

THE “TANZIMAT STATE” IN THE OTTOMAN IRAQ: TRIBES,
IDEOLOGY/SHIISM AND TAXATION, 1830-1910




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by
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“The “Tanzimat State” in the Ottoman Iraq: Tribes, Ideology/Shiism and Taxation, 1830-1910” a thesis prepared by Erhan Bektaş in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History degree from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University.

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Title: The “Tanzimat State” in the Ottoman Iraq: Tribes, Ideology/Shiism and
Taxation, 1830-1910

This thesis, which handles the periods of the Tanzimat and Abdülhamid II, aims to examine the implementation of the Hamidian reform policies in the Iraqi province of the Ottoman Empire in the context of central government reactions towards the prevalence of Shiism in the nineteenth century. The focal points of this study are how the Shiite identity was perceived by the Ottoman state and the measures of the Ottoman Empire against the spread of Shiism in the Iraqi province. This thesis is based on Ottoman archival documents, and the narratives of contemporary observers and researchers about the Ottoman state policies against the spread of Shiism and the growing penetration of Britain and Iran throughout the Persian Gulf and Iraqi regions. It also examines the relations between the tribes in Iraqi province and the Ottoman central state during the Tanzimat period. At the same time, this study aims to draw a wide-ranging panorama by the examination of the border policies of the Ottoman Empire, preventing the propagation of Shiism through the revival of Sunni educational institutions. Finally, the border policies of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century in Iraq did not result in an achievement as the state desired.

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Başlık: Osmanlı Irak'ında Tanzimat Devleti: Aşiretler, İdeoloji/Şiizm ve Vergilendirme, 1830-1910

Sultan II. Abdülhamit ve Tanzimat dönemlerini ele alan bu tez, 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Irak vilayetinde artan Şii nüfusuna karşı tepki olarak, II. Abdülhamit hükümetinin uyguladığı reform politikalarını göstermeyi amaçlıyor. Bu çalışmanın odak noktaları Osmanlı Devleti'nin Şii kimliğini nasıl algıladığı ve Irak vilayetinde Şiizmin yayılmasına karşı Osmanlı Devleti'nin aldığı önlemlerdir. Bu tez Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri belgelerine ve çağdaş gözlemci ve araştırmacıların 19. yüzyılda Şiizmin yayılmasına karşı Osmanlı Devleti'nin politikalarına ve İngiltere ve İran'ın Irak ve Basra Körfezi üzerinde büyüyen nüfuzu hakkındaki anlatılara dayanmaktadır. Bu çalışma ayrıca Tanzimat döneminde Osmanlı merkezi devletinin Irak vilayetindeki kabileler arasındaki ilişkiyi ele almaktadır. Aynı zamanda, Osmanlı Devleti'nin sınır politikaları ve Irak vilayetindeki artan Şii nüfusuna karşı Sünni eğitim kurumlarını canlandırarak engelleme girişimleri hakkında geniş çaplı bir panorama çizmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ancak 19. yüzyılda, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Irak vilayetindeki bu sınır politikalarının arzu ettiği şekilde neticelenmemiştir.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While there is a large literature of academic study on the governmental politics of the Hamidian era on reshaping the common people of Anatolia and Arabia, the effects of modernization policies on common people in the frontiers of the Empire, especially Iraq, have not received sufficient attention. To contribute to the insufficient studies on Hamidian Iraq and on the larger context of struggles over border areas of the late Empire, this thesis, I will examine the implementation of the Hamidian reform policies in the Iraqi provinces¹ of the Ottoman Empire in the context of central government's reaction towards the widespread of Shias² (*Shi'a*) in Iraq. For this purpose, this study scrutinizes documents that gathered from the Ottoman archives, which reflects the ideology of central government between late 1830s and early 1910s, a period during which Shiism spread in the Ottoman Iraqi provinces.

In my thesis title "The "Tanzimat State" in the Ottoman Iraq: Tribes, Ideology/Shiism and Taxation, 1830-1910", my aim is that within the context of modern state-making projects, the Tanzimat and Hamidian state's programs shared similarities³ about the sedentarization of tribes in Iraq. During the periods of

¹ This study uses the term "Ottoman Iraqi province" to refer roughly to the area that three territories- Mosul, Baghdad and Basra; each administered and controlled independently. In the archival documents, the term "Ottoman Iraqi province" were referred to as "*Hitta-i Iraqiyye*" (the country of Iraq).

² For the description of Shiites, see Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), p. 307. Shiites: "adherents of the minority sect of Islam who believe that Muhammad designated Ali ibn Abi Talib to succeed him as leader of the Muslim community on his death and that subsequent caliphs, or imams, should be descendants of Ali and Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Major subjects are the Imamis, or Twelvers; Ismailis, or Seveners; and Zaydis."

Tanzimat and Hamid, the state agents aimed to subject the nomadic tribes to conscription and taxation in Iraq between the 1830s and 1910s. In this respect, the state strategies could bring the diverse tribes under its authority in the province of Iraq. Therefore, in my thesis, the Tanzimat state includes in Hamidian period as well. Also, looking at the relations between ideology and Shiism, in the Iraqi context, Shiism and Sunnism were tried to impose as the state ideology by the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Therefore, the word of ideology refers to Shiism and Sunnism as the state ideology in Iraq in the nineteenth century.

In this thesis, my main question is to examine how Shiism propagated in Hamidian Iraq; put it differently how the central government improved its governmental technologies, such as modern education, propagation of Sunni ideals in the context of a challenge from its archrival Shiism. The answer to this question lies on dialectic between nature of these new governmental practices and social and political realities of the frontier region, Iraq in particular. In other words, politics for settlement of tribes, education and propaganda for a new ideology, including Sunni sect confronted everyday life of common tribal people in different social layers including religious beliefs. This confrontation was definitely effected preference of these people. For that reason in this thesis, I asked further questions; such as-why the Ottoman Empire attempted to settle the tribes in the Iraqi region, what caused these people to adopt the Shiite identity in Iraq, and lastly which factors encouraged the spread of Shiism in Iraqi region. In the light of these questions, this aims to provide a broader picture of the problem and in order to that I particularly focus on the border

³ For further information about the similarities between the Tanzimat and the Hamidian state policies, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, 1961), p.174. And Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia." *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no.2 (May 1973), p.139.

policies of the Ottoman Empire and its attempt at preventing the propagation of Shia and converting Iraqi Shiites to Sunnis.⁴

The spread of Shiism in Hamidian Iraq has already been studied. However, my thesis offers a more comprehensive study on the historiographical analysis of the Ottoman officials' perspective and uses a methodical approach to explain the effects of modern Hamidian governmental practices. According to the official reports and correspondences, the growth of Shiism stemmed from the incapability of educational Sunni centers and the powerful influences of Iranian ulema (religious clerics) on the Bedouins in Iraq. As a preventive action of Ottoman Empire against the spread of Shiism in Iraqi provinces, the Ottoman Empire tried to enforce the Sunni ulema's authority and increase the efficiency of Sunni educational institutions in Iraq in the nineteenth century. However, this modern politics was restrained by social conditions of Iraqi tribal life. It seems that contrary to official claims, neither education nor politics had a decisive effect on the spread of Shiism. In fact, Ottoman modern policies were challenged by British and Iranian presence. One can argue that the Ottoman Empire failed to reach Iraqi tribes.

My contribution to the literature will be to show, to some extent, the perspectives of the Ottoman Empire on the reasons for the spread of Shiism in the late nineteenth century by referring to Ottoman archival documents. According to the official reports and correspondences, the growth of Shiism stemmed from the lack of educational Sunni centers and the powerful influences of the Iranian ulema on the Bedouins in Iraq. The Ottoman Empire, as a preventive measure against the spread of Shiism in the Iraqi provinces, tried to enforce its authority and increase the efficiency

⁴ For the description of Sunnis, see Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, p. 309. Sunnis: "adherents of the majority sect of Islam who believe that the caliph should be chosen by community consensus, which is thought to be part of the sunna, or custom of the prophet Muhammad."

of the Sunni educational institutions in Iraq in the nineteenth century. However, behind the scenes, the influence of Britain and Iran heightened in the Ottoman Iraq.

In this introduction, I would like to make a literature review about the growth of Shiism in Iraq in the nineteenth century. However, this literature review will not focus on the specific reasons for the spread of Shiism in the nineteenth century, but will explore the clues of historical transformation in the Iraqi region. Then, I will try to present my arguments about the spread of Shiism by referring to the Ottoman archival documents. Last, I will summarize the contents of my thesis chapters.

In the literature, some of the historians studying Iraqi Shiites like, Yitzhak Nakash, Hala Fattah, and Juan Cole explain the question of how the spread of Shiism occurred in Iraq by using Arabian and British archival documents. Their approaches to the triggering factors of the growth of Shiism in Iraq were based on the Britain and Arabian views. On the other hand, historians, such as Gökhan Çetinsaya, Selim Deringil, and Zekeriya Kurşun discuss the rising Shiism in their articles and books by referring to Ottoman archival documents, although they do not completely touch on the question of how the spread of Shiism occurred in Iraq. I compare the data acquired from the Prime Minister's Office of the Ottoman Archives (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Devlet Arşivleri-BOA*) with other studies on the spread of Shiism in Iraq. Also, this question will be pursued considering the internal and external factors, namely the effects of Iran and Britain in Iraq in the nineteenth century by using Ottoman archival documents.

In this field, the important publications about Iraqi Shiites in the nineteenth century by historians Yitzhak Nakash, Juan Cole, and Hala Fattah. They have contributed new perspectives to the literature of Shiism in Iraq relying mostly on the Arab and British archives in their studies. Their other arguments about the spread of

Shiism was that the construction of the Hindiyya Canal, the changing role of the sheikhs, the financial sources of Shiite missionary activities, the role of Wahhabi attacks, and the theological transformation in Shiism.

At this juncture, I will deal with the foremost contributions by historians studying on Iraqi Shiites, specifically about the spread of Shiism in Iraq in the nineteenth century. Looking at their basic arguments, historians like Juan Cole and Yitzhak Nakash mainly consider the reason for the propagation of Shiism as the Ottoman attitudes against the Shiites during the Tanzimat period such as the forcing tribes to settle on fertile lands in the Ottoman Iraqi provinces, taxation, and compulsory military service. The impact of Tanzimat policies will be discussed at length in the second chapter.

Now, other principal factors that will be discussed to facilitate an understanding of the inevitable conversion to Shiism from Sunnism – which were as follows the construction of the Hindiyya Canal in Iraq, the changing role of sheikhs in the tribal order, the financial source of the Shiite missionary activities, the role of Wahhabi attacks against the Iraqi tribes, and the theological transformation of Shiism between the Usuli and Akhbari sects. In the following lines, how these factors were elaborated in the secondary sources;

The Building of the Hindiyya Canal⁵ in Najaf

Taking into account a life of dwellers in the deserts in the southern Iraq, water resources played a major role in the continuation of tribal life in Iraq because of the

⁵ For the purpose of building of Hindiya Canal, see Cengiz Erođlu, *Osmanlı Vilayet Salnamelerinde Bağdat* (Ankara: Global Strateji Enstitüsü, TİKV, 2006), p. 136. “Başmühendis Mösyö Pol Chönderfer’in Raporu: Hindiya Kanalı esasen Fırat suyunun bir kısmını teşkil ederek Necef yönünde akması için, sahillerin yıkılmasıyla genişletmek suretiyle 12-15 metre açılarak inşa edilmiştir.”

severity of the climate and dryness of the plains in the Iraqi region. In this regard, a significant contribution to the growth of Shiism can be found in Juan Cole's book *Sacred Space and Holy War*. For Cole, in 1840s, the construction of the Hindiyya Canal in Najaf populated by Shiites was like a life saver of dwellers living in Najaf and Shiite neighboring cities Kerbela.⁶ The building of Hindiyya canal provided solutions for the irrigation of lands and increased fertile lands in the valley of the Euphrates. In return, the surroundings of Hindiyya canal became the influential causes for preferring of settlement by the tribes because the tribesmen could produce labor-intensive crops such as rice and dates in these fertile lands in Hindiyya.⁷ Also, the majority of people living near the Hindiyya Canal near Najaf were Shiite believers. After the settling of tribes in these regions, accepting of Shiite identity might have been imposed as a local ideology on the tribesmen by native Shiite in the near Hindiyya canal in the nineteenth century.⁸

Yitzhak Nakash shares a similar approach with Cole about the effects of the Hindiyya Canal in the spread of Shiism in Iraq. He pointed out that the increasing economic welfare of Najaf with the opening of Hindiyya was significant factors in choice of settlement for the tribes because the fertile lands in Hindiyya Canal provided also a big opportunity for tribes' desert life with the increasing potential capacity of fertile lands. For this reason, during the Tanzimat era, many nomadic tribes were forced to settle in cultivated areas, or tribal people were directed to these fertile lands due to agricultural production.⁹

⁶ R. I. Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 81.

⁷ Samira Haj, "The Problem of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth Century Iraqi History," *Social History* 16, no.1 (January 1991), p. 49.

⁸ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 32.

Moreover, the construction of the Asafiya Canal from the Euphrates River by the sultan of Awadh Muhammad Ali Shah in India further strengthened the economic position of the Najaf and its surroundings. These new irrigation canals created a large amount of cultivated land in previously desert areas. The bulk of the tribes chose the shrine cities as places of settlement because of economic welfare's position of Najaf and Karbala.¹⁰ Consequently, the growing economic welfare of Najaf city with Hindiyya and Asafiya canals had directly brought about increased interaction between the Bedouins and native Shiite groups. Therefore, the newly settled Bedouins began to become involved in Shiite Islam. The demographic map of Shiite population began to change from the minority to the majority in Iraq.¹¹

The Changing Role of Sheikhs in Tribal Order

As the tribes began to familiarize themselves with sedentary life, farming, and trading the products of their cultivation, it was inevitable that there would be deep changes in their political and cultural structure, to begin with their leadership tradition. As known, each tribe had sheikhs who had esteemed ancestors. The source of their power was based on strict traditions and customs. The sheikhs also served as judges in the legal problems among the tribes and they performed functions similar to heads of state. The decisions of the sheikhs were superior to the other people's decisions in the tribes.¹² Nakash writes that tribal sheikhs had greater potential in directing of their own tribal confederations as well as in the representation of their

⁹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 20.

¹⁰ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 81.

¹¹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 20.

¹² Samuel Baranet Colonel Miles, *The countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1919), p. 421.

tribes. Therefore, the sheikhs forced their Sunni tribesmen to accept the Shiite Islam in Iraq. For example, looking at the tribes of Müntefik in Basra, they converted to Shiism from Sunnism in the nineteenth century after their sheikh did so. Then the entire tribal sections and most of members of this tribe became Shiite followers with the influence of Shiite tribal sheikhs¹³

The Financial Source of Shiite Missionary Activities

As the traditional tribal structure broke down with the settlement process the weakened sheikh figure was replaced with that of local Shiite religious figures as community leaders. There were other factors as well that strengthened the position of the Shiite religious leadership in the region, particularly in the holy cities. In this respect, Juan Cole mentions the financial source of Shiite ulema's missionary activities. The Shiite religious donations were an extremely important motivation for the Shiite shrine cities and the spread of Shiism in Iraq in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thanks to these philanthropic activities, the Shrine cities gave great financial power to the Shiite ulema to provide for their missionary activities. The provision of financial resource to the shrine cities was made by two Shiite states the Awadh (Oudh) in north India and Iran in the nineteenth century.¹⁴

These shrine cities directly or indirectly collected cash income in two ways. First, during the visits to the shrine cities, Iranian and Indian pilgrims gave donations. The Shrine cities in Najaf and Karbala attracted large numbers of pilgrims annually from Indian and Iranian Shiites. Shiite institutions achieved prosperity in this way. According to Cole, every year, from 30,000 to 100,000 pilgrims from Iran

¹³ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 44.

¹⁴ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 90.

and India visited shrine cities of Iraq, or brought the remains of their relatives to bury in these holy places of Najaf and Karbala.¹⁵ During these visitations, the pilgrims donated money to the Shiite medreses (religious schools) and ulema.

Another financial resource of shrine centers and ulema was money from the Shiite rulers of the Awadh government in North India. The treasury of the Awadh government regularly provided considerable funds to the Iranian ulema in Najaf and Karbala for public works and institutions. According to British records, Muhammad Ali Shah contributed to Shiite endowments Rs. 300.00 in 184, and he donated Rs. 30.000 and Rs 250.000 to Iraq for the repair of the canals in Iraq in June 1839. Also, the king of Awadh gave Rs. 26.00 to Karbala for religious purposes in 1841. His son Amjad Ali Shah sent money for the building of a canal, a dam and other projects. He also repaired the sacred Imami tomb of Abbas and the anteroom of Imam Hüseyin's shrine.¹⁶

Moreover, the Iranian state financially supported the shrine cities and the Iranian ulema in Iraq through pilgrimage and donations because of their own interests in the Iraqi region. Pilgrim traffic from Iran to the shrines was combined with trade. In this way, the shrine cities began to serve as desert ports and became centers of wealth as well as theology.¹⁷ In addition to these, the needs of Shiite ulema and students were met by the Iranian state. Iran gave money to Shiite ulema for the traveling into tribal confederations to spread of Shiism.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 94.

¹⁶ R. I. Juan Cole, "Indian Money and the Shrine Cities of Iraq 1786-1850" *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no.4 (Dec. 2006) Routledge, London, pp. 468-470.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

¹⁸ Cristoph Werner, "What is a Mujtahid? Functions and Stratification of Tabrizi Ulema in the Early Qajar Period", *Islamic Area Studies Project of IRCICA* 19 (March 2000), p. 20.

Juan Cole's writes that the Indian endowment transactions assured large amounts of money to the Iranian ulema in Iraq. For example, the Shiite ulema Sayyid Ali Naqi Tabatabai in Karbala collected a great deal of money from the Awadh noblemen in India. Also, the Indian merchants gave the expensive and valuable gifts to the Iranian ulema during the pilgrim traffics. Thanks to these gifts, the Shiite ulema gained their independence from the Ottoman governor of Baghdad. It is important to note that these financial contributions of the Shiite Awadh governors to the Shrine cities and ulema provided legitimacy to the Awadh government. For instance, the Shiite ulema Seyyid Ibrahim Kazvini and Seyyid Hüseyin Nasirabadi referred implicitly to Amjad Ali Shah as the helper of the ulema in their preaching. Therefore, the relationships between Shiite ulema in Iraq and Shiite rulers in North India were based on mutual interest.¹⁹

Apart from Juan Cole, Nakash notes that the income obtained from philanthropy and Shiite pilgrimage was used to finance Shiite proselytizing by way of new Shiite institutions and Shiite students who wanted the shrine cities in Iraq. In return, the increase of economic position of these Shiite educational institutions enabled them able to effectively interact with the newly settled tribes. This economic welfare accelerated the spread of Shiism in these regions.²⁰

In this context, it might have been that the financing of proselytizing activities through Shiite charities and visitations played a key role in the spread of Shiism in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the monetary contributions provided the Shiite ulema with financial independence from the Baghdad government by way of

¹⁹ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 94.

²⁰ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 30.

charities, religious taxes and vakıf revenues. Therefore, the authority of the Iranian ulema was dominant in everyday life.²¹

The Role of the Wahhabi Attacks in the Reinforcement of Shiism

Another source that includes the spread of Shiism and Wahhabi²² pressure in Iraq is Zekeriya Kurşun's study. In this study, Kurşun states that the rise of the Wahhabis began in the nineteenth century as an Islamic reform movement. They began to threaten the Arabian countries such as Oman, Syria, Kuwait, Basra and all of southern Iraq. For example, Wahhabi groups invaded Karbala city in 1801, killing five thousand Shiite people in the time of Muharram mourning ceremony. The Mamluk governor Süleyman Pasha failed against this Wahhabi attacks. The Shiite ulema in Iraq then provided motivation to convert the tribes to Shiism because this caused an authority gap in Iraq because of the loosing of Mamluk control in these areas with the effects of the Wahhabi attacks.²³

Also, the aggressive attitudes of the Wahhabi sect towards the Shiite population in the southern Iraq had a great role in the breaking of the Ottoman domination over the Shiites.²⁴The Ottoman Empire had failed to solve the Wahhabi problem at that century. In a reaction to Wahhabi attacks, the tribes of the Zübeyd,

²¹ Werner, "What is a Mujtahid? Functions and Stratification of Tabrizi Ulama in the Early Qajar Period," p. 1.

²² For the description of Wahhabi, see Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, p. 309. *Wahhabi: "Puritanical Sunni sect which emerged in the Arabian peninsula during the eighteenth century and allied with the Saudis against Ottoman government They opposed all innovations to the Sunna of the prophet Muhammad, including Sufism and using community consensus or logical analogy to reach a legal decision."*

²³ Zekeriya Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti (Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı)* (Türk Tarih Kurumu: Ankara, 1998), p. 33.

²⁴ E. Caesar Farah, *Abdülhamid II and the Muslim World* (Istanbul: ISAR Foundation, 2008), p. XV.

the Hazail, the Şamiyya and the Cezira, the Zafir, the Şammar Carba, and the Rawala rebelled against the Ottoman government in 1814.²⁵

In this context, Nakash discusses in detail how the Wahhabi attacks increased Shiite motivations in the nineteenth century. He writes that the tribal confederations were obliged to protect themselves towards the Wahhabi attacks as a result of the inadequate military might of the Ottoman Empire. The Shiite ulema tried to increase the motivation of the tribes against these attacks in Iraqi regions such as Karbala and Najaf because this situation led to security risk for the shrine cities.²⁶

For the Shiite ulema, the security of the shrine cities had chief importance, since it was essential to ensure regular attendance at the pilgrimage and corpse traffic activity towards the shrine cities. The regular visitations brought money and status to the Persian ulema, thanks to Indian and Iranian pilgrims. Because of that, they attempted to reinforce Shiism to mobilize the tribes and they established a regular army which was composed of Shiite tribes against Wahhabi threat. For example; the tribes of Bani-said, Tay and Anze united and liaised towards Wahhabi attacks. The tribes who integrated to protect itself from Wahhabi pressures also changed their locations in the Iraqi region and some of these tribes moved closer to Najaf, Karbala, Hilla, and Kazimayn. The tribes of Tay and Anze moved to the environs of Baghdad and Mardin because of the Wahhabi pressure.²⁷

The Effects of Theological Transformation in the Reinforcement of Shiism

²⁵ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, pp. 28-29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁷ Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Aşiretlerin İskanı* (İstanbul: Eren Press, 1987), p. 113.

