took advantage of the higher wages, which could go up by as much as three times their normal rates during harvest season. Their participation in harvest and other economic activities meant that most of the time these tribes were functioning as transhumant communities in the west. Only part of a tribe would move between the lowlands and the mountain pastures, while the rest became involved in sedentary activities, including farming. Even those who moved were not necessarily cut off from farming completely as they would incorporate it into their seasonal migration. In the course of their migration they would cultivate the

abandoned or unclaimed lands (which could be plenty) that they encountered or work as sharecroppers or seasonal labourers on lands cultivated by peasants in their regions. The existence of these extensive relationships shows that the underlying system of settled agriculture was strong and that there was division of labour between this sector and the migrating groups and individuals.

The interchange between villages and migrants could take even more complex forms. For example, the collective ownership of land, called *musha'*, that prevailed in some of the Arab provinces, in particular in western Syria, did not grant permanent ownership or possession to any single household that was part of this system. Instead, individual parcels were periodically redistributed among the households, including seasonal migrants who might be residing in the village. In this way, *musha'* provided the migrants with another means of entry into local economic networks.<sup>19</sup> This shows that, despite appearances, neither migration in rural areas nor the interaction of nomads with local economy was random. The central government was aware of the systematic nature of these relations and made sure to tax the nomads separately for any settled farming in which they might be participating.

In addition to farming, nomads took part in manufacturing activities, such as carpet weaving, rug making and other textiles.<sup>20</sup> For example, around Jerusalem, both the settled peasants and nomads were engaged in the production of soap in the seventeenth century, and the two competed with each other to obtain raw materials such as alkaline ash, which was a key ingredient.<sup>21</sup> Some of the key export items such as natural dyes and timber were gathered from the interior of Anatolia by nomads and sold to merchants on major trade routes.<sup>22</sup> Often, nomadic tribes were the sole purveyors of animals such as camels, donkeys, mules and horses, which were the main means of transportation for civilian and military purposes. We should note, for example, that nomadic tribes were the sole suppliers of the more than 40,000 camels and as many mules that the Ottoman army required on its campaigns. Their control of the empire's large and small animal stock meant that nomads were indispensable for the operation of regional and imperial networks of trade. Also, the fact that they specialized in raising sheep made transhumant nomads the main suppliers of meat in the empire.

In this context it is important to point out the mutual dependence that characterized the relations between nomads and the settled villagers and townspeople. Just as strongly as the sedentary groups, nomads were dependent on the commercial nexus that linked them to other groups on their paths. They had to have access to regional markets in order to obtain a wide variety of necessities, including food items, construction materials, horseshoes, and even some of their weapons. Such exchanges were a regular part of the economies of various regions of the Ottoman empire.<sup>23</sup>

Nomads also provided some very important services in the integration and organization of the empire on a macro-level. For example, the so-called Arab camel drivers could be found in most provinces of Anatolia, sometimes moving with their animals across a large swathe of territory extending from the Dardanelles to Adana in the south.<sup>24</sup> Nomads facilitated the flow of goods and resources; they made it possible for the Ottoman troops to move quickly across long distances, and they herded, gathered, grew or manufactured valuable goods of consumption and trade. In times of famine and other natural or man-made disasters, the Ottoman government relied on the services of nomadic tribes to move large quantities of grains and other foodstuffs and necessities to disaster regions.<sup>25</sup> Nomads were also employed in state-owned mines,

and in the construction of roads, bridges, forts and castles, as well as in the guarding and protection of such structures.<sup>26</sup>