There were other important factors in the spread of Shiism. One of them was that the Shiism underwent big theological transformation in the nineteenth century, particularly the Usuli and Akhbari sects of Shiism in Iraq. However, to understand this theological transformation, it is necessary to spare a few word to explain terms like “Usulis” and “Akbaris.” These were two important schools in the Imamiya Mazhab in the history of Shiism. The traditionalists were called as the Akhbariyya and the rationalists were called the Usuliyya. Before the nineteenth century, the overwhelming Shiite majority followed the traditionalist school’s jurists. The traditionalist schools refrained from the religious rational debates and they devoted their efforts to preserving the traditional learning system of Imams. For them, the Imams were the only source and the Quran could be understood through the Imams in the Akhbari schools and thus, they denied the method of rational argument in the Usuli Shii law. In the later period, the followers of Akhbari were harshly criticized by the Usuli schools because the Usuli School advocated the consensus of the sources of law (*Kuran and Hadis*) and reason (*akl*) in religious matters. Therefore, the superiority of the Shiite understanding of traditionalist school began to fall into decline in the nineteenth century. Later, the Akhbari School, Karbala and Kazımayn and other Shiite learning centers in Iraq were taken over by the Usuli ulema.²⁸

Mazlum Uyar’s study is an important contribution to the Usulis and Ahbaris in Shiite studies, which focus on the theological transformation in the Imami sects. Shiism acquired dynamism thanks to taking over the leadership of Usulism against the Akhbari interpretation of Shiite jurisprudence in the nineteenth century. The doctrines of the Sheikh (Akhbari) schools were based on esoteric and intuitive knowledge. For them, the sole sources of law were the Quran and Hadiths. However,

²⁸ Mazlum Uyar, “İmamiyye Şiasında Ahbarilik,” (Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, PhD Thesis, 1996), p. 330.

the Usuli school jurists did not accept the claims of the Akhbari schools. Usuli school of law had only focused on the importance of rational derivation of law from the divine texts by the Mujtahids (Shiite ulema). In the absence of the Last Imam Mehdi, the Mujtahids only acted for the Last Imam. Mujtahids served as religious scholars and representatives of secular authority of the Shiites. In addition to these, an increase in the significance of the positive sciences in Iran and taking a stand of Akbari School against the rational mind could lead to losing their influences in the Shiite society in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the ulema of the Usuli School had a vital leadership mentality. They claimed that it was possible to find the answers to every religious and social matter through the foremost institute of judicial opinion (*İçtihad Müessesesi*).²⁹

In line with Uyar, Nikki Keddie noted that one of them was that Nadir Shah had placed hundreds of Shiite ulema families and Azeri population in Najaf so as to spread Shiism during the period of the 1722-1763. Najaf became the center of Shiite institutions and jurisprudence by way of the Shiite ulema and Shiite Azeris. Most of the religious Shiite Persian students were also trained and accommodated in the Najaf medreses by the Shiite ulema. The Shiite educational costs were met by rich Persian merchants. Thanks to the Usuli ulema's migration to Najaf, the Usuli ulema in Najaf could constitute their own supremacy over the Shiite followers by benefiting from the authority gap in Najaf.³⁰

Nakash shares a similar approach to that of Keddie about the Shiite ulema's supremacy over the Shiites. He says that to place the Shiite ulema and Azeris on Najaf by Nadir Shah had led to an increase in converted Sunni believers to Shiite

²⁹ Mazlum Uyar, "İmamiyye Şiasında Ahbarilik," pp. 337-339.

³⁰Nikki Keddie, "Religion and Politics in Iran: Shiism from quietism to revolution," (New Heaven: Yale University Press,1983), p.7.

Islam. There were some socio-political reasons in the rising influence of the Usuli schools over the Akhbaris. In this regard, the influence of the Usuli ulema increased among the Shiite believers in Najaf. The new religious interpretations of Usulism brought synergy to the Shiite policy about the spread of Shiism in Iraq. According to these Usuli doctrines, the obedience to the rules of the Iranian ulema were the main essential of Usulism. This obedience to the Iranian ulema was believed as a correct Islamic way by the Usulis.³¹

Until now, the narratives have consisted some foremost of the Iraqi historians' discussions on the triggering factors of the growing Shiism in Iraq. In this part, the theme will focus on the approaches of the Ottoman Empire to the reasons for the spread of Shiism in the nineteenth century by using Ottoman archival documents.

As will be discussed in this study, there were two important reasons for the spread of Shiism in Iraq. One of them was the inability of Sunni education and thus many of the Bedouins remained ignorant.³² The second was the Shiite Iranian ulema living in southern Iraq. The reasons for the growth of Shiism in Iraq stemmed from the backwardness of Bedouins and rural persons and incapability of Sunni educational institutions. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire mostly focused on the revival of Ottoman Sunni educational institutions like Sunni mobile medreses (*seyyâr medrese*) and modern schools for the solution to the spread of Shiism in Iraq.

The inability of Sunni education in Iraq was the biggest problem for the Sunni identity of the Ottoman Empire. The Iranian ulema in Iraq benefited from the lack of a Sunni educational center and contributed to the spread of Shiism. More specifically, the ignorance of Bedouins in Iraq allowed the Iranian ulema to spread

³¹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 15.

³² BOA, Y.PRK. MYD 23/18 1317.12.29 (30 Nisan 1900). "*Halkın din ve diyanete adem-i vukuf*".

Shiism in the region. Therefore, the Ottoman reactions against the growth of Shiism in Iraq were related to the revival of Sunni education by way of the sending of Sunni ulema and religious order (tarikât) sheikhs to Iraq, as well as the opening of new medreses and schools in Iraq.

In this regard, my contribution to the literature will be to show the Sunni education centers as a preventive action of the Ottoman Empire against the spread of Shiism in Iraqi provinces, especially in the nineteenth century by using the Ottoman archival documents. However, the real fear of the Ottoman Empire in the context of the growth of Shiism was the Iranian influence on the Shiite subjects in Iraq because they were considered to be Iranians.³³

Another fear of the Ottoman Empire in Iraq was the growing penetration into Iraq. The Ottoman officials' reports repeatedly referred to Britain influences on the local notables and Iranian ulema in Iraq. The Ottoman reports which were sent to the imperial center from local governor Ahmed Said in Najaf noted that Britain had deployed troops in the Persian Gulf and in the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Britain gradually distributed weapons to the Shiite tribes in southern Iraq. Also, Britain gave money to the Shiite ulema to gain their support in Iraq.³⁴ The Ottoman Empire chose to revive Sunni education as a reaction against the missionary activities of Iranian ulema in Iraqi region. Then, with the policy of Shiite-Sunni unity, the Empire wanted to break the Iranian and British influences over the Iraqi Shiite subjects in the nineteenth century.

The Ottoman Empire opened new medreses and Sunni tekkes in Iraq. Sunni ulema, preachers, and Bektaşî, Nakşibendi sheikhs were appointed to these Sunni

³³ BOA, MF. MKT 1050/7 1326.04.24 (26 Mayıs 1908). "*Şiilik, İranilik gibi telakki edilebilir*".

³⁴ BOA, Y.PRK. UM 41/117 1315.12.23 (15 Mayıs 1898). "*Aşaire peyderpey İngilizler tarafından esliha verilmektedir*".

institutions.³⁵ However, these policies produced little success. Looking at the reasons for the failures of Sunni education, the Ottoman reports noted that the many of the Sunni ulema sent from Süleymaniye medrese in Istanbul which were the highest degree in the Sunni educational system, consisted of ultraconservative and bigoted persons, leading to further increase of the Shiite population. They had two very important tasks in the Sunni institutions in the Iraqi region: to prevent the spread of Shiism and to strengthen the Sunni subjects' belief. However, the method of Sunni education against the growth of Shiism was to teach the Shiite subjects the classic Islamic rules of Sunnism such as Tecvid and İlmihal.³⁶ One can argue that one of the major reasons for the failure of Sunni education was the employment of wrong method against the Shiite subjects by ultraconservative Sunni ulema who graduated from Süleymaniye medrese representing the central state ideology in the Sunni Islam. Looking at the examples, Sunni ulema Said Efendi had not graduated from Süleymaniye Medrese, but he had been successful in their Sunni education methods in Samarra. He possibly understood Sunni Islam by using different methods from the other Sunni bigoted ulema from Süleymaniye. Thanks to him, Shiite subjects were led to conversion to Sunnism from Shiism in the city of Samarra, which was inhabited by a majority of Shiites.³⁷ In looking at the example of Sunni ulema Said Efendi, his approach to religion was different from other Sunni ulema who were sent from Istanbul to Iraq. For the other ulema, the understanding of religion was based on strict interpretations. Thus, they failed to solve the spread of Shiism in Iraq. However, Said Efendi perhaps followed at more humanitarian and moral

³⁵ BOA, Y.EE 9/14. 1327.04.06 (27 Nisan 1909)

³⁶ BOA, Y.PRK. MYD 23/18.

³⁷ BOA, Y.PRK. MYD 23/18.

perspectives in the style of expression of religion in Samarra. He can be considered successful in protecting the Sunni Islam in Iraq.

The present study is divided into four parts. In this study, more particularly, Chapter 1, 2 and 3 comprise of historical and administrative background of the spread of Shiism in Iraq. The extensive archival research part (Chapter 4 and 5) were mainly based on the local, socio-political topics which were related to the spread of Shiism and Hamidian strategy about the unification of Sunni-Shiite sects in Iraq.

Chapter one contains the nineteenth century, which was not only an important turning point in the whole history of Ottoman Iraq, but it also signified the milestone in the intense competition among the states over the Ottoman Iraqi province. Looking at the origins of competitions, there were many factors that contributed to increasing clashes and disputes between the Britain, Iran and Ottoman states. The political and economic conditions in the Ottoman Iraqi region had began to change. As much as imperialist outsiders like Britain, local powers played also key roles in the Iraqi regions. An intense competition among the countries (Britain- the Ottoman Empire and Iran) could potentially evolve into a sectarian tension between the Sunnis and Shiites in the Ottoman Iraqi region. In this context, chapter one discusses the background of interest conflict between the states over the Iraqi and Gulf regions. Britain,-the Ottoman Empire and Iran claimed sovereignty over the Iraqi region because of its strategic importance. Iraq also had important transit trade routes, including Euphrates and Tigris rivers. These routes were used to transport Indian and Iraqi goods to Europe. The British Lunch Company also used the Tigris to reach to the interior agricultural goods in Iraq. For these reasons, every state had distinct economic and political interests in the Iraqi region. The Ottoman state wanted to protect its economic position. Iran had interests in Shiite pilgrim routes and frontier

trade lands in Iraqi region.³⁸ Last, Britain attempted to provide security for their inter-regional trade routes, which were located between India, the Persian Gulf and Iraq.³⁹

Chapter two discusses some of the Shiite tribes' problems with the Ottoman state and the reactions of the tribesmen to the Tanzimat state's tax and settlement policies. These selected Shiite tribes were composed of people who had converted to Shiism from Sunnism in the nineteenth century. Together with settlement, they converted to Shiism because of the Tanzimat's compulsory tax and conscription policies.

In the nineteenth century, tribal confederations in Iraq directly worked to incorporate within the agricultural production system and larger economic system within the Tanzimat context. The Tanzimat policies brought about an increase agricultural production and taxes, but the implementation of Tanzimat policies altered the balance among the tribesmen in the long term. The chapter further examines the reason behind this noticeable sectarian change. My argument is that the conversion of tribesmen to Shiism stemmed from an anti-governmental motive against Tanzimat state policies such as forced settlement and taxpaying. Many of the tribes, like Müntefik, Hazail, and Anze, had big problems with the Ottoman state about settlement and taxes. These tribes were forced to settle to cultivated lands and their taxes were collected by Ottoman military troops. Therefore, the reactions of the tribes against the Tanzimat state policy were an inevitable result in the Ottoman Iraqi province. In the same context, Yitzhak Nakash reached similar results about the reasons of the conversion to Shiism by using Arabian documents. According to him,

³⁸ Fattah, Hala, *The Politics of regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 70.

³⁹ F. Frederic Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Suudi Arabia, and Qatar* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997), p. 20.

the behind of magnitude of the conversion in the nineteenth century can be fully understood only as an unintended result of the new Ottoman policy of tribal settlement.⁴⁰

Chapter three is mainly composed of Ottoman governmental policies towards the spread of Shiite groups. The understanding of the origins of these divisions between Sunni- Shiite sects is complex. However, looking at the Ottoman thoughts about Shiites, Shiism perceived as a superstitious belief. In the Ottoman documents, the Shiites were called rafizis (rejectionist: those who do not accept Ebubekir and Ömer as the Caliphs). In this chapter, I also focus on the historical reasons for the origins of today's conflict in Iraq. The Ottoman central government's comments about the spread of Shiism in Ottoman Iraq saying that Iran attempted to implement a project expanding its influence in the Iraqi region and Iranian Shiite ulema living in Iraq was part of that religious Shiite project. Because of that, the Ottoman Empire decided to take action against the Shiite groups in Iraq and tried to prevent the growth of Shiite sect by way of Sunni educational institutions.

In this regard, all of the Ottoman efforts were as follows; the sending of Sunni imams and Sunni preachers, the establishing of Sunni institutions- medreses, tekkes, religious schools and the appointment Sunni tarikat leaders and Sunni seyyid families to Ottoman Iraqi province. The functions of the Sunni ulema, preachers and Sunni tarikat sheikhs could prevent the growth of Shiism and spread Sunni Islam among the Iraqi persons. It was also brought some prohibitions to the Shiite activities such as the forbidding Muharram ceremonies and marriages between Sunnis-Shiites and the limiting of Shrine city visitations by Iranians. However, these projects of strengthening of Sunni institutions in Ottoman Iraqi province was not perfectly

⁴⁰ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 32.

realized due to the inadequate budget of the central authority and its distance from Iraq to the Ottoman imperial centers.

Chapter fourth explores the Hamidian policies about Shiite-Sunni unity. Abdülhamit II had two main important aims about Shiite-Sunni unity. One of them was to protect the togetherness of all Muslim subjects in the Ottoman Empire against the growing European penetration into Muslim provinces in the nineteenth century. Second, he aimed to solve the Shiite problem in Iraq with peaceful ways together with understanding the inefficiency of Sunni education and preaching policies in the nineteenth century. Within the Shiite-Sunni unity context, efforts were made to revive the image of Ottoman Caliphate in the eyes of Muslim subjects by way of sending gifts to the Shiite tombs (turbes) in the shrine cities (Nacaf-Karbala-Samara), repair of Shiite tombs (like Imam Abbas- Imam Hasan- Imam Ali).

In the idea of Shiite-Sunni unity, Abdülhamit II had never neglected to consult with Muslim intellectuals like Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, Cemaleddin Afgani and Kamil Pasha who had extensive knowledge of Islamic law. Also, the financing of building and repairing of Shiite turbes were mainly supported by Abdülhamid' Privy Purse. However, the project of Shiite-Sunni unity produced little success against increasing the Shiite policy and the growing European penetration. However, Abdülhamid II supported the development of the Rıfaiya tarikat in Iraq in the context of Shiite Sunni unity policy. This policy provided the appearance of new figures who contributed the Shiite-Sunni unity in Iraq in 1920. The poems of Sunni Yusuf al Suveydi, including those about Imam Ali and Karbala martyrs, consolidated the

Shiite-Sunni unity. These two Muslim sects joined the party of Haras al-Istiklal and struggled against Britain.⁴¹



⁴¹ Thomas Eich, *Patterns of the 1920 Rising in Iraq: The Rifaiyya Tariqa and Shiism* (Leiden: Brill Press, 2009), p. 118.

CHAPTER II

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION IN THE PERSIAN GULF REGION

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the socio-economic developments of Iraqi geography in the late nineteenth century as well as the historical and regional narratives of economic practices in Iraq and the Gulf region. In this geography, there were three main political actors, the Ottoman Empire, Britain and Iran; all of which directed their interest to the Iraqi region, which had a growing importance through the marine transportation on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that were used to transport goods between India and Iraq. In this respect, the control of the local economies of Iraq and the building alliances with local merchants in the Gulf regions were the biggest aims of these countries. For that reason, the developments brought economic, religious, and political transformations to Iraq.

In the literature, the Shiite Muslims in the Middle East have been little studied in spite of their political, social, and economic importance. The current studies could not adequately explain the transformation process regarding the Sunni-Shiite problem and the spread of Shiite population in Iraq. In the current literature, the scholars like Selim Deringil and Gökhan Çetinsaya interpret the spread of Shiism in Iraq as the Shiite- Sunni conflict. They focus on the conclusions of the Shiite missionary activities in the nineteenth century. However, the reasons for the increasing Shiite population in Iraq are not adequately explained by them. They just focus on the results of the growth of Shiite groups. On the other hand, Yitzhak Nakash in the book of *The Shiites of Iraq* concentrates on the transformations of the background of the rise of Shiism. In this regard, this study traces the issue of

increasing sectarian divisions in Iraqi province by looking at the economic and religious basis of Iraqi region. Also, it focuses on the analyses of the indications of previous studies which were dealt with historiographers Deringil, Çetinsaya and Nakash about discussions of competition and economic interests of British, Iran and the Ottoman Empire in the Iraqi geography in the nineteenth century.

This part will also include documentation of the transformations in the Iraqi economic structure. Economic factors such as foreign trade and missionary activities with their financial consequences as part of the aspects of Shiism Iraq will be examined. The economic developments which had seriously effect on the ethnic, geographic and religious differentiations in the Gulf region and Iraq deserves particular attention in order to observe the background of Shiite problem in Iraq. In this context, this study primarily aims is to clarify the general panorama and transformations in the background of Shiite problem.

Throughout this part of my dissertation, answers will be sought to the following questions: What were the underlying reasons for the Shiite-Sunni problems in Iraq? What was the extent of the socio-economic influence of Britain in the Iraqi and Gulf regions? What were the financial resources of missionary activities of Shiism, and lastly how did Britain apply expansionist policy in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula?

The Background of Interest Conflict between the States

The existence of the Shiite problem in Iraq in the nineteenth century could be related to the growing importance of the Iraqi economy with the increase of foreign trade and transportation along Iraqi routes through the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris. The

inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869 can be counted among the economic growth in Iraq because the old trade route changed with the establishment of canal and Iraq obtained the new trade roads which were chiefly used by the European powers. Moreover, the inauguration of the Suez Canal brought European money to the Arabian and Persian Gulf regions and Iraq.⁴² The economies of the Persian Gulf countries revived with increasing foreign trade with the use of the steamboats. This suitability of the Gulf region directly affected marine transportation. Furthermore, the transportation of food and raw material strengthened the position of Iraq due to trade routes including Euphrates and Tigris. These rivers had played a dominant role in the expansion of market trade in terms of carrying foods and raw materials. To put it in the words of Salman Hassan:

The nineteenth century secular growth in world, and especially European, income and demand for foodstuffs and raw materials, facilitated by the development of modern transport (especially the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the launching of steam navigation in the Tigris in 1861) widened market for Iraqi produce.⁴³

British Political and Economic Interests in the Gulf Region

Above, it was discussed how in the mid-nineteenth century, a number of new economic developments such as the settlement of tribal confederations and the increasing agricultural production and trade either directly or indirectly impacted regional networks of trade in Iraq.⁴⁴ In this regard, the European statesmen attempted

⁴² Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar*, p. 19.

⁴³ Mohammad Salman Hasan, *The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1864-1964: A Study in the Growth of a Dependent Economy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 348.

⁴⁴ Hala Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 113.

to extend their domain over the regions in order to consolidate their political and economic affiliations by way of negotiating with local actors in the Gulf regions.

The significance of Iraq for the European powers was based on the strategic location of Iraq on the India-European route.⁴⁵ Iraq had the most important transit trade route between southern European countries and Persian Gulf regions which was used by Britain in the nineteenth century. The strategic location of Iraq provided an increase in foreign trade and transit trade in local markets in Iraq and the Gulf region in the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ According to Hassan, with the development of modern transportation, the increase in world demand was very useful for adjusting the economic structure of Iraq to the world economy.⁴⁷ At this point, both being on Iraq's trade roads and having the modern transports were the biggest advantages for becoming an economic attraction center for European powers.

It is important to note that one of the British initial concerns in the Persian Gulf region was to secure dominance over the Indian trade routes that were the most important part of the Britain imperial system. Therefore, Britain was closely interested in the Persian Gulf region to provide the security of the trade routes which were used to reach India. There was also the Ottoman Iraqi province in the north of the Persian Gulf and the threat of Russia's existence at the Persian Gulf and India over Iran and Iraq triggered Britain to control of these Iraqi and Gulf regions⁴⁸ because the Russians could gain important power in the Caucasus and the Caspian

⁴⁵ Tom Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq: Mamluk Pashas, Tribal Shayks and Local Rule between 1882 and 1831* (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004), p. 82.

⁴⁶ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 113.

⁴⁷ Hasan, *The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq, 1864-1964: A Study in the Growth of a Dependent Economy*, p. 358.