Nomadic tribes made an equally significant contribution to the military organization and success of the Ottoman empire in the early part of its history. It was by relying on intrinsically mobile groups such as nomads, and unattached single men, that the Ottoman government could mobilize large numbers of troops without threatening the integrity and viability of the peasant economy. In fact, so central were their military activities that, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman government registered many of the *yürük* communities as military companies (*müsellem*) ready to be called to the front in times of war or provide support services in war or peace.<sup>27</sup> In some instances the Ottomans did not even have to channel or harness the movements of local tribes but simply followed them. This was the case with the 10,000 nomads who in the fourteenth century spontaneously moved and settled in the Balkans, where they found willing partners among the semi-nomadic communities of Vlachs and Albanians.<sup>28</sup> On a broader scale and for a longer period, tribal groups were assigned the task of guarding fortresses in the frontiers, bridges and major highways, all of which were crucial in military campaigns as well as in peace time. In the Arab provinces the Bedouin were paid special fees by the government so that they would provide some of these services and, in particular, to keep pilgrimage routes open and secure.<sup>29</sup>

Not surprisingly, the importance and variety of the activities in which nomads were involved and the crucial role the chiefs played in mobilizing their followers made some of these leaders extremely wealthy, powerful and highly autonomous. One historian estimates that 'even the poorest herdsman could be placed in the same category as a peasant cultivating a full *çift* of 60–100 *dönüms* or 15–25 acres of land'. In 1540, two confederations in eastern Anatolia had become so wealthy that they paid 2 million *akçe* in taxes to the central government.<sup>30</sup>

### NOMADISM AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE AGAINST THE STATE

Like all itinerant groups in history, nomadic tribes in the Ottoman empire had the option of using their mobility as a weapon. When they lacked the means to organize a rebellion, they simply abandoned their designated pastures and paths of circulation, left the towns where they were settled, and hid in the mountains or the countryside to avoid the authorities.<sup>31</sup> Alternatively, they would join other unemployed youth or soldiers who had deserted or were discharged from the army, and together they would roam the countryside, raid and rob villagers and merchant caravans. The end of the sixteenth century was one such period of upheaval in the Ottoman empire, which overlaps with a Mediterranean-wide increase in banditry, described by Braudel as 'an explosion of liberation from the Mediterranean mountains'.<sup>32</sup>

The Ottoman response to such actions was typically punitive, involving the forced displacement of the individuals and tribes involved. But even such confrontations did not necessarily imply a categorical opposition to nomadism on the part of the central government, but rather a more focused response to ideological, political and/or foreign pressures. In any event, tribes which had been forced to relocate as punishment did not necessarily stay in the places to which they were sent, but moved back and



forth between their places of origin and their new areas of settlement. For example, in western Anatolia, the region around Saruhan, which was a very important source of emigration to the Balkans from an early period, never completely lost its nomads but continued to provide one of the end points in the back and forth movement of migrants and nomads.<sup>33</sup> Hence, in most instances, in the early part of the empire's history, pressuring nomads had the effect of spreading nomadism into an even larger part of the empire, a process characterized by one author as 'reseeding of nomadism' across the Ottoman territories.<sup>34</sup>

## WAVES OF SEDENTARIZATION

### The eighteenth century

From the late seventeenth century, the Ottoman empire responded to the new world of expanding trade networks and territorial states by initiating a series of measures intended to improve the empire's security. These measures can be interpreted as the first steps towards creating a functionally differentiated state structure that constantly sought to improve its capacity to rule over an unruly and highly mobile society. A key component of this shift in priorities was the growing interest on the part of Ottoman officials to count, register and, ultimately, settle the nomadic and other itinerant groups within the borders of the empire. It was becoming clear that, in the new modern world, the territorial and political uncertainty that came with nomads and migrants was no longer an asset. In fact, such fluidity was fast becoming a liability.

The turning point in the empire's relations with nomadic tribes and other mobile groups came in 1689 during the short grand vezirate of Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa Paşa, when the first set of comprehensive orders to settle nomadic tribes were issued. These were followed in 1691 with another series of directives that aimed to register as many of the nomadic tribes as possible.<sup>35</sup> In addition to monitoring the movements of these communities, the registration drive helped create specially designated companies who were then drafted into the army.<sup>36</sup>

The urgent need to reinforce the army during the war of the Holy League in Hungary (1683–99) was an important factor which informed these particular measures. However, the policy of settling nomads did not end there. The following two centuries of the empire's history witnessed a steady stream of orders and decrees dealing with various problems related to nomadic populations, migrants and refugees and their settlement. These orders and the underlying policy that shaped them became clearer and better focused as time went on.

An important aspect of the new wave of centralization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the qualitative and quantitative expansion in the kind of information the Ottoman government sought. This implied a new approach to rule, and expansion of the powers of the civilian officials.<sup>37</sup> As part of this new development, almost as soon as the settlement decrees began to be issued, a new Office of Settlements (*iskan dairesi*) was established in the palace, and in 1693 all such initiatives were placed under its authority.<sup>38</sup> During the following two centuries, the offices that focused on the settlement of tribes and refugees expanded, and their powers

multiplied. This subtle shift of power towards civilian authorities created a deep sense of unease among the military and led to a series of revolts in the eighteenth century.

Cognizant of established practices and expectations, and being aware of the fact that the very mobility of the tribes gave them an important means of protection – and the possibility of evasion by flight – the central government approached sedentarization cautiously. Rather than relying only on force, officials tried to make the option of settlement and joining the army attractive by offering a wide range of incentives to those tribes who agreed to change their status. Such tribes were exempted from all regular duties (nomadic or sedentary) for several years at a time. In addition, they were granted free seeds and oxen, better access to sources of irrigation, and other encouragements and subventions that were tailored specially for different regions. In return for these privileges the nomads were typically required to abandon their peripatetic lives and assume sedentary farming. They would pay a one-time special tax and desist from attacking or harming villages and the villagers in their new areas of settlement. In some parts of the empire, nomads obtained even broader privileges if they agreed to plant certain crops that were highly valued and/or needed, such as wheat and cotton in central and southern Anatolia. The Ottoman government also offered similar incentives to fugitive peasants who had quit their lands and were roaming the countryside.

Even though such encouragements could be attractive, tribal members resisted registration and sedentarization, since these were usually followed by additional demands for taxes and military service.<sup>39</sup> It was common for them to ignore, deflect, subvert or resist government orders. While it was usually the tribal chiefs who complained and wrote the petitions, it was not uncommon for individual members of a tribe to take the lead in such matters. The most common causes for complaint by the tribes was the distance they would have to travel, the size of the plots given to them, and the limited resources made available. Local officials reviewed such petitions and usually referred them to higher-ranking bureaucrats. Not surprisingly, the desert areas of Rakka in Syria where a large number of nomads were forced to settle formed a particularly strong source of discontent for the tribes that were sent there. Lack of water and limited vegetation were the main factors that the tribal leaders cited in demanding a change in their orders of settlement. Occasionally, tribes mobilized a large number of their members to resist the central government's order, not only by fighting Ottoman forces but also by making their places of settlement inhospitable by burning and destroying the existing fields.<sup>40</sup> Whether tribes would rebel and whether local notables would support the rebellious tribes depended on local conditions. The particular position taken by a tribe did not necessarily stay the same either. In response to changing circumstances, a tribe could switch from being rebellious to being supportive of the government, or vice versa.<sup>41</sup>

In trying to settle the nomadic tribal communities and others, the Ottoman government also clashed with villagers whose interests were threatened by the introduction of new groups in their midst.<sup>42</sup> An important part of this conflict was rooted in the ownership patterns in Ottoman agriculture, which had created several distinct groups with equally strong and competing claims of rights, especially in the more fertile areas of Anatolia and Mesopotamia. In addition to the peasants who had been working the land, these groups included tax farmers, absentee landlords, and members of the sultan's household, all of whom had become *de facto* landlords with the introduction of life-long leases in 1695.<sup>43</sup> In a pattern that would repeat itself many times in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, absentee landlords could agree to government policies of sedentarization and pacification for their own reasons, while the peasants who were the actual cultivators in possession of the land strongly opposed the arrival of refugees and the settlement of nomadic tribes. In fact, most of the complaints of which records have survived, and which provide information about the processes and problems of settling nomads, were filed by villagers. Especially in western Anatolia, the common claim was that the land was already congested and that settling new groups would make life very difficult for people already living there. It was not uncommon for the Ottoman government to heed these complaints and reverse its position.<sup>44</sup>