⁴⁸ Cevdet Küçük, *İran-İrak Hududunu Belirleyen 1913 Tarihli İstanbul Protokolü* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1981), p. 244.

thanks to the Treaty of Gulistan between Russia and Persia in 1813. The Russians began to approach the frontiers of British India. The threat of a Russian invasion of India led to the revival of British strategic concentration in the Persian Gulf.⁴⁹ Therefore, Britain wanted to extend its control over the local actors (sheikhs) for the protection of Indian trade routes as a first step. Also, through important commercial agreements, Britain attempted to obtain exclusive rights from the Ottoman Empire in order to exploit the local wealth in the nineteenth century. In addition to these, British and Ottoman Empire struggled keenly with each other over the Arab provinces throughout the nineteenth century and they tried to control regional trade in the Gulf and Iraqi region.⁵⁰

British Supremacy in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

In the nineteenth century, foreign trade became the principal monopoly of British ships and British merchants in Iraq. In 1862, the British Shipping Lunch company was established to serve on the Tigris in order to reach interior Iraqi goods and to move their troops from Baghdad to Basra and from there on to Bombay. These developments provided a gradual increase in Iraq's seaborne trade with India. The Iraqi goods of dates, wheat, barley, and horses were transported to India and Europe. These commodities were carried rapidly and efficiently to India using the Shatt al Arab waterway (located in southern Iraq), which was a vital commercial network for the distribution of goods.⁵¹ In this regard, some of the commodities distributed among the countries as follow;

⁴⁹ J. B. Kelly, *Britain and The Persian Gulf 1795-1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 260.

⁵⁰ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 186.

Caravans from the Levant brought gold and silver coin, brassware, Angora shawls, Aleppo piece goods, silks, satins, gold and silver lace, French broadcloth, Venetian jewelry and glassware, cochineal, and tobacco. From Persia came spices, rosewater, dried fruits, old copper, opium and other drugs. From Musqat came slaves and ivory brought from Africa, spices brought from the East Indies and cotton piece goods, Kashmir shawls, sugar, rice, indigio, iron, lead, and tin brought from India. The goods imported from the Levant were nearly all reshipped to Persia, Arabia, Musqat, and India, while the merchandise brought up the Gulf from those places found its way northwards, by river or caravan, to Baghdad and Aleppo.⁵²

The increasing commodity transportation provided the financial development because it was cheaper to carry of goods from cultivable lands to the coast through water transport in Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq. These water trade routes were under the control of new landholding merchants (Shaykhs) because of the privileges given to title-holders. In the changing conditions of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government lost control of commercial alliances in these regions,⁵³ which led to famines in the 1840s and 1850s. These famines led to escalating competitions between the Ottoman Empire and Britain in monopolies of grain trade. For this purpose, control of the local economies of Iraq was one of the biggest aims of British traders. British tried to build alliances with local merchants in Gulf regions, especially in the grain-producing areas. In this respect, the growing influence of British government forced the Ottomans authorities to rethink their vital strategy in the Gulf and Iraqi regions in the 1860s.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 159.

⁵² Kelly, *Britain and The Persian Gulf 1795-1880*, p. 36.

⁵³ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 153.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 150-160.

At the same time, a report which was sent by official Müşir Nusret Pasha from Iraq regarding the British policy in the Persian Gulf countries helps to understand how Britain prevailed in this region. The Report said that British cruised at least twice a week in order to show their strength and to dominate other states in the Persian Gulf regions like Iraq, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The British ships mostly came to Basra from London carrying goods. These trade ships were accompanied by British war ships, which served like British military guard post in the Persian Gulf in order to provide the security of the commercial ships.⁵⁵

The exact limits of Ottoman sovereignty over the Persian Gulf region at this time were ambiguous. The authority gap was so great that even small boats did not fly the Ottoman Empire flags. Therefore, the coasts of the Persian Gulf could be seen as under the control of Britain and on these communities in the Gulf region, the Britain had a means of gaining advantages with British flagged war ships. In this regard, the aim of British policy was to establish both Arabian government in the Arabian Peninsula and the administration of Sudan in Africa together with the invasion of Egypt. These new governments in Arabia and Africa would be mainly under the control of Britain.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the British mercantile encroachment in the Gulf began to have an effect on and a spectacular increase in British shipping and the rise of the Muscat fleet in Oman. Regarding the sea-trade activities between Muhammara in Iraq and India in 1850s, Hala Fattah writes that Muhammara imported Indian goods from Bushire (Abu Shahr in Iran) in boats; among the commodities included were goods such as sugar, tea, ginger, pepper, nutmeg root, indigo, and textiles from the cities of

⁵⁵ BOA, Y.EE, 11/3, p. 5. 1327.12.06 (27 Nisan 1909) *"Mazi ve Müstakbel Irak'ın Ahvaline Dair Layihadır"*

⁵⁶ BOA, Y.EE, 11/3, p. 5. *"İngiltere, Bahr-i Fars sevhilinin halkı üzerinde bir nüfuz kesb eylemiştir."*

Gujarat and Benares. It also imported English manufacture of goods, cotton shirting, chintz, guns, pistols, flints, gunpowder, lead, iron, tin, china, and glassware.⁵⁷

According to the reports, two things that drew the attention of Britain to the coasts of the Persian Gulf were the connection between India and the Persian Gulf and the wide fertile lands which was used in agricultural productions of these Persian regions.⁵⁸

At the same time, Britain invaded the cities of Muhammara and Shatt el Arab and the southern part of Tigris River to control trade routes. Although Britain had received permission from the Ottoman Empire to manage two steamers on the river Euphrates, they usurped part of Tigris up to Baghdad, the Euphrates and the Shat el Arab for their trade because of the lack of Ottoman police stations and local governors in the region. For this reason, The Imperial center did not claim a right over their properties in the Persian Gulf. Subsequently, it appears that Britain claimed these regions as land. The Arabian Peninsula and the coasts of Persian Gulf seemed to be left to Britain.⁵⁹

It is important to note what the reports mentioned about the activities of British consul officers in the coasts of Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. There were two British consuls who were appointed to win the hearts and minds of the Arabs in Baghdad and Mosul. These British consuls were constantly seeking ways to gain the political support of the tribal chiefs in the Gulf region. For example, some British officers declared themselves as Wahhabis in order to have an influence on the Wahhabi tribes. On the other hand, they provided financial assistance to the Persian ulema and poor Shiite people in order to win the Shiites' affections. These two

⁵⁷ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ BOA, Y.EE, 11/3, pp. 7-15.

⁵⁹ BOA, Y.EE, 11/3, pp. 7-15. "*Bahr-i Farsta isbat-ı mülkiyet için elde bir delil ve bürhan yoktur.*"

consul officers made all kinds of sacrifices in order to gain influence over the local powers. Moreover, they consistently traveled throughout the Arabian and Persian regions. They spoke Arab and Persian fluently with the locals. They gave gifts to the Arab sheikhs and they tried to incite sheikhs in the coasts of the Persian Gulf against the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁰ As the result of the British officials' activities, Britain constructed a great network on the coasts of Persian Gulf.

The Economic Development in Iraq

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Iraqi economy was transformed by the growing British and European commercial relations. Also the regional market in Iraq and Gulf region grew with the Suez Canal. In this respect, Iraq held great importance on the Gulf trade routes through which the revenues from the agricultural production and cultivation increased. The total trade of Iraq had reached 70 percent through the British goods in the nineteenth century.⁶¹ Economically, one of the biggest advantages of Iraq was the control of river and sea routes like the Euphrates and Tigris for Britain. These rivers particularly were used to carry trade products coming from the British Indian and the other Gulf regions to Europe by Lunch Company which was one of the branches of East Indian Company in Iraq. To give one example, almost all sheep which were raised in Iraq were sent to Europe.⁶² The Lunch Company transported goods between Iraq and India via riverine ways of Tigris and Shatt al Arab. Due to the importance of economic interest in Iraq, the

⁶⁰ BOA, Y.EE, 11/3, p. 10.

⁶¹ Hasan, *Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1869-1939*, p. 151.

⁶² Bağdat Salnamesi, 1899, "Ağnamın bayağısı hemen hemen umumen Avrupaya götürülür." p. 24.

British attempted to increase their efficiency in the Iraqi provinces and the coasts of Persian Gulf regions.

It is important to note that in the 1850s, Iraq gained significance due to the fact that Iraq became a major supplier of grain to the Persian Gulf region and had supply routes like the Tigris and Euphrates to transport Indian goods to the Gulf region.⁶³ The British Lunch company on the Euphrates carried the British products to the Mediterranean and Anatolia. Also, Britain needed Iraq in the Gulf region in order to transport its products and gain control over regional trade. Therefore, Britain attempted to expand its political and commercial policies in the Persian Gulf in the nineteenth century. This enabled them to impose their influence and control the lands that had access to the Gulf of Oman and, by extension, the Persian Gulf, which culminated in Britain's control over strategic Kuwait in the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶⁴

Also, much of Iraqi region was under the control of tribal leaders and notables especially in the Shiite cities. Therefore, the British wanted to contact with the Shiite notables in Iraq, especially in the southern Iraq cities of Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra because the Atabat had a growing power in the region. This relationship disturbed the central government and the authority of Abdülhamid II.⁶⁵ Despite all attempts of central and local government, the Ottomans failed to eradicate the British influence on Arabia.⁶⁶ Britain succeeded at maintaining control over the Iraqi and Gulf region.

⁶³ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Suudi Arabia, and Qatar*, p. 20.

⁶⁴ E. Caesar Farah, *The Sultans' Yemen: Nineteenth century Challenges to Ottoman Rule*, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. XIV.

⁶⁵ Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, (London: Soas/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2006), p. 120.

Moreover, the location of Iraq assured the foremost opportunity for transmission products to the Mediterranean or Europe by river for Britain.⁶⁷ After all, the Ottoman government had restored its authority in the region so as to protect its economic interest against the European forces. The primary factor of visibility in Iraq was the Tanzimat as a response to the Britain's and other state's economic interests. For Anscombe, one of the purposes of the Tanzimat was to diminish the influence of European powers on the Arab provinces.⁶⁸ The policies of the sedentarization of tribes and the efforts to break the local powers within the framework of the Tanzimat reforms can be seen as policies that aimed to please Arab nomads. Also, the main efforts on the Tanzimat consolidated and expanded the Ottoman supremacy over the Arab provinces in 1870s and reorganized land tenure, production, and revenue because of the financial problems of the Empire.⁶⁹ Thereafter Abdulhamid II contemplated keeping the European states out of the Arab provinces.

Persian Influence on Iraq

The easternmost frontier provinces of the Ottoman in Iraq were the contested regions between the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Together with the Tanzimat reforms, the practices of centralizing and regaining control of the provinces became important consideration in the relations of the Ottoman Empire and Iran. In this frontier region, the Shiite ulema in Iraq became a major player in Iranian politics as a

⁶⁶ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Suudi Arabia, and Qatar*, p. 20.

⁶⁷ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 158.

⁶⁸ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Suudi Arabia, and Qatar*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Fattah, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 142.

countermeasure to the Ottoman government and Britain. They were engaged in missionary activities via the financial assistance of Iranian, the Indian Shiites, and Britain. Moreover, the shrine cities in Iraq had the great advantages over Iranian state in order to control the trade routes thanks to Shiite inhabitants living in southern Iraq. In these regions, Iranian traders created an essential, profitable network for the distribution of goods coming from Shatt al Arab to Basra and Baghdad, and from there to the Persian border towns. Therefore, they had completion with Iraqi and Britain traders in order to control these riverine routes in Iraq and Gulf. At the same time, the pilgrim routes from Iran to Iraq played a key role in increasing of revenues of the Persian merchants. Many pilgrims are also known to have been involved in trade.⁷⁰ In other words, the pilgrimage cities had not only religious practices but also economic activities. For example, Hilla, Basra and Muhammara which were some of the Shrine cities, had large tribal markets and centers of exchanges.

Religious/Ideological Competition in the Gulf Region

In the nineteenth century, religion began to play a significant role in the social, economic and political relations between the states. The beginning of re-interpretation of religion and sects provided the significant potential to consolidate religious identities and movements. In this regard, religion could be used as the vehicles to move large numbers of society and the power of religious identity were re-discovered in order to mobilize and unite the populations. Also, The Muslim world experienced several religious movements in Islamic areas because of the decline of local authorities and the growing social and cultural

⁷⁰Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 70.

differences.⁷¹ Therefore, many of countries competed with each other about their spread of their religious doctrines in the Islamic areas. The United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy were some of countries that managed the greatest missionary activities in the Middle Eastern countries.⁷² For instance, a report which was written in 1900, Müşir Nusret Pasha noted that British missionaries had prepared Arabic books giving knowledge about Christianity. These missionary Arabic books against were hiddenly or obviously delivered to persons living the Gulf region.⁷³ In this regard, the rising sectarianism movements of Wahhabism, Salafism, and Shiism in Islam in Middle Eastern societies could also be evaluated in the context of the religious fundamentalist movements. Therefore, sectarianism also can be seen as a primary creator of the modern political identity.⁷⁴ In this context, the occupation of northwestern Iran by Ottoman Empire were seems to be the denominational movement which based on the religion and sectarianism between Iran and Ottoman Empire.

During the time of Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Both Iran and the Ottoman Empire had struggled with each other to re-establish their hegemonies over the border lands throughout nineteenth century. In this war, the Ottoman Empire occupied northwestern Iran. Ottoman troops cooperated with their co-religionist Sunni Kurds, who occupied Iranian areas under the pretext of creating a buffer zone against Russian expansion. These Ottoman forces occupied Iranian towns of Salmas,

⁷¹ Talib Küçükcan, "Some reflections on the Wahhabiya and the Sanusiya Movements," *The Islamic Quarterly* 37, no. 4(1993), p. 237.

⁷² Sabri Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881," (New York University: PhD Thesis, 2006), p. 320.

⁷³ BOA, Y.EE, 11/3 p. 6-10.

⁷⁴ Ussama Samir Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Chehrik, Somai, Bradost, Tergevar, Megevar, Desht, Baranduz, Deshtbil, Ushnu, Salduz, Lahijan, Serdesht, Alan and Bane. This event was indicative of visibility of Ottoman Sunni power.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Iran followed the similar policy as a counter-attack against Ottoman's frontier lands. Iran attempted to establish Shiite supremacy in the lands which were occupied by the Sunnis.⁷⁶

In the late nineteenth century, without doubt, the Ottoman Empire encountered a Shiite problem in Iraqi region. For instance, the economic developments of regions in terms regional and interregional trades were parallel to political and religious events such as Sunni- Shiite problems in Iraq. There were one or more reasons for the intense rivalry among the states in the second half of the nineteenth century. Evaluating the main factors of the conversion efforts between Sunnis- Shiites could pave the way for a principal inference, it is clear that each state had its distinct interests over the Iraqi region with the effects on economic developments of Iraq. First, the Ottoman authority attempted to protect its economic position by increasing the amount of tax revenues and by conserving the cultivation. Second, Iran tried to protect their Shiite pilgrims' routes, frontier trade and commercial caravans against Iraq. Last, Britain tried to provide security for inter-regional trade routes which were located between India- Persian Gulf and Iraq. These interests of the states led them to share a closer connection with the Iraqi region.

At the same time, the nature of the spread of Shiism should not be disregarded. The social structure of Iraq was predominantly determined by increasing economic welfare and sedentarization in Iraq throughout the nineteenth century. However, the predicament concerning the spread of Shiism in Iraq should not only

⁷⁵ Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881," p. 442.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 379.

be interpreted as the direct result of the changes in the social and economic factors. It is necessary to look at the transformation processes in the whole Gulf and Arabian geography because the improvements in the economic welfare and growth of sectarian divisions in the region were unquestionably related to each other.



CHAPTER III

THE TANZIMAT STATE AND SHIITE TRIBES: SETTLEMENT, TAXATION AND CONSCRIPTION OF SHIITE SUBJECTS (1830-1910)

This chapter is related to the central state's tribal settlement program in the Ottoman Iraqi province within the Tanzimat context.⁷⁷ I will focus on the questions about how the Tanzimat state's policy implemented on the taxation processes of nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes through the settlement way of fertile Iraqi lands, what were problems which resulted from tax collection and the settlement of tribes during the Tanzimat era, and lastly how the Shiite tribes turned into followers of Shiite Islam because of the Tanzimat state policies. This chapter mostly covers the period between 1830-1910 and is primarily based on Ottoman state archival documents as well as published materials.

First, in this chapter, I would like to analyze some of the Shiite tribes' problems with the Ottoman state and the reactions of the tribesmen to the Tanzimat state's tax and land policies in Iraq in the nineteenth century. By doing so, I will look at whether the Tanzimat policies led to the spread of Shiism in Iraq or not. Therefore, the tribes that will be dealt in this study are mainly composed of Shiite tribes having with problems with the Tanzimat state who converted to Shiism in the nineteenth century.

In the present literature, the historians studying on Iraqi Shiites frequently pointed out that tribesmen had mainly problems with Tanzimat state policies in Iraq,

⁷⁷ For the definition of Tanzimat, see Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, p. 308. *Tanzimat: "Literally, reorganizations, the programme of westernizing political reforms, including abolition of Jizya, land tenure reform, and moves towards consultative government, enacted by the central Ottoman authority between 1839 and 1876."*

especially in the matters of settlement, taxation and compulsory military conscription. For that reason, I will focus on the Tanzimat state's policies about tribal settlement and taxation programs and the increasing reactions of tribes against the Ottoman state by looking at the relations between the Ottoman state during the reform period of the Shiite tribes such as the tribes of Beni Lam, Anze, Hazail and Müntefik.

Engin Akarlı devotes particular attention to the Tanzimat policies of the Ottoman Empire. He notes that the Ottoman Empire had three ways to solve the troubled economic progress in the provinces in the period of Tanzimat. These were to renovate financial solvency, to enhance prestige and authority of state, and to construct effective governmental system in the whole Ottoman provinces. However, these new Tanzimat policies led to unexpected developments.⁷⁸ In this respect, Soli Shahvar says that the Ottoman Empire decided to implement an effective centralization in which real decision-making would to be passed from the provinces to Istanbul. This demonstrates a shifting paradigm of provincial administration and a changing of regional economic context. In this way, the Ottoman administration put into practice three significant policies in order to succeed at the effective centralization mechanism in Ottoman Iraq. The first one was the construction of ships, roads, railroads, and telegraphs in the Arabian provinces to reach the all provinces efficiently. The aim of this policy was to provide an efficient administration system between the central and local governments and strengthen central authority.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Engin Deniz Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 26, no. 3(2006), pp. 356-357.

⁷⁹ Soli Shahvar, "Tribes and Telegraphs in Lower Iraq: The Muntefiq and the Baghdad-Basrah Telegraph Line of 1863-65," *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1(2003), London: Routledge, p. 89.

In this respect, Hala Fattah notes that one of the primary purposes of the implementation of Tanzimat edicts in the Arabian and Iraqi regions was to collect provincial revenues to send the imperial center as well as the establishment of a stronger administration and military control in Iraq. Therefore, with the centralization policy, the Ottoman administration attempted to take control in the Arabian region eliminating provincial elites. In other words, the imperial government tended to keep the local man-powers and regional elites under the control or to eliminate their influences from the local administration system in the Arabian region because the Ottoman central power desired directly to collect regular taxes and a fraction of rents. Because of that, they more efficient state machinery system necessitated the collection of state revenues.⁸⁰

Yitzhak Nakash discusses the tribal settlement policy in Iraq at which the Ottoman Empire aimed with this settlement policy to increase agricultural production and tax revenue because the state was obliged to sustain the growing involvement in the world capitalist economy. The other important aim of the imperial settlement politics in Iraq was to solve the tribal problem in Iraqi region in order to control resources and river routes. By doing so, the Ottoman Empire might to take control the river routes Euphrates and Tigris and to collect customs duties from the merchants and shipping on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in the nineteenth century.⁸¹

Lastly, Frederic Anscombe pointed out that the foremost reasons for the implementation of centralization policies were not only the consolidation of provincial administration but also the effective counteraction towards the British threat in Iraq. Britain's position in the Iraq scared the Ottoman government because

⁸⁰ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 96.

⁸¹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 32.

British influence increased day by day. The importance of Iraq for Britain stemmed from its strategic location on the India-Europe route. Therefore, Ottomans mainly concentrated on reform programs in Iraq in the nineteenth century. Also, the Ottoman Empire wanted to protect the economic interest over the Iraqi region against the European expansionism.⁸²

The Tanzimat State towards the Shiite Population

According to Juan Cole, the aim of the Tanzimat decrees involved equality, pluralism and cultural variability policies the protection of cultural diversity and cultural rights- for all Ottoman subjects. Thus, the Tanzimat state policy towards the growth of the Shiite population seems to have been contrary to the Tanzimat decrees because the growth of Shiism threatened national unity and security because of increase rebellions. Therefore, the rule of cultural diversity of the Ottoman Tanzimat state was not applied to Shiite population. The Tanzimat state policy did not promise the improvement in the status of Shiite the subject. The Ottoman government also forced them to accept more direct rule in that period.⁸³

Together with the centralization policy, the Ottomans once again began to control Arabian geography in order to protect their regional position. Britain was seen as the foremost threat due to the growth of its economic and political influence in Arabia, especially in the Persian Gulf regions. Therefore, Ottoman authority promoted a centralization policy against Britain and other dangerous groups on the region. In the process of Tanzimat centralization policy, Baghdad governor of Midhad Pasha tried to control in order to break the influences of Britain and other

⁸² Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar*, p. 6c.