Even though there were regional successes, overall, the sedentarization policies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not produce a permanently settled society. In fact, by the early nineteenth century the trend had once again turned in the opposite direction, with nomadism and nomadic tribes growing. While exact numbers are impossible to come by, one contemporary account estimates that, on the eve of the mid-nineteenth-century *tanzimat*, there were, just in Adana, as many as 56,955 nomads compared with merely 5,000 settled peasants.<sup>45</sup> Rather than shrinking, some of the tribes were steadily expanding their power as well, some behaving as if they had all but seceded from the empire. This development was caused, in part, by the impossibility of imposing a uniform pattern of settlement across the empire from Europe to Asia.

### The nineteenth century

In the early nineteenth century, external wars and internal disorder made it harder for the central government to carry out its directives for creating a more sedentary empire. In particular, the inability of the Ottomans to fill the vacuum left by the Russians after the 1828–9 war allowed local notables and Kurdish chiefs to expand their power in the east. Some Kurdish tribes quickly gained control of a series of citadels in the border areas of eastern Anatolia, creating a region that was effectively cut off from the rest of the empire. They then used these as bases to attack travellers, traders and peasants.<sup>46</sup> One of these Kurdish chiefs, Badr Khan, eventually controlled the entire region between Diyarbakir and Mosul, becoming so powerful that in the 1820s and the 1830s he issued coins in his own name.<sup>47</sup> Even though they were expanding their power, building palaces, maintaining armed forces, and even establishing dynasties, the Kurdish tribes never abandoned their pastoral nomadism completely. They continued to circulate in and around their regions, and fought with each other in order to gain advantage and keep alive their tribal identities. In this way they could also keep the centre at bay, being always prepared to revert to their nomadic lives if conditions changed. This made it nearly impossible for the Ottoman empire ever completely to subdue and control the Kurdish tribes in the east.

In the period between the abolition of the Janissaries in 1826 and the creation of a new professional army, the Ottoman government carried out a series of campaigns using former soldiers and local irregulars. The purpose of these campaigns was to pacify the border areas that had become all but ungovernable. In particular, the government targeted the local notables of the Black Sea region, rebellious tribes in Libya, Kurdish emirates in northern Iraq, Kurdish families in the east and the south, and the Bedouin who had been pushed north to Syria during the eighteenth-century Wahhabi uprisings and the later campaigns of the Egyptian armies.<sup>48</sup>

Among all the regions and groups with whom the Ottomans had to deal, they were particularly challenged by the situation in the Taurus region in the south. To deal with the large confederation of tribes which all but controlled of a large swathe of territory here, the Ottoman government created a special fighting force called *fırka-i ıslahiyye* ('the army of reform'), consisting of former soldiers and Albanian, Zeybek, Georgian, Circassian and Kurdish fighters who were recruited locally.<sup>49</sup> Even though it was set up as a military operation, the campaign by the *fırka-i ıslahiyye* was carried out as a comprehensive programme of pacification and sedentarization which also created new towns and novel methods of administration; all were designed to strengthen the ties between the centre and these regions.