⁸³ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 29.

rivalry states over the Iraqi region. Through settlement of tribes and Land Tenure, Mithad Pasha could control Iraqi frontier against Britain and Iran through centralization policies. The Ottoman government's plan in Iraq was to control the tribes and increase agricultural production and tax revenue to sustain the Empire's growing involvement in the world capitalist economy.⁸⁴ Therefore, governors like Midhad Pasha who was a promoter of Tanzimat in the Arab side preferred continuing, dynamic Ottoman military and civil presence in the coasts of Persian Gulf, from Basra to Qatar in order to protect these regions from future expansion. They wanted full incorporation into the Ottoman Empire for the security of Arabian region from foreign encroachment.⁸⁵ Also, Midhad Pasha attached high importance to military presence in the Persian Gulf and Arabian region, because the British supremacy in Iraq and Gulf region did not limit only commercial influence but also military power.⁸⁶

At the same time, the Ottoman Empire tried to regain and re-establish its control over semi-autonomous provinces through its centralization policy. According to the Tanzimat, the imperial centre ordered a statistical survey of the tribes and their taxable properties in the 1850s (*Fırka-i Islahiye*) because one of the goals of Tanzimat was to succeed in gathering regular taxes from the inhabitants of provinces. Therefore, the central authority intended to establish a settled lifestyle by restricting tribal mobility between the mountain pastures and their winter base. The other principal purpose of the centralization policy in the provinces was the settlement of the tribal confederations in order to incorporate them into the modern state

⁸⁴ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Suudi Arabia, and Qatar*, pp. 25-26.

⁸⁶ Fattah, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 186.

mechanism.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the reason for the settlement of the tribal confederations was to integrate the nomads into the local production and cultivation.

It is important to note that during the implementation of the centralization policy, Ottoman officials attempted to take control the religious visitations to the shrine cities. When Mahmud II ascended the throne in 1808, the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala were under the control of the Shiite ulema. Ottoman governor Ali Rıza Pasha (1831-1842) established a permanent standing army in the southern regions with the aim of controlling these pilgrimage roads and the Iranian ulema. However, these repressive policies against the Iranian ulema resulted in periodic outbreaks of rebellions among the Shiite population because this prevented the management of the profits coming from the shrine endowments and pilgrimage traffic by the Shiite ulema. As a result, the Shiite population in the shrine cities could not resist the Ottoman military forces and the Shiite rebellions in the region were suppressed by the central government in 1843.⁸⁸ Also, the use of the financial advantages of Najaf and Karbala were prevented by the Ottomans and Ottoman administration began to demand money from each pilgrim and it reestablished its control over financial income from the Shiite visitations of the Holy Shrines.⁸⁹

At the same time, in the mid-nineteenth century, the implementation of the Tanzimat policy affected the various social groups in the form of increased military presence. For example, it caused resistance and rebellion in Iraq especially in the autonomous Shiite lands.⁹⁰ Notably, as a matter of centralization policy in 1843, the

⁸⁷ Ebubekir Ceylan, "Carrot or Stick? Ottoman Tribal Policy in Baghdad, 1831-1876," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009), p. 182.

⁸⁸ M. Karen Kern, *Imperial Citizen: Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces of Iraq* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 64.

⁸⁹ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 143.

Ottomans attempted to set up garrison in Karbala in order to increase control over these Shiite areas and to collect taxes regularly. However, the Shiite population refused to accept the garrison and rebelled against the Sunni Ottoman authority. On this occasion, Ottoman governor Necib Pasha invaded Karbala and killed 5000 Shiites. The Ottoman government punished the survivors severely and destroyed their Shiite institutions.

As symbols of Sunni dominion, Sunni governor, judges, and preachers were appointed to Karbala. The Ottoman sultan's name began to be mentioned in the Friday prayers in Karbala. Taxes and tributes were collected from these regions as a result of these interventions, the Shiite population in Iraq mainly lost their autonomy in the implementation of Tanzimat process.⁹¹ Moreover, the invasion of Karbala by the Ottoman administration led to two unfavorable consequences. First was that the most of the Shiite ulema migrated to Najaf from Karbala. As a result, the city of Najaf became a prominent Shiite educational center and the Najaf played a key role in the spread of Shiite Islam. The second negative effect was that the Iranian state started to take action to protect their subjects living in Karbala. Iran gave a favorable position to the Shiite ulema and population in Najaf. For instance, the custodian of the shrine cities and major of Najaf began to be held by Iranian subjects.⁹²

What's more, Iraqi province had limited the cultivated areas in the 1860s. These areas were probably under the 150,000 dönüms because of the absence of adequate irrigation system, low level of productivity, and low participation rate of

⁹⁰ Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," p. 55.

⁹¹ Fattah, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 150.

⁹² Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 26.

agricultural production.⁹³The building of the Hindiyya, Hamidiyya, and Asifiyya Canals provided solutions for irrigation of lands and increased the percentage of fertile lands in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates. Also, the development of irrigation system through canals resulted in the growth of agricultural output, exports and governmental revenues from agriculture together with the expansion of foreign demand for Iraqi products.⁹⁴

It is also important to note that much of the state lands were used as the private property of high officials, leading sheikhs, and the leaders of tribes during the reign of Baghdad governor Midhad Pasha. Then, all of the registration system was politicized.⁹⁵ Moreover, the biggest amendment of tribal communities had detrimentally affected the Ottoman administration because tribes that resisted to the local governors about the settlement policy were suppressed in Iraq.⁹⁶ As a result of this policy, the Ottoman Empire never fully carried out the settlement of tribal confederations in this region. This policy could produce little success. Also, the forced settlement of tribes led to hostility towards the Sunni Ottoman authority and acceleration the evolution of the tribal society in Iraq in the nineteenth century.⁹⁷

According to Nakash, following their settlement, the tribes contacted with Shiites in Najaf and Karbala. The Shiite population in these areas played a significant role in the construction of the Shiite identity. In this regard, there could be gathered from tribal figures and narratives connected to folk stories of Shiites in Iraq as the

⁹³ Hasan, *The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq, 1864-1964: A Study in the Growth of a Dependent Economy*, p. 349.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁹⁵ Fattah, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 147.

⁹⁶ Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," pp. 50-58.

⁹⁷ I.Matti Moosa, "The Land Policy of Midhad Pasha in Iraq, 1869-1872," *Islamic Quarterly* 12, no. 3(1968), London, p. 158.

Müntefik, the Bani Hukayyim, and the Al Fatla.⁹⁸ The superiority of Bedouins over the villagers and townspeople was a frequent topic in the narratives and folks of Shiite groups. Moreover, the moral values of Shiism and Bedouins like courage and honor were used to encourage the Bedouins to draw closed to Shiism. They attempted to identify the senses of Bedouins' courage and honor with the heroic characters of Hussein and Ali.⁹⁹

Another important reason for the growth of Shiite supremacy in Iraq was the semi-autonomous position of Najaf and Karbala. They were being different from Baghdad and Basra, where governmental control was more effective. Namely, the inability to control these cities by the Ottoman Sunni officials efficiently provided the Shiite ulema with an easy Shiite propagation in the Najaf and Karbala and its surrounding areas. The Shiite ulema in Iraq freely traveled among the nomadic and pastoral tribes in these autonomous cities in order to spread the Shiism.

It is important to note that the tribal settlement policy in Iraq efficiently led to the demographic changes in the late nineteenth century. The estimated population of Iraq in 1850 was 1,290,000. The percent of rural population was 41 and only 24 percent was urban.¹⁰⁰ However, this ratio in central Iraq changed from 23 and 39 percent to 7 and 78 percent in 1905. These numbers could prove that Iraqi population had a quick demographic transformation. This demographic change in the population of urban and rural areas between 1850-1905 presented some evidences about the evaluation of the magnitude of conversion to Shiism among the settled tribes in the

⁹⁸ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 175.

⁹⁹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁰ R. I. Juan Cole and Moojan Momen, "Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq: The Rebellion of Ottoman Karbala 1824-1843," *The Past and Present Society*, no.112 (August 1986), p. 113.

late nineteenth century. This period between 1850-1905 coincided with the intensification of spread of Shiism in Iraq during the late 1890s and early 1900s.¹⁰¹

Undoubtedly, the tribal settlement policy made a major contribution to the rise of the urban population in these periods. In this context, some of historians claim that there were direct relationships between the settlement policies and the growth of Shiite population because many of tribes were forced to settle in the fertile lands which were close the sacred Shiite areas like Najaf, Karbala and Samara, populated largely by Shiite population. This could have increased the Shiite population due to the intense interaction between new settled tribesmen and Shiite population in the urban areas during the nineteenth century.¹⁰² In other words, having settled heavily Bedouins to fertile Shiite lands through the developments of irrigation system for agriculture, Shiite population was increased in the nineteenth century. In this respect, the words of prominent a Sunni alim Ibrahim al haydari helped to strengthen these arguments. He said about tribes which had recently been converted to Shiism in 1867 that these newly converted tribes of the Müntefik, the Zübeyd, the Dulaym, the Albu Muhammad, the Hazail, the Bani Lam, the Tabia, and the Kab were among the newly settled on the fertile Shiite lands in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰³ In addition to these, the number of the Shiite population in Iraq had reached 546,000 and the Sunni element was only 175,000 in 1900s.¹⁰⁴ Compared with the previous numbers the ratio of the Sunni and Shiite element in Iraq, Sunni population had become minority from the majority.

¹⁰¹ Selim Deringil, "The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," *Die Welt des Islami New Series* 30, no. 4 (1990), pp. 49-50.

¹⁰² Eich, *Patterns of the 1920 Rising in Iraq: The Rifa'iyya Tariqa and Shiism*, p. 117.

¹⁰³ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁴ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 175.

Ottoman Settlement Policy in Iraq: Taxation and Conscription

It is important to stress that during the Tanzimat period, the Ottoman Empire launched a comprehensive reform to achieve tribal settlement and control of the tribes in Iraq. Some of these reforms were the construction of irrigation canals, creating new arable lands, public works and land tenure. Thanks to these policies, tribal confederations were directly tried to incorporate within agricultural production system and the larger economic groups in the nineteenth century. In this respect, the attempts of Ottoman Empire to encourage Iraqi tribal settlements could provide a considerable picture in the examining of state-tribe relations within the Tanzimat context.

Notably, the foremost reason for the implementation of the Tanzimat in Ottoman Iraq was that the Ottoman Empire was exposed the significant pressure from the European nations especially Great Britain, France and Russia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Ottoman administration had struggled with these European states through the creating a new administration, recruitment and collection of taxes from its provinces.¹⁰⁵ In response to this increasing involvement of the European countries, the Ottoman Empire tried to establish direct rule in Iraq during the Tanzimat period; however, the tribal life in Iraq was the potential threat for the ruling of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, throughout the nineteenth century, the Ottoman administrators tried to carry out settlement of nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes in Iraq. The real aims of the Ottoman state' attempts

¹⁰⁵ Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the Armenian Question during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876-1908" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012), p. 770.

towards the settlement of tribes were to establish a more orderly tax collection and regular system of military conscription.¹⁰⁶

Why did the Ottoman Empire attempt to settle the tribes in Iraq? During the Ottoman period, tribes living outside the existing legal and administrative structures were economically independent and politically unpredictable. Namely, they consisted of unusual legal, economic and political groups and different from regions which were directly controlled by central authority. Their economic production was based on an exchange between the tribal confederations and towns. They produced grain, meat, animal skins, and dates in the Iraqi lands. However, they did not produce their own goods for regional markets and trading centers.¹⁰⁷ By the second half of the nineteenth century, a bankrupt Ottoman Empire produced new policies in order to ensure resources the central treasury. Also, securing resources for the treasury through taxation of agricultural production and foreign exchange was one goal of getting the disorganized tribes under administrative control was a different goal. Therefore, they firstly attempted to sedentarize the tribal confederations in Iraq because keeping them under control was very problematic due to their region's geographic isolation.¹⁰⁸ Then, many of the tribes were forced to abandon their lands, and they were settled into the fertile lands such as the valley of Tigris, Euphrates, and Hindiyya Canal in Najaf, in order to integrate the tribes with the economic system of Ottoman Empire. It is important to stress in this context, these settlement policies firstly were implemented through the oppressive methods. Then, Ottoman Empire

¹⁰⁶ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," pp. 50-53.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

realized that the tribes refused to be settled by force and thus the Ottoman state decided to solve the settlement problem by peaceful means.¹⁰⁹

State and Tribes: Consent and Coercion

The Ottoman governors were interested in the valley of the Euphrates because of the fertile lands of that region. The state wanted nomadic tribes to settle there. Therefore, it appointed the sheikhs of tribes as district of their governors (*kaymakam status*) by settling them in place of their traditional sheikdom (*meşihat*). The sheikhs of tribes were recognized officially by the Ottoman central and local authorities. The Empire expected to serve from tribal sheikhs as small land holders in their lands. The Empire could compose alliances in the new settled areas by extending domination over the tribes. It wanted to guarantee its control over the new settled lands. Also, this meant to maintenance of cooperation with the Ottoman administration.

The appointment of news sheikhs was announced by the newspaper of *Takvim-i Vekayi*. To give one example, on the death of the leading chief of the Anze tribes Sacer Efendi, the Ottoman Empire stipulated approved candidate Abdülmuhsin from Anze tribe in 1873. For that reason, the Anze tribes were necessary to rescue the tribes' people from savagery and nomadic life. These were to guarantee the settlement of the Bedouins in the Anze tribe, to cultivate agricultural lands that were given by the Ottoman state to Anze tribe and to unite whole communities of the Anze tribes in the Muhsine district. Sheikh Abdülmuhsin accepted these conditions and the Ottoman Empire appointed him as kaymakam in the Muhsine district. Also, this

¹⁰⁹ Moosa, "The Land Policy of Midhad Pasha in Iraq, 1869-1872," p. 150.

document reflected the dominant view of the state about the situation of tribesmen describing as the ‘savage Bedouins’.¹¹⁰

As understood from several archival documents, the Ottoman Empire focused exclusively on settling the tribes in two different ways. First, the administrators tried to settle tribesmen and tribal chiefs in the new cultivated areas. For this purpose, The Empire was admitted to the incentives such as putting the chiefs of the tribes on salaries or giving the tribal chiefs a Turkish title. Another state policy of Ottoman government was forced sedentarization of tribal confederations in Iraq. Ottoman authorities generally used military troops to settle nomadic tribes on the new lands.

On the other hand, in cooperation way with the Ottoman authorities attempted to abolish tribal sheikhdoms by giving offering different positions in order to guarantee its control over the land in Iraq. Another method different from these offering of Turkish titles was to support the chief of tribes financially. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire put tribal leaders on a salary especially some outstanding members of the leading houses of the Anze, Şammar, Rabia, Müntefik. In a report sending from the Baghdad to the Imperial center about assigned salaries to the leader of the tribes, Sami Pasha recommended that the chief of sheikh zebab continued to become hard up for money, this situation would lead to conspire among Bedouins of Hazail tribes therefore, Ottoman Empire Porte to put the one of leaders (*baş ağa*) of Hazail tribe in

¹¹⁰ Takvim-i Vekayi, (16 Cemaziyelevvel 1289/22 Temmuz 1872), pp. 2-3. “Anze Şeyhülmeşayihî Sacer Efendinin vukuu vefatına mebni aşayiri merkumenin idaresine muktedir birinin tayini lazım gelmiştir... Şeyhlik namının devamıyla aşiret halkının meşihat idaresinde kalması ve vahşet ve bedeviyetten kurtarılması... ve şeyhi sabıkı Abdülmuhsinib aşayir-i merkumenin iskanını taahhüd etmesi ve böylece arazi-yi haliyeyi mamur eylemek ve aşayir halkının orada birleştirerek hane ve karye teşkil etmek ve kerbela sancağına merbut olmak üzere Muhsine kazası ismiyle bir kaza teşkil olunarak beylik ünvanıyla kaymakamlığa mir-i mumaileyh tayin kılınmıştır... Anze aşiretinin ne derece vahşi ve bedevi bir kavim oldukları malumdur.”

Müntefik on a monthly salary of 300 piaster and the supporting him financially by the Ottoman finance ministry could prevent to rebel the Hazail tribes in Müntefik.¹¹¹

Furthermore, the Empire built a more complex relationship with the tribal sheikhs in the nineteenth century. Ottoman governors in Iraq tried to ally with the tribal sheiks in order to persuade them of settlement of their tribesmen in the Iraqi lands. Also, the state offered the tribal sheikhs title deeds and new bureaucratic Turkish titles (*like Kaymakam*) in order to convince them for the settlement on these new fertile lands in that geography.¹¹² With this purpose, Namık Pasha (governor of Baghdad) had attempted to settle these tribes under the centralized Ottoman administration system in Iraq as an initial step to solve the tribal problems and he appointed the tribal sheikhs as Kaymakam (district governor) in order to facilitate the settlement tribes in Iraqi province.¹¹³ For instance, the tribes of Şammar and Anze were forced to settle down in 1872 but Namık Pasha failed to sedentarize them.

Then, Ottoman local governor Namık Pasha offered tribal sheikh Abdurrahman Haddal of Anze to title deed rights and Turkish titles (*Kaymakam*) to settle down in Muhsiniya district in Basra. The sheikh Abdurrahman accepted these title deed rights and Kaymakam titles to settle as the cultivators on the commercial

¹¹¹ BOA, İ.MVL, 536/24085, 1282.01.06 (1 Haziran 1865).

“Müntefiklerin hazail aşiretinden olub bağdata celb olunarak bazı mahzurat üzerine bağdatda ikamet etmek ve canib-i hükümetten ruhsat verilmedikçe aşiretleri tarafından gitmemek üzere kefaletle rabtiyesiyle tahliye kılınan baş ağa zebab elganımın taşirlerine medar olacak bir güne nesnelere olmadığı cihetle emr ü idarelerinde zaruret çekmekte olduklarından bahisle emsalleri misüllü kendilerine dahi birer mikdar maaş tahsisi ifade ve istida olunmaktan naşi... bunların öyle hal zarurette bırakılması bilahare aşiretleri canibine karar ile bir takım fesadata ictisar etmelerini müeddi olacağı anlaşılmiş ve bu makulelere münasib mikdar maaş tahsisi emsali iktizasından bulunmuş olmağla mahallerine avdete mezun olduklarında kat edilmek üzere gösterilen tarihinden itibaren mumailiyhimaya olmikdar maaşın tahsisi hususunun mahalline işarıyla hazinece ifa-yı muktezasının dahi maliye nezaret-i celilesine havalesi tezekkür kılınmış ise de ol babda her ne vecihle irade-i seniyye-i hazret-i mülukane müteallik ve şerefsüdur buyurulur ise ona göre hareket olunacağı beyarıyla tezkire-i senaveri terkim kılındı efendim.”

¹¹² Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: the failure of nation-building and a history denied*, p. 56.

¹¹³ Moosa, “The Land Policy of Midhad Pasha in Iraq, 1869-1872,” p. 156.

waterways in al-Muhsiniya near the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris. Whereby, Ottoman government could make alliances with the sheikh of Anze tribes.¹¹⁴

It is important to stress that the tribal settlement on cultivated areas was an important source of cash income for the Ottoman state. Following the tribal settlement in Iraq, the collection of taxes was carried out in many different ways. In the first stage, the Ottoman Empire tried to acquire solid data about the tribes' population and their income for tax- purposes and restructuring land and tax during the Tanzimat period.¹¹⁵ The settlement processes of the Hemvend, the Ottoman government settled them in the Bazeban district in lower Iraq in 1879 and the Ottoman state distributed the seeds and store of grain (*tohumluk, zahire*) to settled tribesmen to cultivate of their lands and increase agricultural production. Also, the outstanding chiefs (*agha, sheikhs*) of the Hemvend tribes were put on salaries between the years of 1879-1876. 347,434 piasters was given to the Hemvend tribes to meet their needs. Also, this tribe was exempted from paying of taxes and tithes between years of 1873-1876. However, Ottoman officials began to collect taxes and tithes, and also the Ottoman state asked to pay the debts of the Hemvend tribe, which was given for salaries to the chiefs, seeds and stores of grain 347,434 within three years with the decision of the council of the Ottoman Empire. Then, because these debts could not be paid on time in 1877, these debts distributed in 1877 and 1878.¹¹⁶

The Ottoman Empire applied all kinds of measures with the aim of tribal settlement and maximizing income of taxes in Iraq during the time of the Tanzimat. The Ottoman state used government forces to settle, conscript and tax the nomadic or

¹¹⁴ Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," p. 55.

¹¹⁵ James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹¹⁶ BOA, i.ŞD, 43/2320. 1296.12.05 (20 Kasım 1879).

semi-nomadic tribes in Iraq. It used the Ottoman military troops for forceful tribal settlement and collection taxation in that term. According to Özbek, Ottoman provincial governors used the gendarmerie and even regular army in their regions.¹¹⁷ In a response to these policies, the tribesmen rebelled against the Ottoman state. It is known that there were several tribal rebellions that arose from taxation and conscription, like the tribes of Hazail, Beni Lam, Kaab and Şammar in the nineteenth century. For example, the tribe of Hazail revolt in the Baghdad in 1827 was one the reactions to the forced sedentarization and taxation against the Ottoman state. In this revolt, Ottoman military troops (*Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*) suppressed the Hazail uprising and killed all seditionists of the tribes in the revolts.¹¹⁸

Another example about the settlement of Gülhor tribes was that the Ottoman Empire wanted to persuade them to settle down arable lands. Therefore, they were settled in Baziyan town. They were exempted from the taxes of tithe, income (*temettu*), and kura for two years beginning from the settlement. However, they were not exempted from cattle taxes or customs duty.¹¹⁹ Subsequently, as understood from these archival documents, the Ottoman Empire had tried to incorporate these tribes within agricultural production and larger economic systems. In doing so, it also collected the taxes from the settled tribes.

According to several archival documents, sending military troops to the tribes to force them to pay their tax debts was one of these methods used in Ottoman Iraq due to the lack of sufficient control by the Porte in this province. In one document

¹¹⁷ Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the Armenian Question during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876-1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012), p. 779.

¹¹⁸ BOA, HAT 509/ 25001, 1242.04.07 (8 Kasım 1826) "*Bağdat ve Basra arasında bulunan Hazail aşiretinin isyan alameti göstermesi sebebiyle Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye gönderilmiş ve harpte galip gelerek alınan başlar irsal olunmuştur.*"

¹¹⁹ BOA, DH. MKT 301/45. 1312.11.29 (30 Ekim 1894)

which was sent from Porte to the military (*taraf-ı valayı seraskeri*), it was mentioned that the tribes of el Hicam and el- Hasan in the Sukuşsuyuh district in the Müntefik (in lower Iraq) had not paid their annually taxes. For these reasons, the imperial center decided to take necessary measures against the tribes and Ottoman troops were sent together with the governor of Basra to the Sukuşsuyuh region for the collection of taxes by using of military force.¹²⁰

It is important to note that the acceptance of the Shiite identity the tribesmen could find a way to escape from settlement, taxation and conscription. The Shiite identity of the tribesmen provided them to pass over Iranian border and this allowed them to avoid the tribal policy of Tanzimat state. As understood from the Ottoman archival documents Shiite tribes like Beni Lam, Rabia, Milli and Müntefik passed to Iranian region when they occurred problems with the Ottoman Empire about taxation and conscription. Among the most common methods of tribes evading taxation and compulsory military service were to immigrate to the Iranian region.¹²¹ Also, it is possible that the conversion to Shiite indicated the reactions of the nomadic tribes against the increasing collection of taxes and violence acts of Ottoman governors in Iraq.

Also, some of the tribes from the lower Iraq immigrated to Iran because of the attempt of collecting taxes from them by the government. In a document which was written by the Van governorship, the Milli tribe moved the Iranian region for avoidance of the cattle taxes. In addition, Ruşali tribe in 1890 attempted to pass

¹²⁰ BOA, BEO 2685/201309, 1323.02.21 (27 Nisan 1905) and BOA, BEO 2728/204540, 1323.10.18 (16 Aralık 1905). "*Müntefik sancağın Sukuşsuyuh kazası dâhilindeki el hicam ve el hasan aşiretlerinin vergilerini vermemekle beraber memuriyet-i hükümetin evamirine itaat etmemeleri üzerine cereyan eden muhaberat neticesi olarak bir tabur asker-i şahane ile iki tabur sevkine mukaddema irade-i seniyye-i hazret-i hilafetpenahi şeref müteallik buyurulmuş.*"

¹²¹ BOA, DH. MKT 2410/64, 1326.07.09. (22 Eylül 1910) and BOA, DH. MKT 262/13, 1312.01.05 (9 Temmuz 1894).

Iranian border from Mosul to avoid the state policies. This tribe also killed two Ottoman soldiers because of avoiding taxation and they objected to the appointment of new kaymakam in their district.¹²² Namely, it is clear that the Shiite tribes immigrated to Iran due to dislike of forced settlement and taxes.¹²³

The Müntefik Tribes in Basra:

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire's relations with the Müntefik confederations in Iraq had a great importance in the understanding of the nature of the Shiite tribes. The Müntefik confederation was powerful tribal confederation that resided in Basra. The Ottoman state tried to forcefully reorganize them in producing areas by way of integration into economic system. According to estimations in the Ottoman report, the number of tribes was quarter million in the Müntefik areas in the Ottoman Iraq. All of tribes were followers of the Shiite sect apart from the Sadun tribes.¹²⁴

I would like to specify that each tribal confederation was composed of tribal groups. Müntefik was the name of a confederation composed of tribes from different origins.¹²⁵ All of these Shiite tribes in Müntefik in Basra were governed by the Sunni clan Saduns, who were charged as an intermediate agent between the state and the tribes by the Ottoman state. The Müntefik confederation was located in a fertile valley of the Euphrates in lower Mesopotamia and thus, their settlement in the

¹²² BOA, DH. MKT 1506/5, 1305.10.21 (1 Temmuz 1888).

¹²³ BOA, A. MKT. MHM 163/34. 1276.01.21 (20 Ağustos 1859)

¹²⁴ BOA, BEO 4020/301457, 1328.03.12 (25 Mart 1912). "*Müntefik livasında tahkikat ve icraata memur olan heyet-i muhtelitanın tanzim ettiği layiha*"

¹²⁵ Soli Shahvar, "Tribes and telegraphs in lower Iraq: The Müntefik and the Baghdad-Basra telegraph line of 1863-65," *Middle Eastern Series* 39, no. 1(2013), pp. 91-95.

district place played a considerable role for Ottoman Empire.¹²⁶ However, these Shiite nomadic tribes of the Müntefik were not completely settled down and many of them continued to be independent from the authority of the Ottoman state.¹²⁷ In addition to these, much of tribes in Müntefik were categorized in many different ways because their attitudes towards the Ottoman central state changed constantly within the sociopolitical conditions during the Tanzimat period such as their loyalties to the Ottoman state, their religion and demographic situations.

The Ottoman Empire prepared a comprehensive report about the political and economic situation of Müntefik tribes. This report presents a good example of the government's view of the tribal settlement and the conscription in the Müntefik region within the Tanzimat context. Although this report was written in 1910, it presents considerable knowledge about the settlement processes of the Shiite Müntefik tribe in the nineteenth century. The aim of preparation of this report was the becoming of the low degree of central authority over the Müntefik region and the restoration of agricultural system. The report included the clan names of Beni Esed tribes in Müntefik, extensive knowledge about tribes' religious beliefs and demographic situation in Müntefik region. It was interesting that the tribes also were categorized according to their loyalties of the tribes towards the Ottoman Empire. To give one example, the Beni Rekab tribe was written such that they were the Shiite (*caferi*) in Reçe region, their population composed of 180. Their loyalties towards the Ottoman state were of moderate level. The members of the committee in the report gave some recommendations about controlling the Müntefik tribes. According to them, the nomadic tribes in Müntefik should be settled in the valley of the

¹²⁶ BOA, BEO 4020/301457.

¹²⁷ R. Ghassan Atiyah, *Iraq 1908-1921 A socio-political study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973), p. 26.

Euphrates by using military troops (*Firat sevahiline cebren sevk ve tedibler lazım gelmektedir*) and it should also be constituted a village for each of the one hundred households and it should be given thirty acres of land per household for them. If each person in village has their own lands, the influences of tribal sheiks on the tribesmen will be removed. Also, much of Müntefik tribes had British guns. Therefore, the guns of the tribesmen in Müntefik should be immediately collected. There was a possibility that these guns would be used against Ottoman troops during the clash between Ottoman officials and the Müntefik tribes. Therefore, these guns should be kept in storehouses by the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁸

Furthermore, as understood from this archival report, the Müntefik tribes seems a have posed a threat to the Ottoman officials and therefore, Ottoman state wanted to settle down in the valley of Euphrates and to control them by breaking their units in the tribal region. In fact, the Ottoman state aimed to institute its authority in the peripheries of the Basra and Euphrates' fertile valleys. For these reasons, the state permanently placed gendarmeries in the new settled areas in the Müntefik and deployed military troops along the Euphrates and Tigris for greater control of the river trade.¹²⁹The real intentions of the Ottoman Empire were to implement the new polices of taxation and military conscription in the region.

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire attempted to eliminate the old sheikhs of the tribes. Some were incorporated gradually into the new system in the new settled areas and they continued to play significant roles in the settled local districts under the governors of Ottoman Iraqi province. On the other hand, some of the sheikhs of tribes had shown reactions to these policies of the central state because many important sheikhs in lower Iraq and the Gulf were powerful merchants who

¹²⁸ BOA, BEO 4020/301457.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

specialized in grain and horse trade.¹³⁰ Therefore, they were removed from their regions. The new sheikhs were appointed the kaymakam in their place. However, these policies also led to conflict among the ruling households of tribes. For example, Gazban, the sheikhs of Beni lam became a potential threat in the eyes of Ottoman government by the 1900s. Then, he passed into Iran from Basra and Şibli Bey was appointed sheikhs in his place. The Rubiyye tribe began to collect soldiers in Iran against the Şibli Bey. Upon these events, the Ottoman Empire charged the sixth army in Baghdad to prevent inter-tribal conflicts between Beni Lam and Rubiyye.¹³¹

The second great problem was the compulsory military service. The matter of conscription of tribesmen was also one of the biggest obstacles to the persuasion of settlement of the tribes in the nineteenth century. The Müntefik tribesmen were not conscripted because there was not enough information about the number of tribesmen and the regions where they stayed. The Ottoman state forced the Müntefik tribesmen to join the Ottoman army to create stability, peace and prosperity in Iraq. Ottoman officials thought that the conscription of the tribes in the Iraqi region was necessary to maintain public security and extend authority over the tribes in Müntefik. However, the tribesmen were reluctant to perform military service and thus, they were afraid to settle in Basra. The members of committee in the report recommended that Shiite tribesmen in Müntefik not serve as military troops in the Ottoman army because military service in the Sunni Ottoman army was seen as incorrect and unholy according to the Shiite belief. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire should exempted tribesmen from military service in Müntefik. After the settlement, their newborn children continued to be recruited instead of the newly settled

¹³⁰ Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," pp. 54-55.

¹³¹ BOA, DH. MKT 301/45, 1312.09.01 (26 Şubat 1895).

tribesmen. However, much of the tribes in the Müntefik could not be fully settled until the First World War.¹³²

At the same time, the settlement of the nomadic population, the expansion of agriculture, the distribution of title deeds to individuals, the collection of taxes in Iraq resulted in the rebellion of tribes against the Ottoman state.¹³³ The conflicts between the Ottoman local authorities and the Müntefik tribes continued to exist throughout the nineteenth century. It is possible to observe that the accepting shiism in Iraq was reactions of Tanzimat state policies like settlement, conscription and taxation. The case of the Müntefik tribes was good examples in the understanding of the reactions and anti-government act of protest of tribesmen against the Tanzimat state. Soli Shahvar gave also a great emphasis on the policies of Tanzimat state in Basra like paying taxes and conscription and he conveys following,

It had a general policy of imposing direct rule, mainly for taxation and conscription, but this was difficult to achieve over areas known for their local autonomous life and notorious for the rebellious spirit and turbulent behavior of their population, and southern Iraq (Müntefik) was one such area.¹³⁴

The Reactions of the Tribesmen to the Ottoman Tanzimat Policies

The occurrence of the settlement of the tribes from nomadic life to agricultural activity created a deeply social, political crisis in the Iraqi lands because this settlement policy forced the tribesmen to construct new identities to in the new settled areas. In these new settled areas, they could only recognize Shiite Islam as a religious identity. There are two significant reasons for the conversion in these lands.

¹³² BOA, BEO 4020/301457.

¹³³ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 44.

¹³⁴ Shahvar, "Tribes and telegraphs in lower Iraq: The Müntefik and the Baghdad–Basra telegraph line of 1863–65," p. 95.

First, the majority consisted of Shiite groups in the new settled areas. Second, the settlement policy by force led to hostility against the Sunnism because the tribes were displaced and their tribal order destroyed by the Sunni Ottoman officials. Namely, it is possible to observe that they converted to Shiism from Sunnism due to the forcing of the Bedouins to settle by Sunni officials during the time of centralization.¹³⁵ It is necessary to state that there were no certainly evidences about the Sunni faith of the tribes in the Bedouin life.

The central Ottoman state' correspondences indicate that the tribal reactions against the Tanzimat state policies were an inevitable ending in the Ottoman Iraqi province. The Ottoman state launched military campaigns against the Shiite Iraqi tribes in the nineteenth century. When we look at the responses of Bedouins to these policies we can see that they were more complex than total resistance and compliance.¹³⁶ The response to this settlement policy of tribes, some of the tribes accepted to depend on the Ottoman central state and some of them did not cooperated with the Ottoman state. In a resistance to these state policies of forced settlement, the tribes showed different reactions against the central state policies, such as refusal to pay taxes and denying forced conscription. Also, tribes in Ottoman Iraqi province started to perceive the Ottoman state as a constant oppressive power against them because of the cruel attacks of the Ottoman state during the compulsory military conscription, taxation and settlement.

It is important to note that the scale of the conversion activities changed according to regions in Iraq and there were also major relationships between the areas where tribes settled and the conversion activities of Shiism took place. In other

¹³⁵ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 28.

¹³⁶ Nilay Özok, "The Making of the Modern Ottoman state in the Kurdish Periphery: The Politics of Land and Taxation, 1840-1870," (Binghamton State University of New York: PHD thesis, 2011), p. 54.

words, there were the intensifications of conversion activities in the some regions in the late nineteenth century.¹³⁷ For example, the tribe of Şammar Tuqa migrated to near Karbala and Najaf in the eighteenth century and became Shiite Islam in the new settled areas and also, the Jubur al Wawi which settled in the Euphrates valley chose the Shiism.¹³⁸ The regions which were closely connected with Ottoman Sunni ideology, like Baghdad protected their Sunni identity because they were governed by Sunni Ottoman officials and the majority of the population consisted of Sunnis. To illustrate, the tribal confederation of Şammar Carba, which was made up mainly followers of Sunni religion in the late eighteenth century settled to Cezire close to Baghdad and they could protect their Sunni identity in these more centralized Sunni regions. These examples demonstrate that there was no fixed religion of tribes in the new settled areas¹³⁹ and the magnitude of these conversion activities changed according to regions. Therefore, there was a distinct sectarian relation of tribes according to the regions where they settled.¹⁴⁰

Briefly, although the Arab tribal confederations which settled near Shrine cities (Najaf and Karbala) cities became Shiite supporters, the confederations which migrated to Baghdad and the surroundings remained as the followers of Sunni Islam. The settlement policy of the tribes led to an increase in the sectarian lines in Iraq.

Consequently, from this evidence, one can argue that the centralization policy of the Tanzimat taxation, conscription and settlement gained a new dimension to the relationship between the tribes and the state. This led to tribal hostility against the

¹³⁷ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement in Iraq*, (New Jersey: Princeton, 1978), p. 13.

¹³⁸ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 43.

¹³⁹ Haj, "The Problems of Tribalism: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Iraqi History," p. 49.

¹⁴⁰ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 44.

Ottoman Empire. It is possible to observe that these factors were the main reasons for the expansion of Shiism among the nomadic and settled tribes. This chapter who explored how the settlement policy of Ottoman Empire were applied to nomadic tribes in Iraq, and the real purpose of settlement policy was incorporation within agricultural production system of Iraqi tribes due to the inabilities of Ottoman Central treasury. In addition, it discussed the relation between tribes and state changed and brought about hostility to the Ottoman central administration within the Tanzimat context. The settlement policy could be linked to the increasing of Shiite subjects in Iraq in the context of the reaction against the Tanzimat policies in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER IV

THE SPREAD OF SHIISM IN THE OTTOMAN IRAQ (1830-1908)

In this chapter, I would like to scrutinize governmental policies towards Shiite groups in Iraq from the 1830s to 1908. The main purpose of this study is to understand the reflections and policies of the Ottoman governments during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II by examining specific events concerning the prevalence of Shiite faith among Iraqi population. For such study, I would like to profit from Ottoman archival documents to examine the history of Shiite conversion in Iraq and governmental response with paying attention to perspective of Ottoman officials and governments against the rising the raising importance of the Shrine cities. Since the archival material is majorly limited with the Ottoman archives, such study allowed me to reduce the partiality of Ottoman archives on the subject. For, firstly I would like make a summary of historical debates on state and religious group relations by rethinking the subject of sectarianism within a broader world historical context, specifically within a late imperial framework. In this chapter, the basic contention is the spread of Shiism in Ottoman Iraq and the counter reactions of the Ottoman Empire against the spread of Shiites the late nineteenth century. This chapter also will not focus on the specific reasons for the Shiite- Sunni problems in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but it attempts to explore the growing interest of Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Britain over Ottoman Iraqi provinces.

This study covers the period between 1830 and 1908. It is primarily based on Ottoman state archival documents as well as published materials. In doing so, hearing the sounds of Ottoman officials and learning about the mentalities of the

foremost social actors could help in the evaluation phase of the Shiite- Sunni competition. Moreover, the Ottoman relations with Shiite groups, in recent years, have been studied by Hala Fattah, Juan Cole, Yitzhak Nakash, and Samira Haj. These studies provide a considerable literature on the history of Shiites in the Ottoman Iraqi province. Many of these historians have used the Arab and British archival documents on the studies of Shiism in the nineteenth century. However, there many questions remain unanswered and unknown aspects in the studies of Shiite history remain.¹⁴¹Therefore, my purpose in this study could say something about the Ottoman attitudes towards the Shiites in Iraq within the historical context during the late Ottoman transformation era.

In this chapter, I aim to provide the answers to the following questions: How did the spread of Shiism occur in Iraq? How were the Sunnis converted to Shiism in this province? Which effects triggered the spread of Shiism in Ottoman Iraq? What was the counter propaganda of the Ottoman Empire for these conversion activities? How Iran was involved in the missionary activities of Iraqi persons in the nineteenth century? What were the motivations of Ottoman central and local officials towards the spread of Shiite population in Iraqi province in the nineteenth century? What were the consequences of the conversion of Iraqis to Shiites in Iraq?

The Ottoman Official Discourse Correspondingly Shiism

There were a lot of correspondences between central and local government officials about the growth of Shiism and actions to be taken against it in the late nineteenth century. In the official correspondences, it was said that the belief of the Shiites in

¹⁴¹ Hala Fattah, "Identity and Difference in the Work of Sunni Historians of Eighteenth Century and Nineteenth Century Iraq," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009), p. 212.

Iraq was very weak (*taklid-i İman*) and the rules of Shiite religion only consisted of worship and visiting the divine tombs, like Hz Ali and the Big divine Imams in Shiism in Atabat-ı Aliyyat. Therefore, Sunni ulema could help them to return the true path of Sunni Islam. Also, it could raise difficulties for the people who accept of Shiite Islam in Iraq. Therefore, a report sent from Baghdad to the Istanbul about the Shiites in Karbala was given in the following expressions,

The Iranian ulema in Baghdad deface and falsify the rules of the Quran and also the verses of the Quran and the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad were changed by them. In doing so, Iranian ulema have deceived the Iraqi people by using the illiteracy of society and Iraqi persons do not know very well the religion and religiosity in respects of Sunni sect.¹⁴²

In addition to these, the general thought in these Ottoman correspondences about the spread of Shiism in Iraq was that the conversion to Shiism stemmed from missionary activities of Iranian ulema.¹⁴³ The Shiite perception of the Ottoman central authority was transformed as distrusted and undesirable subjects due to the effects of the Iranians over the Iraqi region in the late nineteenth century. These suspicious circumstances towards the Shiite subjects had reached its peak at the end of the empire¹⁴⁴ and this was perceived as a security risk for the Ottomans who decided to take action against these Shiite groups in Iraq. According to Çetinsaya, the Ottoman central and local officials' approach to Iraq province was based on the fear of Shiite rebellion or the separation movement of Shiites against the Ottoman governors.

¹⁴² BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. 23/18

¹⁴³ Ibid, "işte (ahund) tabir olunan ulema yı iraniyenin iğfalat ve tesvilatına kapılarak ahali yi tarik-i hidayet ve müstekimden udul ile tarik-i sekime sapmaktadırlar..."

¹⁴⁴ Sabri Ateş, "Bones of Contention: Corpse Traffic and Ottoman-Iranian Rivalry in Nineteenth Century Iraq," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (Duke University Press: 2010), p. 9.

Therefore, local and central administration officials had reached an agreement about the question of reform in Iraq in order to extend their domain influence over Iraqi region by using different ways.¹⁴⁵

Moreover, major changes in the number of Shiite population in Iraq had taken place in the first and second half of the nineteenth century. This situation also signified a serious threat for the Sunni image of the Ottoman authority because the Ottomans were not only the representative Sunni identity, but also protectors of the Sunni sect in the Islamic geography. According to the foremost understanding of Sunni Islam, Shiism was perceived as one of the superstitious faiths.¹⁴⁶ For example, a Hanafi kadi in Iraq, Ibrahim ibn Sabgatullah al Haydari, referred continuously to the term of *rafadha* (rejectionists) to those tribesmen who converted Iraq in the 1860s.¹⁴⁷ For these reasons, the spread of Shiism in Iraq was perceived as a potential threat against Ottoman central authority in the Iraqi region. In this respect, the spread of the Shiite Islam in Iraq had seriously impacts on political and administrative powers of the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman official correspondences do not directly mention the reasons for the magnitude of the Shiite conversion in Iraq in the nineteenth century. They just explained that the majority of Iraqi society had undergone a big sectarian change from Sunnism to Shiism compared to previous situation. For example, Alim Alusi, who was one of the important Sunni ulama in Baghdad, pointed out that the number of Shiite converts had been increasing day by day in Iraq and their loyalties had been

¹⁴⁵ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 101.

¹⁴⁶ BOA, BEO. 413/30919, 1311.11.28 (2 Haziran 1894).

¹⁴⁷ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900*, p. 212.

decreasing to the Ottoman Sultan. He preferred to see Iraq within the center of the Sunni Islam instead of the Shiite centers.¹⁴⁸

It is important to note that the only thing that worried the Ottoman Empire was not Shiite propagation policy of Iran. Britain's expansionist policy in the Arabian and Persian Gulf Policy was the other dangerous situation for the Ottoman government in the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁹ Britain attempted to keep controlling coasts of the Persian Gulf regions like Oman, Kuwait, and Iraq to secure of the trade routes.¹⁵⁰ In a report from Baghdad, the Baghdad governor, Esad Bey said that both Iran and Britain had been increasing their influences in Iraq day by day. Many of the tribes in Iraq had been armed by Britain and the inhabitants of Iraq had moved away from the caliphate's administration.¹⁵¹

The Conversion Activities in Iraq

Iraq had had strong religious and socioeconomic links with the Iranian state for many years. There were the four crucial shrine cities in Iraq which were considered sacred by Shiite believers: Najaf, Karbala, Samarra, and Kazimayn which was known as the Atabat-1 Aliyyat.¹⁵² These cities were viewed as Iraq's part of the Iraqi's rightful heritage.¹⁵³ According to Kamal Salibi, in the political turmoil of the eighteenth

¹⁴⁸ BOA, İ.HR 78/3847, 1237.10.12 (2 Temmuz 1822).