Staging military campaigns was only one part of the Ottoman response to the growing power of tribes and local families. Over time, these were joined by new laws and new institutions that gave the military and other steps a higher degree of consistency. In a government publication summarizing all laws and regulations passed between 1841 and 1867, it is stated that all the nomadic tribes in Anatolia would henceforth be settled in their winter pastures, and that they too would be included in the imperial censuses. From then on, tribes would be expected to engage in agriculture and pay their taxes accordingly.<sup>50</sup> In 1854, in a further attempt to undermine local centres of power, the government deprived the tribal sheikhs from the official recognition that had been accorded to them, and incorporated them into the administrative hierarchy of provincial administration with titles such as *kaymakam* and *mutasarrıf*.<sup>51</sup>

These regulations concerning nomads and tribes were accompanied by several laws designed to strengthen the overall institutional framework of the empire. One such initiative that aimed both to enhance the power of the central government and to protect settled peasant agriculture was the land code enacted in 1858. While the overall thrust of this law was to undermine the large landholding notables and to undo the harmful effects of the tax-farming system, it was also a clearly and strongly anti-tribal measure. Most significantly, in a direct blow to the foundations of tribal life, the 1858 law replaced communal property and identity with the principle of individual ownership. Individual households could take advantage of this and acquire the lands which they had already been cultivating, by registering with the central government.

The central government also requested reports about the behaviour of tribes following their (re)settlement. If tribes persisted in unruly behaviour, they would be moved further away and punished in new ways. The Kurdish tribe of Hemvend was one community that was the subject of repeated government orders and attention, especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. After causing numerous problems in the region between Baghdad, Mosul and the Iranian border, and after some of their leaders escaped from Yemen where they had been imprisoned, they were divided into groups, and one part was forced to move in 1886 to the Işkodra region of Albania.<sup>52</sup> Those who remained in the area but refused to settle near their places of circulation around Mosul were pushed towards Adana, Ankara, Sivas and Konya.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, specific orders were given for the confiscation and selling of their animals, so that they would have nothing to come back to.<sup>54</sup> Another group of the Hemvends who continued to organize raids between Mosul and Kerkük were ejected and settled in Cyrenica.<sup>55</sup> In the execution of this last order, the central government kept a particularly close watch on the Hemvend as they moved from Mosul to Albania and Libya, by way of Izmir.<sup>56</sup> In 1887, because of the growing cost of moving the Hemvends around

the empire, the government ordered that some of their animals should be sold and the money raised be used to meet some of these expenses.<sup>57</sup>

Other Kurdish confederations that have played prominent roles in the modern history of Iraq were also a source of concern for the Ottomans in the nineteenth century. In 1886, Ismail Paşa, vice-director of the Ottoman Military Inspectorate, was given special powers and the public prosecutor in Mosul was ordered to work with him, so that the Berzenci and Talabanli tribes would be forced to cease attacking each other and the banditry in the region could be brought under control.<sup>58</sup> Several months later, the central government was alerted once again to the ongoing conflict between these two confederations.<sup>59</sup> Two months after this, Ismail Paşa reported that the trial of the leaders of the two confederations was completed. Their weapons were confiscated and they were ordered to abandon their nomadic and bandit ways.<sup>60</sup> In executing these orders, the government continued to use force. According to one estimate, between 1868 and 1890, 20,000 tribal members were killed as they were being pushed to settle across the empire. This gave rise to a very rich folklore of pain and persecution at the hands of the state, and remained a central motif in the culture of these tribes long after they took up sedentary life.<sup>61</sup>

Available data suggest that the number of settlements in tribal areas, and villages that were associated with specific tribes, steadily increased during the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> It seems also that the central government took special care to create as many mixed villages as possible, in order to break the cohesion of tribal solidarities as they took up settled life.<sup>63</sup> As a corollary to this trend, data also show that the nomadic population declined in the Ottoman empire during the same period. In Anatolia, the proportion of this decline is calculated as 26 per cent between 1840 and 1890.<sup>64</sup> In the Arab provinces there was a similar decline. Around the province of Basra, the proportion of nomads declined from 50 to 19 per cent between 1867 and 1905; around Baghdad, the ratio was 23 and 7 per cent respectively.<sup>65</sup> However, as happened in earlier periods, this era of relative settlement would also unravel in a period of internal strife and external warfare in the early decades of the twentieth century. Under such circumstances, the tribes rallied their people and restored some of their nomadic practices, re-creating a widely diverse and fluctuating picture for the Ottoman empire.

## CONCLUSION

The waves of sedentarization policies and their outcome in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries show that there was no linear or definitive transition from nomadic to settled order in the Ottoman empire. More typically, in many parts of the empire we see a cyclical alternation between nomadism and sedentary life, sometimes involving the very same communities. For the most part, these cyclical patterns and transitions were maintained and reinforced by the continuing strength of tribal relations. At least in part, the very policies of sedentarization conceived and implemented by the Ottoman government ended up supporting this fluctuating pattern. For example, the Ottoman state frequently resorted to the old tactic of using some tribes to punish or settle others. A well-known example of such a policy is provided by the constitution and operation of the Hamidiye regiments. Formed in 1892, these regiments were staffed exclusively by Sunni Kurds, who were given a free hand and strong

government backing to pacify Alevi Kurds and Armenian and other non-Muslim minorities in eastern Anatolia. The tribes recruited into the Hamidiye stayed within their own tribes and were led by their chiefs. Their number increased from about forty regiments in 1892 to sixty-three in 1899.<sup>66</sup> Some of these chiefs created local networks of administration that looked like the replicas of the imperial institutions. İbrahim Paşa of the Milan tribe, who was made a Hamidiye commander, became so powerful that he was referred to as the ‘uncrowned king of Kurdistan’. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Hamidiye became very well known for their brutality, raiding the property of rival Kurdish tribes, especially Armenians, and pushing them out of their land.

In most cases state officials had little choice but to rely on tribal leaders to carry out their policies in various localities, and were forced to negotiate with the very elements whose power they were trying to curb. For example, it almost always fell on the tribal chiefs to guarantee that their tribes would stay at their designated places of settlement.<sup>67</sup> If they did not, the chiefs would bear the brunt of punishment. In return, the chiefs were given a higher quality of land and granted privileged access to higher echelons of bureaucracy; they themselves were rewarded with posts, salaries, medals and lump sum payments. The old practice of allowing them to settle in familiar grounds around their winter pastures and also of making provision for the continuation of annual husbandry were some of the other concessions that the central government made in its dealings with tribes. Sometimes the very act of settlement helped reinforce tribal organization and identity, since the tribes now had to deal with new contingencies such as gaining access to water, which could only be achieved as a group and even in cooperation with other tribes.<sup>68</sup> In such instances, instead of being subsumed under the centralizing power of the state, while serving the government, tribal chiefs enhanced their position and became even more powerful and indispensable. The long-term importance of tribal and nomadic activities for the Ottoman empire and the particular policies the Ottoman state followed over the years guaranteed mobility a place in the social organization of the empire. Furthermore, migratory activities survived the transition from empire to nation. As a result, Turkey and other new states in the Middle East during the twentieth century continued to govern large and occasionally restless mobile groups.

## NOTES

- 1 Cook 1972: 59; İslamoğlu-İnan 1994: 25.
- 2 Orhonlu 1987: 12; Planhol 1959: 527.
- 3 Murphey 1984: 192; Planhol 1959: 527; Orhonlu 1987: 21, n. 54.
- 4 İnalçık 1993a: 157.
- 5 Çetintürk 1943; İnalçık 1986.
- 6 Sümer 1949–50: 511.
- 7 İnalçık 1994: 32–7; Van Bruinessen 1988a: 27.
- 8 Çetintürk 1943: 111; İnalçık 1986: 42–3; Sümer 1949–50: 515–16; Emecen 1989: 128.
- 9 Gündüz 1997: 105; Planhol 1959: 527.
- 10 Çetintürk 1943: 114; Orhonlu 1987: 20.
- 11 Van Bruinessen 1992a: 144–5.
- 12 Lowry 2003a: 91.
- 13 Evliya Çelebi 1990: 12–18, 273–90; Sinclair 2003.