¹⁴⁹ BOA, Y. EE 11/3.

¹⁵⁰ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 158.

¹⁵¹ BOA, Y.PRK.UM. 41/117 1315.12.23 (15 Mayıs 1898).

¹⁵² For the Atabat, see Hamid Algar, in Encyclopaedia Iranica, www.iranica.com/articles/atabat (accessed 10 May 2010) *Atabat: "thresholds," more fully, 'atabat-e 'aliyat or 'atabat-e (or a'tab-e) moqaddasa, "the lofty or sacred thresholds," contain the tombs of six of the imams as well as secondary sites of pilgrimage.*

century Iran had provided the establishing of crucial networks between Iran and Iraq. In the aftermath of the Afghan invasions and the fall of the Safavids, a large number of Iranians had moved around Najaf and Karbala and over time they had assimilated to Iraq in time. In this way, the Shiite Islam of the Iranians spread to the cities of Najaf and Karbala. This also created an alliance between Iran and southern Iraq in the nineteenth century.

These developments were interpreted as a potential threat by the Ottoman authorities.¹⁵⁴ Reports which were sent from Istanbul to Baghdad governor mentioned that the number of Iranian citizens had continued to increase day by day in southern Iraqi cities like Kazimiye, Najaf, and Karbala. The Iranians who lived in Najaf had asked permission from the imperial center for expanding areas of their cities by destroying the city walls in 1896. However, the Ottoman central authority did not allow the expansion of city because of the increasing number of Persians and Persian students in Najaf. Later, the permission to make building on Ottoman state lands (*miri arazi*) was given to Shiite Iranians living in Najaf. The Mufti of Najaf Mehmed Lütfü Efendi warned the central authority with regard to the idea of the expansion of Najaf city by way of demolishing the city walls. He explained that the expansion of Najaf areas would just lead to an increase in Shiite institutions because the Iranian inhabitants had only built Shiite madrasas in these expanding state lands. This had caused the spread of Shiite population in Najaf. Therefore, he advised that the Caliph Abdülhamid II should not give permission in the expansion of the city walls.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Nabil Al- Tikriti, "Ottoman Iraq," *The Journal of the Historical Society* VII:(2 June 2007), p. 201.

¹⁵⁴ Cole, and Momen. "Mafia, Mob and Shism in Iraq: The Rebellion of Ottoman Karbala 1824-1843," p. 115.

¹⁵⁵ BOA, DH.MKT. 2394/21 1316.05.31 (13 Ağustos 1900).

Before the nineteenth century, Ottoman Empire had accommodated the Shiite subjects in Iraq, but the percentage of the Shiite population had been limited in the areas of Shiite cities of Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra. The Shiite population in Iraq dramatically started to increase in the late nineteenth century. This was particularly common among nomadic tribes in Baghdad and its surroundings. On the other hand, it appears from the reports that the reasons for the increasing numbers of Shiite groups were the Iranian missionary activities in the Iraqi region. It was thought by Ottoman authorities that Iran tended to extend its influence over Iraq by way of these missionary activities.¹⁵⁶

This becomes an urgent and serious problem for Ottomans who decided to enhance Sunni central authority over the Shiite population in Iraq. The main goal of the Ottoman central authority was able to prevent the growth of Shiite sect and to spread Sunni Islam in Iraq by way of Sunni institutional education and preaching. According to Çetinsaya, continuous communication took place between Iraq and Iran. Iran bordered on Iraq and the state of Iran had historical and religious claims there.¹⁵⁷ There was a strong connection between Iraq and Iran in terms of Shiite religious educational institutions. According to the Ottoman official Mümtaz Seyyid, in his reports of 24 June 1885 said that there are more than a thousand Iranian Shiite students in Najaf and Karbala. They lived and studied with the leading of Iranian ulema in the Shiite madrasas.¹⁵⁸ These total numbers of Persian ulema and students had grown to an average 6000 in 1918.¹⁵⁹ Juan Cole states about the expansion of Shiite population in the shrine cities that

¹⁵⁶ BOA, ŞD.2488/28 1302.09.11 (24 Haziran 1885).

¹⁵⁷ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 108.

¹⁵⁸ BOA, ŞD.2488/28.

ethnically Iranian Shiite population consisted of a substantial minority in Najaf, Karbala and Baghdad. However, from the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, the Shiite shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala and later Samarra emerged as key trainers of Shiite clergy for the whole world and as places where Iranian and Indian dissidents could go into exile. Their ulama were successful from the eighteenth century, in proselytizing the Arab tribes of southern Iraq, bringing many of them over to Shiism. This mass conversion may have in part been a reproof from the tribes-people to their Sunni Ottoman overlords, and a protest of their treatment by the latter. Shiite clergymen from Iran such as Sayyid Murtada Ansari were often prominent in the leadership of the religion from the shrine cities, and helped train both Arabic-speaking and Persian speaking students.¹⁶⁰

In the history of Shia, the missionary efforts of the Iranian ulema were not common in Iraq before the nineteenth century. Yizthak Nakash writes that the conversion to Shiism had taken place in Iraq throughout the Shiite history; it was confining mainly to the Shrine cities and there was a very small conversion affair to Shiism among tribes. For example, some Arab tribes had converted to Shiism, like Bani Sulama, the Tayy in Iraq, and the Sudan in the marshes near Kuzistan during the Musha'sha Arab Shiite dynasty of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. According to the estimations, following the massive conversion of the bulk of Iraq's nominally Sunni Arab tribes to Shiism mainly was during the period of the nineteenth century. According to these statistics, 53 and 56 percent of the Iraqi population had converted to Shiism respectively.¹⁶¹ This number was parallel to the British census of 1919; their estimation of the number of Shiite believers was 1,500,000 out of total of 2,850,000; that is, about 53 percent of the population.¹⁶² These various reports show that the changing of Shiite population's ratio was an indicator of the seriousness and

¹⁵⁹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁰ Cole and Momen. "Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq: The Rebellion of Ottoman Karbala 1824-1843," p. 25.

¹⁶¹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 25.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 13.

urgency of the situation for the Ottoman central authority and the Ottomans needed to take immediate precautions.

It is important to note that the Ottoman military commander Hüseyin prepared a comprehensive report in 1899 about the spread of Shiism in Iraq. He claimed that normally, the population of Baghdad and its surroundings had been only composed of five percent twenty five years earlier. But now, the Shiite population made up eighty five percent in the cities of Karbala and Najaf in Baghdad. While this ratio in central Baghdad was sixty percent, in the surroundings of Baghdad, it was eighty percent.¹⁶³ For these reasons, conversion activities over the Iraq could not be as normal. In other words, the greatest rapid change of the Iraqi population was indicative of the foremost dangerous situation and it could affect the Ottoman Empire's political and religious power over the Iraqi region.

Another advice of an Ottoman official in Baghdad in his reports was that the Iranian ulema must not be allowed to circulate among the nomadic tribes in Iraq. The Sunni and Shiite persons in Iraq must clearly be informed about the rules of the Sunni understanding by expert religious teachers (*müderris*). In addition to these, Iraqi society should be warned about the mistakes and sins of the Shiite sect. If the Shiite ulema disseminated the Shiite Islam within Iraq, the Sunni ulema had to help them to find true path with respect to Sunni perceptivity.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. 23/18

¹⁶⁴ BOA, Y.EE. 9/14.

The Role of the Shrine Cities and Iranian Ulema in the Spread of Shiism

At the same time, Iraq had an important position for Shiite sect. The most sacred the Shiite scholars located at Najaf, Karbala, Kazimiyye, and Samara.¹⁶⁵ In these provinces, there are tombs of Hz Ali and his sons and some sacred Imams. Every year, thousands of Shiite persons have come to visit the shrine cities of Iraq for the duty of pilgrimage. They visited the tombs of sacred Imams (Meşahid-i Mükerrreme or Seyyid-i Karbala) who are only recommended for the Shii believers such as Imam Ali, Imam Husayn (descendant of Prophet Muhammed), Imam Musa Kazım and Imam Abbas.¹⁶⁶ These Shiite groups were generally coming from Iran and Indian by using of Persian Gulf route and Khanaqin-Baghdad routes and they stayed in Samara for one night, and then proceeded in Karbala and Najaf.¹⁶⁷ In the nineteenth century, the number of people making the pilgrimage annually reached as average 100,000 together with the development of the mass transportation and modern communication.¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, the Atabat-ı Aliyyat (Najaf and Karbala) were the most important region of Shiite educations in the nineteenth century. There were at least nineteen functioning Shiite religious schools and the Iranian Shiite students completed their training there.¹⁶⁹ These Shiite sacred cities were under the control of Iranian ulema. They had also a privileged status as derived from their protection by the Iranian

¹⁶⁵ Cole, *“Indian Money and the Shii Shrine Cities of Iraq, 1786-1850,”* p. 26.

¹⁶⁶ Takvim-i Vekayi, 6 Safer 1263, p: 1

¹⁶⁷ Nakash, Yitzhak, p: 164

¹⁶⁸ Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 129.

¹⁶⁹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 18.

government and therefore, the control these areas were very difficult by the Ottomans authorities. According to the report of Hüseyin, an Ottoman military commander in Baghdad, in 1899, he alleged that whole groups in southern Iraq had been converted to Shiism by the Iranian ulema thanks to the semi-autonomous status of shrine cities. There are two sectarian groups which were composed of Sunni and Shiite in the regions of Iraq. Sunni part had a tendency to convert the Shiite sect day by day because of the illiteracy of Iraqi society. The main cause of the spread of Shiism was the lack of strong faith in Sunnism and the lack of Sunni ulema. The Ottoman Shiite groups in Iraq felt as if they were Iranian subjects.¹⁷⁰

At the same time, according to the reports which were prepared by headmasters Abdizade İbrahim Efendi and Alusizade Şakir Efendi, Iranian ulema had led to reduction loyalties of the Iraqi Shiite population towards the Ottoman Empire as well as the moral damages in Iraq by way of the accepting of Shiite rules.¹⁷¹ Also, a telegraph was sent to the Foreign Ministry regarding the rebellion movements of the Iranian ulema on 26 April 1894. The Iranian ulema Mirza Celil and Sheikh Abbas Han in the cities of Najaf and Samarra had not perform the ritual prayers of Islam with religious community and they encouraged society in Iraq to rebel against the Ottoman local officials. Therefore, it was requested information about the Iranian ulema from the Iranian Consulate by the Ottoman government.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. 23/18.

¹⁷¹ BOA, MF.MKT. 1050/7, 1326.04.24 (26 Mayıs 1908).

¹⁷² BOA, BEO. 401/30073, 1311.11.04 (9 Mayıs 1894).

The Ottoman Response to Shiite Conversion Activities

In the nineteenth century, the rapid growth of Shiism in Iraqi region was a serious political problems for the rule of Abdulhamid the second. In several reports, it was urgently given imperial order by the Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1890s that every precaution must be taken against the ulema wishing for the spread of Shiism in the Iraqi villages and districts in the frontier territories.¹⁷³ Firstly, Abdülhamid II had tried to re-establish authority over the Iraqi provinces and he prohibited the Shiite madrasas which had been built by the Iranian and Indian Shiite believers. For example, the central authority did not give a license to the sister of the Iranian prince Ziyaelsultan, who wanted to build a Shiite madrasa in Najaf to the unsuitable behavior like the missionary activities of Shiite ulema of Iranians there.¹⁷⁴ According to Yitzhak Nakash, many of the founders and supporters of these Shiite madrasas in the shrine cities were foreign merchants and officials of the Iranian and Indian governments. The students who grew up in these madrasas played a major role in conversion activities to Shiism in Iraqi regions because these madrasas were not only the Shiite centers of learning but also centers for the dissemination of the Shiite ideas and political action. They had also financial and political independence in their regions thanks to religious taxes and money coming from the Indian and Iranian believers.¹⁷⁵ Ottoman administrators did not directly control these Shiite madrasas and thus, one of the best ways to prevent the opening of new madrasas was not to give licenses to them.

¹⁷³ BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 1278.09.22 (23 Mart 1862)

¹⁷⁴ BOA, i. HR. 78/3847. 1237.10.12 (2 Temmuz 1822).

¹⁷⁵ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, pp. 242-243.

Another way of stopping the Shiite activities was to remove the Shiite missionaries from Iraq because they were constantly organizing missionary activities under the pretext of visiting shrine cities (*Atabat-ı Aliyat*). So, Baghdad governor Nazım Pasha suggested that these Shiite missionaries be kept under the control of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷⁶ Also, the rich Indian and Iranian Shiites who wanted to buy lands in the holy cities were not allowed and Shiite lands in these cities could be confiscated by the Imperial center against the growth of Iranian Shiites which resided in Iraq. In other words, the estates which passed into the hands of Iranians in Iraq had to be withdrawn and the necessary measures had to be taken for the preventing of changing hands of Iranian persons by the local governors.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, considering the percentage of the Iranian Shiite inhabitants in Iraq, the number of them in all of Iraqi provinces had been five percent but this number became 75 percent especially in Karbala and Najaf.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, the Ottoman administration put into practice the confiscation of the Persian lands occurred by Persian citizens in Najaf and Karbala. With the confiscation policy, the Ottoman Empire aimed to eliminate and break the religious influences of Persian citizens over the Ottoman subjects in Najaf and Karbala. In addition to these, the report which was sent from Baghdad to Imperial center in 1891, officials recommended that the Shiite believers living in the tribal confederations be recruited. If they were soldiers, they could be transferred from the sixth army in Baghdad to the army in any other places.¹⁷⁹ However, we can not exactly know whether this policy was truly put into practice or not.

¹⁷⁶ MF. MKT. 1050/7.

¹⁷⁷BOA, i. HR. 78/3847.

¹⁷⁸ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 244.

Another counter-propagation of the Ottoman Empire over the Shiite groups was to introduce restrictions for Shiite ceremonies, like the remembrance of Muharram¹⁸⁰ and the mourning of Husain's death. These ceremonies had begun in the nineteenth century and it was under the control of Shiite ulema in the Shrine cities. These Muharram commemorations offered motivations to the Shiite ulema in Iraq.¹⁸¹ Therefore, these religious activities were not allowed by the central and local Sunni authorities. The local governors and notables like Midhad Pasha and Alusizade Şakir limited these activities. A telegraph from the Baghdad Education Council to the imperial center about the Shiite ceremonies in Karbala gave in the following expressions,

In the religious ceremonies of Shiite communities (like mourning of Muharram) in Iraq, the medals and awarding of scholarships were given to the converted to Shiite persons from Sunnism. Because of that, these Shiite ceremonies should be controlled by Ottoman gendarmes and the Shiite women and men have to separately be kept away each other during the Shiite ceremonies. The local Sunni governors constantly complained about these organizations which were campaigned by Iranian Shiite citizens. They also warned the central authority that if the conversion activities continued, it would become very difficult to maintain the Sunni state authority in Iraq. From these reasons, the Ottoman Shiite groups had to be kept away from such bad activities of Shiite sects.¹⁸²

At this respect, Deringil notes that the main purpose of this counter-propaganda of the Ottoman administration against the Shiites was to prevent the missionary activities of Iranian citizens in Iraq in the late nineteenth century.¹⁸³ The Muharram

¹⁷⁹ BOA, İ. DH. 1237/96925a 1308.12.07 (14 Temmuz 1891)

¹⁸⁰ It was memorial services which were closely with the narration of the events of Karbala.

¹⁸¹ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 142.

¹⁸² BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. 23/18.

¹⁸³ Deringil, "The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda", p. 19.

ceremonies in Iraq was seen as the vehicles of propagation of Iranian Shiite groups and one of the unifying factors of large number Shiites in the Karbala region. According to Karen Kern, these ceremonies had increased the excitement of population in Iraq and they seemed much more political than religious. Therefore, the local governors had paid more attention to the implementation of these ceremonies.¹⁸⁴ The Ottoman administrators had aimed to prevent the participation of local Sunni families, soldiers and officials as audience at these ceremonies in Iraq so as to eliminate the efficiency of these ceremonies in Iraq.¹⁸⁵ However, there have not appeared the evidence which were implemented these policies by the Ottoman officials.

Marriages between Iranian and Ottoman men and women living in Ottoman areas were banned in order to prevent the spread of Shiism. For that purpose, a *Nizamnâme* was published by central authority. The intention of this *Nizamnâme* was to be able to ban the marriages of Shiite- Sunni groups. The rules of these regulations about the disallowance of the marriage of Iranian and Ottoman population were, the marriage of Iranian and Ottoman people was forbidden, the Ottoman subjects who married Iranian people would be punished, if Iranian woman married an Ottoman man, both of the woman and her child would be the citizens of Ottoman Empire and the son would be responsible for military service and every kind of the rules of the Ottoman Empire, if an Ottoman woman married to an Iranian man, she would be denaturalized (*vatandaşlıktan çıkarma*) from the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Kern, *Imperial Citizen: Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces of Iraq*, p. 75.

¹⁸⁵ BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. 23/18.

¹⁸⁶ BOA, HR.HMŞ. İŞO 136/12 1338.10.07 (3 Ağustos 1919) "*Tebea-yı devlet-i aliyye ile tebea-yı iraniyenin izdivacı haklarında olan memnuiyetin muhafazasına dair nizamname.*"

However, as understood from the reports, in the marriages between the Ottomans and Iranians, the Ottoman Empire punished only the women who got married to Iranian man without denaturalization.¹⁸⁷ At the same time, the prohibition of marriages between Ottomans and Iranians was a direct result of the sectarian rivalry and hostility in Iraqi geography among the Iranian and Ottoman authorities. The marriage problem between Sunnis-Shiites remained an unresolved issue as long as the Ottoman Empire endured. Also, although the Ottoman system was not capable of counting every marriage and birth in the Iraq, the imperial center wanted to maintain its religious and political position in the Iraqi region in the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁸

Sunni Education and the Sunni Ulema as a Means of Ottoman Counter-Propaganda

A crucial mission was given to the Sunni ulema for the purposes of protecting the Sunni sect's rules and preventing the growth of Shiism in Iraq. The Ottoman officer Mümtaz Seyyit in Baghdad in a report said that highly trained Sunni ulema should be appointed to Iraq for preaching in the mosques by Ottoman central government in opposition to the conversion activities of Iranian ulema in Iraqi region.¹⁸⁹ Forty salaried ulema were sent to Baghdad and neighboring districts in order to consolidate the Sunni Islam (*akaid-i ehli sinneti telkin ve talim ve halka vaz u nasihat için*) by the Ottoman government. The revenues of Mercaniye Camii Şerif endowment in Diyarbakir was allocated for the needs of these 40 Sunni ulama. These Sunni ulama sent to Iraqi province were also ordered to complete following tasks by the Ottoman authority. These were Sunni ulema must stay continuously among the tribes, the

¹⁸⁷ BOA, HR.HMŞ. İŞO 136/12

¹⁸⁸ Kern, *Imperial Citizen: Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces of Iraq*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁹ BOA, ŞD. 2488/28 1302.09.11 (24 Haziran 1885).

basic Sunni rules like Quran, Tacvid, Ilmihal and a concise manual of Islamic faith, worship and ethics must be taught to tribesmen, the ritual worship together with congregation in the tribes must be encouraged (*Cemaatle namaz kilmayı teşvik etmek*), he tribesmen must never know the Sunni ulema as the Ottoman government officials. If the tribesmen asked why have you come here, they must answer such as follows: I have to visit the tribal confederations as a traveler, the Sunni subjects in Iraq must be properly informed about the badness of Shiite Islam, ulema must treat nicely towards the Shiite believers and the religious debates which might be result in dissentions must not be made.¹⁹⁰

Additionally, 10 Sunni ulema were sent to the Sunni madrasas in Basra and its surroundings to spread the Sunni faith and to stop the spread of Shiism. Their salaries were 500 piasters and they it were paid by the Ottoman treasury.¹⁹¹ Also, these Sunni preachers and müderris were chosen by the Süleymaniye Madrasas which were the highest education center in the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Sheikh Said Efendi sending one of the respectable ulema to Iraq was highly educated knowledge in Sunnism. Thanks to his efficient religious knowledge about Sunnism, the improvement of Shiism and spread of Shiite believers in the city of Samarra was stopped in two years.¹⁹²

The most effective ways to prevent Shiism were the use of Sunni ulema and revival of Sunni madrasas and modern schools in Iraq. The number of Sunni institutions was mentioned in the local governor reports according to which there are two civil and military schools and two elementary schools and one school of fine arts in Iraq. In these schools, the rules of Sunni were very well taught by the expert

¹⁹⁰ BOA, Y.E.E. 9/14

¹⁹¹ BOA, MF.MKT. 561/28 1317.04.21 (9 Haziran 1901).

¹⁹² BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. 23/18.

teachers.¹⁹³ In line with these targets, Ottoman government decided to renovate the madrasas.

The new religious scholar (*müderriş*) was appointed to the madrasas of Imam-ı Azam, Hazret-i Gavs, Seyyid Sultan Ali and Münevver Hatun. The government published regulations about these scholars. For example; the meeting travel allowance during the visitations of tribes (*harc-ı rah: yol masrafı*), the giving salaries to the students in madrasas and the paying of salaries in time to scholars in Najaf and Samarra.¹⁹⁴ In the official report, the conditions of Sunni education were mentioned and that there were the 23 Sunni primary schools in Iraq. All of the children of cities were trained by the way of enlightenment of Sunni ideas against Shiism in these Sunni schools. In addition to these, the Sunni education was not only supported in the urban life but also mobile schools (*seyyar medrese*) for tribes in Iraq. In the Seyyar Medrese, ulema traveled among the tribes to train the children of tribes according to the understanding of Sunni Islam. For these purposes, ten mobile madrasas were launched among the tribes by Ottoman authorities. The educational expenses of Sunni schools were met by the taxes of sepulture (*Defniye rüsumu*)¹⁹⁵ which was received by Iran and Indian Shiite believers.¹⁹⁶

The use of Sunni ulema and Sunni educations were constantly among the recommended opinions by the Ottoman local governments in Iraq. Besides this, the negative conditions of the Sunni ulema, Sunni training institutions and the

¹⁹³ BOA, Y. EE. 9/14.

¹⁹⁴ BOA, MF. MKT.1050/7.

¹⁹⁵ For the definition of 'Defniye Rüsumu', see Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 187: Defniye Rüsumu: "taxes which were collected from foreign Shiite subjects of Iran and Indian during the transportation of corpses. Ottoman Empire acquired annually income average 9, 243 pounds and the number of buried the shiites approximately 15.000 in one year."

¹⁹⁶ BOA, MF. MKT. 1050/7.

inactiveness and inefficiency were some of the most frequent complaint issues by the local governors in Iraq. Shiite institutions in Iraq, however had a very strong economic and political system. The Shiite ulema had also composed of very intelligent people who could easily affect Sunni believers. In the reports coming from the Vilayet of Baghdad in 13 August 1907, the governor Nazım Pasha criticized how even though eight ulema, mudarris, and preachers had been sent to the places where Shiite Islam was widespread such as villages, cities and nomadic tribes, there were no benefits of these Sunni ulema (*mudarris*) who had come from Süleymaniye madrasas because they were excessive religionist (*mutassıp*). They lacked the consciousness of their crucial duties for Sunni Islam. For these reasons, these Sunni ulama could alienate the Iraqi people from Sunni understandings. When it compared to the Sunni and Iranian ulema, the Shiite ulema could know very well the rules of their own sects and they could valorously take the risks against all challenges for the sake of the improvement and spread of Shiite mazhab. In doing so, they were able to deceive Iraqi people under the mask of the family of house of Prophet Muhammad (*ehl-i beyt sevgisi*).¹⁹⁷

At the same time, in the comprehensive reports which were prepared by the highly respectable ulema Abdizade İbrahim Efendi and Alusizade Şakir Efendi, they shared same opinions with the Baghdad governor Nazım Pasha. According to them, there had not been the benefits to employ the preachers and mudarris in the Iraq region, if the number of the primary schools in Iraq were increased, the education of these schools could not be appropriate for training and the manners of the Sunni sect. The local people in Iraq could refuse the forms of the Shiite sect. Furthermore, the

¹⁹⁷ BOA, MF. MKT. 1050/7.

damages of this Shiite sect were not only composed of moral damage but also the followers of the Shiite sect have been a tendency to the Iranian state.¹⁹⁸

The Sunni Dervishes in the Ottoman Iraq

Sultan Abdülhamid II was closely interested in popular Sufism and his contacts with Sufi orders brought political advantages in terms of communication with the paramount local leaders around the empire.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, the Bektashi and Naqshbandi Dervishes which came from Sufi status had been appointed to the Iraqi districts in the processing of counter-propagation towards the spread of Shiism in Iraq. They had immediately started the Sunni teaching in Iraqi provinces on the order of Abdülhamid II.²⁰⁰ The tradition of Sufism had had widespread popularity in Ottoman Iraq.²⁰¹ In this way, Abdülhamid II wanted to consolidate his imperial patronage by way of supporting the pupils and murids of Naqshbandi in Iraq with the aim of counter-propaganda against the principal Shiite religious leader of the time like Ayatollah Muhammad Hasan alSirazi.

Also, Abdülhamid II constructed Sunni religious schools in Samarra and Baghdad which were under the influence of the ideas of Naqshbandi like Muhammad Said al- Naqshbandi schools. These members of tariqats advised people of the importance of obeying the orders of the government as well as teaching Islam and

¹⁹⁸ BOA, MF. MKT. 1050/7.

¹⁹⁹ Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization," p. 355.

²⁰⁰BOA, MF.MKT. 1050/7.

²⁰¹ Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, p. 128.

praise (zikr) in accordance with the Shariah.²⁰² Sultan Abdülhamid II also gave money from his private purse to Ahmed al- Rifai, the founder of Rifaiyya, for the circulation of his books in the Iraqi regions.²⁰³ As a result of sending of the tariqats to Iraq, there could be seen the Bektashi and Naqshbandi traces in the Shiite shrine cities.²⁰⁴ It is important to note that Abdülhamid II also appointed the families of Sunni sayyids from Baghdad instead of the local Shiite sayyids as the Nakıb ül Eşraf in the shrine cities in order to limit the Shiite policy in Najaf and Karbala.²⁰⁵ However, despite all of the efforts of the Ottoman Empire, Baghdad officer said that while the rate of Shiite groups in Iraq were fifteen percent twenty years earlier, the Shiite Islam had spread all of Iraqi region now. The Shiites were brought under the control of Iranian state.²⁰⁶

In the late nineteenth century, the spread of Shiism was not only an important turning point in the whole history of Iraq, but it also signified the milestone in the intense competition between the states of Ottoman Empire, Britain and Iran over Iraq. In this respect, looking at the historical origins of the increasing clashes and disputes between the Ottoman and Iranian states over the Iraqi region in the second half of the nineteenth century, the spread of Shiism and the Iranian missionary activities to penetrate into the Iraqi region could play a crucial role in the increase of sectarian problems between two sects.

²⁰² Ateş, *Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881*, p. 332.

²⁰³ Eich, *Patterns of the 1920 rising in Iraq: The Rifaiyya Tariqa and Shiism*, p. 115.

²⁰⁴ Nakash, Yitzhak. *Ibid*, p: 177

²⁰⁵ Meir Litvak, *Shii Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq: The Ulama of Najaf and Karbala*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 167.

²⁰⁶ BOA, MF. MKT. 1050/7.

In the nineteenth century, the constantly increasing reports and rumors on the growth of the Shiite population in Iraq had also disturbed the Ottoman Empire. The imperial center had mainly decided to interfere in the spread of Shiism through the Iranian missionary activities because this was a crucial security risk which required urgent intervention against Iran for the Ottoman authorities. All of the Ottoman Empire's efforts were as follows, the sending Sunni Imams and Sunni preachers to Iraqi mosques and the establishment of Sunni institutions in the nineteenth century. It was also brought some prohibitions to the Shiite activities such as the forbidding of the commemoration of Muharram, the marriages of Shiite-Sunni people, and purchasing of Iranian property.

Without doubt, the spread of Shiism in the nineteenth century cannot be explained by any single cause like Iranian missionary activities in Iraq. However, as understood from the correspondences that the growth of Shiism stemmed from the Iranian state's missionary activities and this may have resulted in separation of Iraq from the Ottoman authority. Much of the efforts of the Ottoman Empire about preventing of the growth of Shiism had little success. The population of Shiites in Iraq has increased enormously and Shiite groups gained political and religious power in Iraqi province.

CHAPTER V

HAMIDIAN STRATEGY FOR HEGEMONY: THE UNIFICATION OF SUNNI-SHIITE SECTS

The Ottoman Tanzimat ideologies like equality and religious freedom and the pluralism policy were not sufficient to hold Ottoman subjects in an integrated society. Having lost the heavily non-Muslim populated Balkans, now, in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire population consisted mainly of Muslim subjects. Thereafter, efforts were made to unite the different Muslim groups of Ottoman Empire on a common basis by the Ottoman central government. Therefore, Abdülhamid II put into practice the Pan-Islamic policy in order to protect the unity of all Muslim subjects against European expansionism.²⁰⁷ Also, the Ottoman Muslim population was made up of some sects with different religious ideas, like Sunnis, Shiites and Wahhabis. These different sects were a biggest obstacle for the Abdülhamid II's political consolidation policy. The problems among the Muslim population in the Ottoman areas had to be solved in order to protect the unity of all of the Muslim Ottoman subjects.

In the previous part of my thesis, I dealt with the prevention policy of the Ottoman Empire against the spread of Shiism in Iraq by using methods of Sunni education and preaching activities in the nineteenth century. At the same time, another important policy of the Ottoman Empire towards the Shiites was the Islamist policy of that period. For that reason, Abdülhamid II put into practice Islamic unity, which is known as the Pan-Islamic project in order to gather all Muslim groups under a single Caliphate roof against the expansionist policy of the Europeans. In this

²⁰⁷ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Kuzey Irak'da Tarikat, Aşiret ve Siyaset," *Divan* 2 (1999), p. 168.

respect, Abdülhamid II tried to establish good relations with the Iran starting in the late 1870s as a result this Pan-Islamist policy. His attempts were mostly based on the Shiite-Sunni alliance and to form good relationship with Iran. Sunni Ottomans decided to coordinate the unity programs with Iraqi Shiites and the Iranian state. In this context, the separation issues between the Sunni- Shiite sects firstly tried to be resolved and the idea of Sunni-Shiite unity had been attempted to be revived with the aim of the common action of Iran and Ottoman Empires. Also, Abdülhamid II decided to negotiate with the Shiite ulema in Iran with Sunni ulema in Istanbul with the aim of unity of Shiite-Sunni groups. From these purposes, in 1908, Ottoman officials were sent to Tehran so as to negotiate with Iranian ulema. At this chapter, the basic contention is the Abdülhamid II's attempts to the Shiite-Sunni unity against the spread of Shiism and the Britain and Iran's growing penetration over the Iraqi region.

In this section, I would like make a literature review about Pan-Islamism within the context of Shiite-Sunni unity. Then, I present the changing discourse of Ottoman officials to Shiite subjects and the crucial advices of Ottoman intellectuals, especially Cemaledddin Afgani, Yusuf Rıza Pasha, Ahmed Cevdet and Iranian ulema Mirza Hasan to Abdülhamid II about the providing of Shiite-Sunni unity in Iraq.

The Idea of Pan-Islamism

Looking at the present literature, the Pan-Islamism policy attracted a great attention in innumerable publications throughout the nineteenth century. And, the identity of

Abdülhamid II was commonly personalized by the term of Pan-Islamism.²⁰⁸ In this respect, Şerif Mardin's work "*Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset*" focuses on the political Islam and Abdülhamid's pan-Islamist policy. First, he properly summarizes that the Muslim population in the Ottoman Empire has becoming more on the boil since 1878 and Ottoman intellectuals started to criticize Tanzimat which was a western movement. Therefore, they supported the Islamic Unity (*İttihad-ı İslam*) instead of Westernism. Namely, the idea of pan-Islamism began to emerge as an eligible policy for Abdülhamid II in the nineteenth century.²⁰⁹

Moreover, Cezmi Eraslan discussed the Abdülhamid' Pan-Islamist policy and the consequences of this policy in his book of *II Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği*. According to him, in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire no longer dominated both physically and militarily, so Abdülhamid II decided to strengthen the state's position both internally and externally against the European expansionism. He also wanted to promote the religious, social, moral, and intellectual relations with the Muslim world by using the idea of Islamic unity.²¹⁰

Kemal Karpat says that there was a growing demand for a Muslim political center in the second half of the nineteenth century and the Ottoman Empire undertook this task because Abdülhamid II was seen as the greatest religious leader who just could make a Muslim unity.²¹¹ However, the concept of pan-Islamism cannot be described with one or two general statements. Also, Karpat talks about two different viewpoints in order to explain pan-Islamism. For example, for the European

²⁰⁸ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "İsmi olup da Cismi Olmayan Kuvvet: II. Abdülhamid'in Pan-Islamizm Politikası Üzerine Bir Deneme," *Osmanlı*, c 2 (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), p. 380.

²⁰⁹ Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), p. 13.

²¹⁰ Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği* (İstanbul: Ötüken Press, 1992), p. 151.

²¹¹ Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 4.

viewpoint, pan-Islamism was “a militant international Muslim political movement of opposition of the West and primarily to its Christian faith and its civilization”. In contrast with the Western standpoint, the Muslims, in particular the intellectuals examined the pan-Islamism “as a movement of regeneration and modernization and as an effort to mobilize Muslims.” He added that this movement was not for self-defense against Western colonialism, but for self renewal and progress.²¹²

Moreover, the ideas of Cemaleddin Afgani had a vital importance for Landau’s discourses. Afghani argues that only a united Muslim world can resist against the physical superiority of European powers.²¹³ Islam began to take on a political view in the conservative policies of Abdülhamid II and Young Turks who made a collaborative effort to political reform.²¹⁴ Landau gives a great emphasis on the propagation tools in the spread of Islamist ideas and the author conveys following: Ottoman Empire benefited from the local sheikhs in order to enforce Islamist ideas in the society. Also, media tools were effectively used in order to make Islamist propaganda. Abdülhamid II gave special attention to newspapers, magazines, authors and columns which were written about the Islamist thoughts.²¹⁵

Although Pan-Islamism has been widely debated, it has not been possible to reach a comprehensive conclusion up until now. In this respect, I will try to look at the Pan-Islamism Policy from the perspective of Shiite- Sunni unity in the late nineteenth century.

²¹² Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, p. 18.

²¹³ Jacob Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism: Ideology and Organization*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 31.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 39.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 85.

The Changing Discourse of Ottoman Officials on Shiism

The tone of Ottoman official discourse on Shiism began to change during the reign of Abdühamid II. Normally, the Shiites were called as *Rafizî* (rejectionists of caliphates of Umar and Abu- Bakr) in the official documents by the Ottoman bureaucrats. Archival documents show that the Shiites had been portrayed as among “the superstitious religious”²¹⁶ (*Akaid-i Batla*) and “heretical sect” (*Firka-i Dalle*)²¹⁷ by the Ottoman ulema and officials prior to Abdülhamid’s new policy. Also, the Ottoman administration attempted to eliminate the effects of the Shiite faith in Iraqi province. Together with the idea of Pan-Islamic unity with Shiites and Sunnis, the discourse of Abdülhamid II created a new viewpoint about the Shiites in Iraq. In the new policy of Abdülhamid II, there was been a major turning point in the Ottoman attitudes towards the Shiite society. Then, the Shiite population began to be called one of the Islamic communities (*Cemaat- al Islamiye*). Namely, the Ottoman Empire applied the Shiite consolidation policy with Sunni administration instead of the eliminating of the Shiite sect in Iraq.

Moreover, in 1899, in a crucial and comprehensive report which was sent from Iraqi province to the imperial center about the commitment of Shiite population to the Sunni Caliph Abdülhamid II was given the following expressions by the military staff,

The region of Iraq mainly consisted of Arab and believers of unity of God (*ehl-i iman*). The Shiite population also shares the same belief with the Sunnis about the matters of Sunni rules like sacred book (*Quran*) and prophethood

²¹⁶ BOA, BEO 413/30919.

²¹⁷ Deringil, “The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda,” p. 53.

and Kabe and there is no doubt the commitment to Sultan Abdülhamid II because of his Caliphs of Islam.²¹⁸

It is understood from this report that with Pan-Islamism's consolidation policy, the Ottoman official perception regarding Shiism altered. Dramatically, the Shiite population in Iraq began to be perceived as a part of the Sunni Islamic world by the Ottoman Empire. In this way, Sultan Abdülhamid II sought to re-establish the loyalties of Shiites to the Sultan with the help of the Islamic Caliphate image of all Muslims in the world because the conversion to Shiism had been interpreted as the decrease in the loyalties of the Iraqi Shiite population to the Ottoman Empire by officials.

The Background of Abdülhamid's Shiite-Sunni Unity Policy in Iraq

Probably, the recent demographic situation of the state in the nineteenth century called for integrative policies with the Muslim world. In other words, because Ottomans consisted of people who had various sects of Islam, they were obliged to combine them under one roof. In this respect, the Pan-Islamic policy of Abdülhamid was based on being one united and brotherly nation of the entire Islamic world. Also, the idea of a united Muslim population was not different from Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism or Pan-Hellenism which were frequently used at that time. In fact, the word's origin of the term Pan-Islamism was based on non-Muslim roots.²¹⁹ On the other hand, some of the Ottoman intellectuals had started to use the Pan-Islamism as a means of sociopolitical solidarity to achieve the territorial integrity of the empire

²¹⁸ BOA, Y.PRK. MYD. 23/18. "Hıttı-i İrakıyye sekenesi umumiyet üzere arab ve ehl-i imandan oldukları malumdur. Ve hidayetinde kitab-ı Allah nübüvvette kıblede ehl-i sünnet ve cemaatte müşterektirler, İslamiyet ve hilafet hasebiyle zat-ı akdes hazret-i tacdar-ı merbut olduklarına şüphe yoktur."

²¹⁹ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism: Ideology and Organization*, p. 2.

since the late 1860s. Indeed, Landau notes that the term İttihad-ı İslam appears to have first been used in an article by Ziya Pasha in *Hürriyet*²²⁰ newspaper of 9 November 1868.²²¹ Namık Kemal frequently defended Pan-Islamism in his articles in *Hürriyet* and argued that only a union of all Muslims could save the empire.²²²

Furthermore, many historiographers of the late Ottoman Empire have noted that Sultan Abdülhamid II attempted to fill the hearts of all subjects with love and loyalty to himself. Sultan Abdülhamid II had understood the impossibility of breaking the local notables in his time with the aim of strengthening the central authority. Therefore, he tended to the way of cooperation of the influential local notables in order to renovate the respectability of the Ottoman government among his subjects. Notably, during his reign, he regularly called the powerful notables from distant provinces to his palace to maintain correspondences with the Sultan and. In this respect, the appeal to Islamic policy was thought to be the best way to generate a consensus the Empire and maintaining the loyalty of the Muslim population.²²³

The Solution for Shiite Problem in Iraq: Shiite-Sunni Unity

There was a growing Shiite population in the empire in the nineteenth century and this signified a serious threat for the Ottoman authority because the Ottomans were

²²⁰ *Hürriyet* newspaper was published by Young Ottomans in some European countries between the years of 1868-1870. Most important authors were Ziya Pasha, Namık Kemal and Ali Suavi. Mustafa Fazıl Pasha's desire for a mindful society affected the pressing of the newspaper because he wanted to make an urgent request for a newspaper that will make society economically, politically, and socially aware.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

²²² See example of his columns "*Hubbül vatan minel iman*" and "*El hakku yu'la vela yu'la aleyh*", "*Hürriyet*", 20 June 1868.

²²³ Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization," pp. 358-360.

not only the representative of Sunni identity but also the protectors of the Sunni sect in the Islamic world. Therefore, the growth of the Shiite population in Iraq was perceived as a threat against both Ottoman religious and central authority over the Iraq region.²²⁴In this respect, the spread of these Sunni-Shiite religious differences in Iraq seriously impacted the political and administrative powers of the Ottoman Empire. Especially in the nineteenth century, the Ottomans tried to find solutions to the Shiite groups in its lands by introducing some new measures. In the 1890s, the government of Sultan Abdülhamid II increased state control over the Shiites through Pan-Islamism and he implemented two crucial policies:²²⁵ first, to spread Sunnism through opening Sunni educational institutions and sending Sunni preachers and ulema and preaching activities; second, to establish an alliance among the Shiite-Sunni sects in order to consolidate their loyalties.

The aim of the spread of Sunni Islam policy was to curb Shiism and to proselytize of Sunni ulema.²²⁶For example, Ottoman Empire sent Sunni ulema and kadıs to Iraqi provinces with the aims of the reinforcement of the Sunni believers and gaining of Shiite subjects' loyalties to the Sunni authority in the late nineteenth century. Kadı al-Walid was one of the Sunni ulema sent to Iraq and his task was to restore the principles of Sunni Islam to Hilla which was one of the significant Shiite regions. After the appointment of Kadı al-Wai'dh to Hilla,

he was firstly to pay special heed to the tribes and to lift the veils of ignorance from them, inculcate them in the pillars of the faith, and teach them to know the attributes of God, the wisdom of sending Messengers of God [to the populace] the sending down of the Quran, the number of prophets and messengers of God, the difference between a prophet and a Messenger, to

²²⁴ Farah, *Abdülhamid II and the Muslim World*, p. 167.

²²⁵ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminin İlk Yıllarında İslam Birliği Hareketi". (Ankara: Ankara University Press, May 1988), p. 23.

²²⁶ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, p. 28.

make students believe in all the prophets and Messengers of God, to study all their miracles.²²⁷

In addition to these, Kadı al- Waidh focused on controversial matters among the Sunni- Shiite sects in the Hilla, like the disputes of the Caliphate of Ali. Because of this, he tried to clarify the importance of three Caliphs in Sunni Islam (*Ebubekir, Ömer and Osman*) and he advised the people in Hilla to refrain from praising Ali. In the consequences of his “valorous works” the Sultan assigned al-Waidh to preach the principals of Sunni Islam in the larger field of Iraq and he was rewarded with nişans and medals from the Sultan.²²⁸

Second, Pan-Islamic activity was performed by Abdülhamid II with the aim of Sunni-Shiite alliance.²²⁹ The Pan-Islamic initiatives among the Shiite groups were launched in order to incorporate the Shiites with the Sunni state system. Thanks to this, the Ottomans tried to strengthen the Sunni faith to Shiites in Iraq and to renovate the signs of a lost loyalty to the Empire.²³⁰ In fact, the main objective of the Sultan’s Pan-Islamic scheme was to remove the influences of Iran and the Iranian ulema in the Shiite population of Iraq. At the end, the projects of Pan-Islamism and Sunni missions to the Shiites produced observable success.²³¹

In the evolving geo-political configuration of the period, the Ottoman Empire used the project of Pan-Islamism as a power tool against the colonial European states. It would be useful to address the importance of caliphate in order to achieve

²²⁷ Fattah, “Identity and difference in the work of Sunni historians of eighteenth century and nineteenth century Iraq,” p. 214.