- 14 Sümer 1949–50: 518; Orhonlu 1987: 23–5; Çetintürk 1943: 110–11; İnalçık 1993b.  
15 Ahmet Refik 1930a: 36, 37, documents 67, 70.  
16 Braudel 1972: 1, 94.  
17 İnalçık 1994: 37.  
18 On the *celali* uprisings, see chapter 13, by Oktay Özel, in this volume.  
19 Firestone 1981.  
20 İnalçık 1986: 40; Sümer 1949–50: 516.  
21 Ze’evi 1996: 106.  
22 İnalçık 1986: 46; Sümer 1949–50: 516.  
23 Ze’evi 1996: 102; Singer 1994: 113.  
24 İnalçık 1983: 260.  
25 Ahmet Refik 1930b: 78–9; Güçer 1964: 15–16; Orhonlu 1987: 21–2, 27 n. 84.  
26 Ahmet Refik 1930a; İnalçık 1983; Çetintürk 1943.  
27 Gökbilgin 1957.  
28 Barkan 1949–54, Part II: 61, 72; Adanır 1998: 277.  
29 Ze’evi 1996: 98–9.  
30 Murphey 1984: 192, 193.  
31 Barkan 1942: 356.  
32 Braudel 1972: I, 102.  
33 Barkan 1949–54, Part II: 70; Gökçen 1946.  
34 Planhol 1959: 531; cf. İnalçık 1986: 46.  
35 Two crucial sources for the early policies of sedentarization are Ahmet Refik 1930a and Orhonlu 1987. Ahmet Refik’s book is a compilation of orders issued by the central government in order to administer and settle nomadic tribes. Although not a comprehensive list, it is nevertheless a valuable source, containing 244 orders covering the period between 1558 and 1785.  
36 Gökbilgin 1957.  
37 Abou-el-Haj 1991.  
38 Orhonlu 1987: 52–3.  
39 Ahmet Refik 1930a: 35, 37, documents 67, 70.  
40 Orhonlu 1987: 89–90.  
41 Khoury 2006: 143; Masters 2006: 196.  
42 Ahmet Refik 1930a: 104.  
43 On life-long leases, see chapter 27, by Ariel Salzmänn, in this volume.  
44 Orhonlu 1987: 76.  
45 Gould 1973: 27–8.  
46 Fraser 1972: I, 300–1, 318, 404.  
47 Von Möltke 1967: 101–7.  
48 Marufoğlu: 1998: 66.  
49 Cevdet Paşa 1986: 134–6.  
50 In *Kavanin ve nizamat mecmuası*, cited in Marufoğlu 1998: 177.  
51 Marufoğlu 1998: 178.  
52 Ibid.: 170–1.  
53 BOA-MV (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları) 22/50, 24/48 (1304, Za 10).  
54 BOA-MV 22/75 (1304 Za 17).  
55 BOA-MV 27/53 (1305 Re 24).  
56 BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti, Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdare Kalemi 29/37 (1305 C 14); Marufoğlu 1998: 170–1.  
57 BOA-MV 35/51 (1305, Z. 28).  
58 BOA-MV 14/24 (1304, S. 19).  
59 BOA-MV 15/56 (1304, Ra 13).  
60 BOA-MV 22/49 (1304, Za 10).  
61 Gould 1973: 208–9.

- 62 Ibid.: 248–50; Lewis 1987: 36–7, 56–7.  
63 Gould 1973: 181.  
64 Ibid.: xv.  
65 Nakash 1994: 35.  
66 Van Bruinessen 1992a: 186; Klein 2002.  
67 Orhonlu 1987: 50, n. 87.  
68 Nakash 1994: 35–45.