²²⁸ Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi’ite Islam*, p. 28.

²²⁹ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 25.

²³⁰ Fattah, “Identity and difference in the work of Sunni historians of eighteenth century and nineteenth century Iraq,” p. 213.

²³¹ Fattah, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 30.

the goals of the Islamist policy of the Hamidian regime. For Abdülhamid II, Islamic unity could be provided with just the revival of the function of caliphate because the caliph is the name of the highest chief of Islamic world and it was known as the highest Imam.²³² That is to say, the image of caliph had a great influence on the Islamic world and the caliphate so it was viewed as the best agency that could create a united Ottoman-Muslim entity. Therefore, the Ottoman state had a desire for the Islamic leadership which was based on the Sultan's title as the Caliph of Islam or Commander of the Faithful (*emir-el-müminin*).²³³ Therefore, the Sultan and his officials highlighted the commitment to the caliph by trying to increase relationship between the center of the caliphate and Islamic provinces, such as Iraq, Bahrain, and Yemen.

In addition, the Ottoman state tried to teach the Muslims about the importance of jihad and union of Islam with this Pan- Islamic policy. Another purpose of the Pan-Islamist policy of Abdülhamid II was to create a political alliance and a common identity among the Muslim population. In other words, the state was pursuing the aim of a common political, social and cultural value among the Muslim subjects in order to form a united nation.²³⁴

Iranian Policy towards the idea of Shiite-Sunni Unity

As was discussed above, one of the main aims of Pan-Islamism in the nineteenth century was to be able to provide the Sunni-Shiite unity in Iraqi geography. Sultan

²³² Farah, *Abdülhamid II and the Muslim World*, p. 263.

²³³ Deringil, "The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," p. 45.

²³⁴ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 35.

Abdülhamid II attempted to remove the influences of Iranian state and the Iranian ulema (*Mujtahids*) in Iraq with the purpose of unifying the different sects. For the Ottoman authorities, Iranian state was a big threat in the nineteenth century because it was thought that the growing Shiite population in Iraq had occurred with Iranian influence.²³⁵ At first, the Shiite people constituted about twenty percent of all the Muslim population of Ottoman Empire prior to nineteenth century. However, they grew with time especially in Iraq with the supporting of Iran and British by ignoring Abdülhamid's unification policy.²³⁶ Therefore, the Shiite population was perceived as a political threat and security risk by the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Shiism was seen as one of the superstitious religions (*itikad-ı batıla*) by the Sunni authorities and Iraqi Shiites was perceived as ally with Iranian state.²³⁷ Therefore, the Shiite people in Iraq were untrustworthy in the eyes of the central government in the nineteenth century. There was a close relationship between Iran and Iraq because Iraq had the most important Shiite shrines in Najaf, Karbala, Kazımiye and Samara, collectively known as the Atabat-ı Aliyyat.²³⁸ Therefore, Abdülhamid II attempted to establish good relations with Iran between 1876 and 1886 in order to prevent the expansionist policy of Iran and Britain by using the Pan-Islamist policy.

To conclude, even if the sultan followed his Pan-Islamist policy throughout the Muslim world, this policy could failed in the Iran despite all of the sultan's efforts to unify the Muslim world.²³⁹ What were the reasons for the failure of the

²³⁵ Karpaz, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* p. 205.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 210.

²³⁷ BOA, BEO.413/3091.

²³⁸ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 99.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 151.

Pan-Islamist policy of Abdülhamid II in Iraq in the nineteenth century? The Iranian Shah's fear of assimilating under the Ottoman Sunni sect was an important cause for this failure policy.²⁴⁰ That is to say, the Iranian Shah did not want to fall under the protection of Ottoman Caliph; hence the Shah refused the Abdülhamid's Pan-Islamist policy. Then, Iranian Shah wanted to impose his own Shiite ideology in the Iraq, there were not brotherly feelings between the Shiite and Sunni sects. Iranian Shah had some political activities in the Iraq region in order to convert the Sunnis to Shiite sect especially in the nineteenth century.

The Iranian Shah pursued three objectives in Iraq. These were to make the Shiite propaganda by sending the teachers and religious men with the name of *ahund* (a kind of Persian ulema) to Iraq, to send gifts to the mosques and turbes (*tombs*) in Iraq, also to undertake the repair costs of the mosques, madrasas and turbes, to take advantage of Iranian ulema's influences on the Shiites society.²⁴¹ When the provocative activities of Iran were above combined with the financial aid of Britain and the Ottoman disinterest in the region, almost half of the Baghdad people accepted the Shiite sect in 1892. The Shiite- Sunni conflict in Iraq gave Iran and British the opportunities to separate this territory from the Ottoman state.²⁴²

Mainly, Islamism was used as an ideology to forge the unity inside of the country by the Sultan Abdülhamid II. In this respect, Abdülhamid II never neglected to consult with the competent people and received the opinions of the most authoritative Islamic scholars of the period. He gave importance to the ideas of these scholars who were regarded mainly as Pan-Islamic in order to develop this unity.

²⁴⁰ Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği Hareketi*, p. 307.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 308.

²⁴² Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, p. 195.

They provided some suggestions to help the sultan carry out his political, cultural, and social integration policies. They were helpful for the empire in terms of their practical intelligence and innovative capacity. Because these advisers had the knowledge of Ottoman traditions and Islamic law, and also current affairs, they tried to strengthen the state by maintaining the tradition. Furthermore, all of them came from the higher ranks of the Ottoman political military and Arab intellectual establishments.²⁴³

Surely, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (1823-95) was one of the significant pioneers of these scholars. He was educated in a classical madrasa and developed his information in the study of history and education. Ahmet Cevdet Pasha entered the service of Reşid Pasha before that of the Abdülhamid II. He was an excellent individual for Reşid Pasha because Reşid Pasha was looking for someone who was well educated in Islam, but open minded towards the new ideas and Ahmet Cevdet was exactly such a person. After he worked with Reshid Pasha, he served for Abdülaziz in a high government position as becoming minister of justice. Later on, he worked on various offices under Abdülhamid II. His interpretation of events and advice had a deep effect on Abdülhamid's decision.

Ahmet Cevdet Pasha formed a committee in order to find the ways of ending the Sunni-Shiite rivalry. He classified Shiites as Imamites (*Twelvers*) in Iraq and Zaidis in Yemen; the warlike Ismailis in Behran-Yemen and the Mutevalli in Sayda-Lebanon. Also, he gave some information about the attitudes of these different Shiite groups against the Sunni Ottoman Empire. For example, Zaidis were closer to the Sunnis because they recognized the legitimacy of the first two caliphs Ebubekir and Ömer. In contrast to the Zaidis, the Twelvers were opposed to the Sunni and Iranian

²⁴³ Karpas, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, p. 199.

Shah, too, since both Ottoman Caliph and the Iranian Shah were an obstacle to the Iranian ulema' authority. However, despite all of the negative relation between Sunni and Shiite people, Ahmet Cevdet believed that there were not real doctrinal differences between them. The reason for the conflict was actually just the political purposes. In short, Ahmet Cevdet, who believes the overarching power of the Islam stated the alliance of Shiites and Sunni against the enemies of Islam as an obligation.

For this purpose, he advised to Abdülhamid II in a reply qualification for the Iranian Shiites efforts and he prepared a detailed report in 1891 about the Islamic alliances. The ideas of Pasha were as follows: to repair and develop the areas which were accepted as holy places by the Shiite sect in Hedjaz and Iraq, such as repair of the tombs of Imam Abbas, Imami Abbas, Imami Hasan, Imami Zeydülabidin, Imami Caferüssadık and Fatımatüzzehra, to attach importance to Shiite population living in Hedjaz as well as Sunnis, to gain the Persian ulema' in Iraq support against Iran and to engage in public works (*imar faaliyetleri*) in the holy Shiite regions in Iraq.²⁴⁴

Another inspiring person to Abdülhamid II was Yusuf Rıza Pasha, the head of the Commission for Refugees. Yusuf Rıza saw Sultan Abdülhamid as the leader of all Muslims and he compared him with the Iranian Shah. According to the statement of Yusuf Rıza Pasha, whereas Abdülhamid II was regarded as '*hilafetpenah*' and '*imamül müslimin*' by the Sunni people, the Iran Shah had no such authority among the Shiites. Therefore, Abdülhamid II was the most appropriate person in order to become leader of the Muslims.²⁴⁵

Apart from that, we shall examine the Pan-Islamic ideas of the best known and most powerful personality, Cemaleddin Afgani. He was very a famous Pan-Islamist and he made a significant contribution to the understanding of Pan-Islamism

²⁴⁴ BOA, Y. EE. 12/12.

²⁴⁵ BOA, Y.EE. 38/118.

(1838/39–97) he was a leading political activist and Pan-Islamist who resided in Istanbul from 1892 until his death in 1897. He also had a close relationship with Sultan Abdülhamid II and helped to the Sultan's Pan-Islamist scheme in the 1890s. Therefore, it can be described with his own words clearly. At the same time, Afghani had been born and grow up in a Shiite environment and also was closely familiar with the Sunnis due to his travels to Sunni regions. Therefore, Abdülhamid II wanted to hear his ideas about the Sunni-Shiite problem. He came to Istanbul from London in order to propagate Islamic unity under the leadership of Sultan Abdülhamid II as the caliph of all Muslims. Cemaleddin Afgani inspired the Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and Abdülhamid II with his reasonable solutions especially in the Sunni-Shiite problem.²⁴⁶

Moreover, Afgani was mainly engaged in Arabic and Persian writing and publishing propaganda for the Shiite-Sunni unity. Istanbul wanted Afgani to convince the Shiite populations to unite under the Caliphate against the British treatment of the Muslims. Afgani also began to campaign against the Mirza Riza Shah in the Shiite lands that lived in the Ottoman Empire, notably in Karbala and Najaf.²⁴⁷ He aimed to strengthen pride in Islam and to use Islam as an ideological weapon against the Christian Westerners. This political propaganda of Afgani against the West was appeared mostly impractical and he failed to achieve his goals.²⁴⁸

Negotiations between Abdülhamid II and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani resulted to some implementations about Islamic Unity. Firstly, Abdülhamid II excluded all

²⁴⁶ Farah, *Abdülhamid II and the Muslim World*, p. 310.

²⁴⁷ Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and Abduh: an essay of religious unbelief and political activism in modern Islam*, (London: Cass, 1966), p: 60-61

²⁴⁸ Nikki Keddie, "An Islamic response to Imperialism, (London: University of California Press, 1968), p. 40.

newspapers and pamphlets which made the propaganda of Shiism and discredited the official belief throughout the whole country, particularly in Iraq. Secondly, Abdülhamid II repaired the tombs of the Imams such as Imam Ali and Imam Husain and the turbes of Prophet's other family members. The purpose of Afgani's advice could compose of the image of masters of the holy places.²⁴⁹ Also, the sultan decorated tombs with the precious gifts. However, at first Iranian Shah rejected the desire of the sultan about the repairing of these turbes. Even if the Shah politely rejected the request of the Sultan for the repairing of turbes of saint Imams and gifts, the sultan promised to carry out the repairs himself exactly as desired by the Shah. In this respect, this turned into a symbolic power struggle between the Ottoman Empire and Iran about the repairing of the Holy Imami tombs. Both the Sunni and Shiite sultans wanted to be protector of these sacred spaces by repairing tombs.

In 2 July 1886, a telegram which was sent from the Shrine cities (Atabat-ı Aliyya: Najaf and Karbala) in Iraq to Imperial center by the Iranian ulema Muhsin Han about the repair of the Imami tombs was given in the following expressions,

Muhsin Han from the Atabat-ı Aliyya asked a favor of the central authority that in the repairing of some places of Najaf city and the dome Imam Ali's tomb which were devastated part of it had been normally made by the Iranian Shah and for that reason, it made an application to Iranian embassy in order to be receive permission from Iranian Shah.²⁵⁰

Thirdly, Abdülhamid II tried to gain the support of the Iranian ulema in Iraq against Iran by way of assigning salaries and giving medals to them. In this respect, with the decision of the Grand Baghdad Assembly, the Iranian ulema were given

²⁴⁹ Nikki Keddie, "An Islamic response to Imperialism, p. 54.

²⁵⁰ BOA, İ.MMS. 84/3626 1310.10.10 (12 Temmuz 1886).

payments and medal in Iraqi region.²⁵¹ In addition to these, Ottoman Empire undertook the task of bodyguard of Iranian ulema in the shrine cities. A telegram was sent to the Ottoman central authority to Iranian state about Molla Kasım Horasani who was one of the significant Persian ulema in Najaf. This report mentioned that the unknown person had been sent from Tehran to Najaf in order to kill Iranian ulema Molla Kasım Horasani. For that reason, it was necessary to take some precautions to prevent the assassination of Molla Kasım. On this occasion, the man whose name was as Seyyid Abdülhüseyin was caught and arrested in Baghdad by Mirza Mehdi and then he was delivered to the Iranian consulate in Baghdad. It was later learned that he was a follower of seditious religion in Tehran.²⁵²

Last but not least, Kamil Pasha wanted to solve the Shiite problem in Iraq by way of Sunni education and sending preaching the children of the Shiite people living especially in Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul tried to grow according to Sunni belief in Istanbul by paying to all expenses with the hands of state. The following excerpt from the Kamil Pasha's proposal clearly reveals:

The Ottoman government should choose a few students from each of the Shiites in the Iraqi provinces like Baghdad, Basra, Najaf and Karbala and they should be sent to the madrasa of al- Ezher in Egypt in their youth. Over a period of 8-10 years, with the help of a good Sunni education in there, they would abandon their superstitious belief and come back to their homeland as Sunnis. Then, they could be appointed to teach their fellow countrymen by way of the allocation of salary to them in Iraq.²⁵³

²⁵¹ BOA, MVL, 776/26 1281.01.25 (6 Nisan 1865).

²⁵² BOA, DH.MUİ. 117/81 1328.07.21 (29 Temmuz 1910).

²⁵³ BOA, İ.DH. 1237/96880. 1308.12.07 (14 Temmuz 1891) "*Bağdad, Basra, Necef ve Kerbela gibi şehir ve kasabalar ahalisinin şii mezhebinde bulunan gençlerin birer ikişer talebe olunarak mutasarrıfları taraf-ı devlet-i aliyyeden tesviye edilmek üzere Mısır da cami-ül ezher medresesinde tahsile gönderilmiş olsa sakin on sene zarfında iktisab edecekleri ulum-u aliyye sayesinde diyanet-i islamiyenin hakayığı ve dekayıkına yakın hasıl ederek sinn i şebabette zihinlerine henüz layığıyla birleşmemiş olan itikadat-ı batıla olacağı cihetle bunlar Sünni olarak memleketlerine avdetlerinde*

Abdülhamid accepted the proposals of Kamil Pasha regarding of the necessities of Sunni education in Iraq. However, Abdülhamid chose Istanbul as a Sunni education centre instead of sending Shiite students to Egypt. Then, the students chosen from Iraqi provinces were sent to Istanbul.²⁵⁴ However, this education policy produced little success because many of the students brought to Istanbul returned to Iraq. Abdülhamid consulted with Mirza Hasan Shaikh al Rais, an important Iranian dissident, residing in Istanbul. Abdülhamid and Shaikh al- Rais's attempts were based on the Shiite-Sunni unity to form good relationship with Iran. Therefore, Shaikh al Rais proposed the removal of the enmity (*adavet*) between the Shiites and Sunnis and he tried to make contact with the Iranian ulema and he made some reformist activities like writing a pamphlet (*risale*).²⁵⁵

To conclude, Abdülhamid II conferred with some scholars like Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, Yusuf Rıza Pasha and Jamal al-Din- al-Afghani in order to prevent the propaganda of the Iranian Shah with the spread of Shiite sect, and to win the loyalty of the Ottoman Shiites. And he reached a conclusion with the suggestions of these scholars that the best long term solution to the Shiite problem in Iraq was the unity of the Shiite and Sunni people. Nevertheless, despite all of the efforts of Abdülhamid II and the scholars especially like Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and Cemaleddin Afghani, the spread of Shiism in Iraq was not stopped and Shiite sect increased its influence day by day on the region.

kendilerine maaş tahsisıyla hem cinslerine tedris-i ulum ile meşgul edilmeleri halinde bu vasıta ile Şiilerden vücuda getirilecek bir nev-i ulemayı temessür etdikçe...

²⁵⁴ BOA, Y. PRK.BŞK. 22/62 1308.12.15 (22 Temmuz 1891) see also BOA, Y. PRK. BŞK 24/66. 1309.05.21 (23 Aralık 1891)

²⁵⁵ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "The Caliph and Mujtahids: Ottoman Policy towards the Shiite Community of Iraq in the late nineteenth century", *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 4(2006), p. 566.

The Repair of Shiite Tombs: Winning the Hearts of Shiite Population

In the background of Abdülhamid's intention of repairing of the sacred Shiite tombs, there was the Wahhabi²⁵⁶ attack to Karbala, Najaf and Shiite groups in the Iraqi regions in 1800s. Najaf and Karbala were the pilgrimage areas and these places were accepted as sacred by the Shiites.²⁵⁷ However, the pilgrimage doctrines of Shiism were not accepted among the forms of pure Islam by the Wahhabis. Therefore, they attacked the tombs of saints Shiite holy cities like Karbala.²⁵⁸ They also tried to prevent the Shiite pilgrimages at every turn and they did not allow Shiite people to go on pilgrimage passing through the places of the Wahhabi influence. Nonetheless, the Shiite pilgrims coming from Baghdad were obliged to pass by Najd which was under the Wahhabi control, to reach Najaf and Karbala. In the cities were controlled by the Wahhabis, they plundered the Shiite pilgrimage caravans and confiscated the property of the Shiite pilgrims.²⁵⁹

Furthermore, the event of the killing of merchant Wahhabis in the Shrine cities was one of the major conflicts between the Shiites and Wahhabis. 300 Wahhabis who had come to Najaf for trade activities were killed by Shiites in Najaf during clashes. Even if Süleyman Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, had taken some precautions in order to prevent a potential danger from the Wahhabis, he could not be

²⁵⁶ *The title of Wahhabi was given to the followers of Shaykh Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab by his Muslim opponents. People to whom the Wahhabi name was applied have rejected this opprobrious label.* Küçükcan, Talib. "Some reflections on the Wahhabiya and Sanusiya Movements" *The Islamic Quarterly*, Volume: 37 Number:4, 1993. P:238

²⁵⁷ Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti (Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı)*, p. 33.

²⁵⁸ Küçükcan, "Some reflections on the Wahhabiya and Sanusiya Movements," p. 239.

²⁵⁹ Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti (Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı)*, p. 33.

successful. Wahhabis saw the massacre of 300 pilgrims as the violation of the non-aggression treaty signed with Ali Pasha, so they began to move to Baghdad government in order to intimidate and to avenge the deaths merchants.²⁶⁰

Even though the event of the massacre of 300 Wahhabis took place in Najaf city, the Wahhabis attacked Karbala instead of Najaf because of the defenseless position of Karbala. The first act of the Wahhabis was to loot the tomb of Husain. Later on, they killed the tired individuals from the day before due to the Muharrem mourning ceremony. In short, Wahhabis were massacred almost five thousand people with the Shiite majority. This case also caused an overreaction by the Iranian government because there were Iranians among the killed Shiites. The Iranian government sent a letter to the Baghdad governor in order to take the revenge of killed Shiites. Unless this was done, he threatened Süleyman Pasha that Wahhabis with an army would enter Baghdad. Eventually, the Sunni Baghdad government could not get a good result against the Wahhabis. Shortly, the Karbala raid provoked a huge response in both the Wahhabis and Shiites. To conclude, these attacks of the Wahhabis naturally resulted in hate against them from the Shiite people. Also, the Wahhabi occupation of these sacred Shiite cities and the pressure to Shiite individuals increase of the hostility between Shiites and Wahhabis.

Also, these Wahhabi attacks to Shiites and sacred Shiite cities in Iraq led to breaking the confidence of Shiites to the Ottoman Empire. The image of Ottoman Empire was severely damaged in this region because of the failure to protect the Shiites. At this respect, Abdülhamid II tended to carry out some infrastructure works in the shrine cities like Najaf and Karbala in order to re-establish of the damaged state images in there after the Wahhabi attacks on the Shiite regions. For instance,

²⁶⁰ Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti (Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı)*, p. 35.

Ahmet Cevdet Pasha suggested to repair the Shiite tombs (türbes) of Prophet's family (*ehl-i beyt*) in Iraq and to send presents to these tombs in order to regain the support of Shiite population and prevent their separatist movements in this region.²⁶¹

At the same time, repairing the tombs of the Imams like Imam Husayn and Imam Abbas and sending valuable gifts like gold and silver candelabras²⁶² were crucial indicators and evidences of the strengthening of the caliphate image and visibility of the state in the time of the Abdülhamid II. The Iranian Shah realized Abdülhamid's visibility policy and he did not allow them in order to repair the turbes and send precious materials. He wanted to repair the sacred tombs in the shrine cities with the Iranian government's support. The Shah tried to win the Iranian ulema's heart with this repair because he was aware of the Iranian ulema' influences in the shrine cities on the Iranian population.²⁶³

Hamidian Philanthropy towards in Shiite Population of Ottoman Iraq

The imperial symbolic representation of power through the gift system gained special importance during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. This imperial gift-giving by Abdülhamid II was publicized through ceremonies (Friday Prayer) and the mass media (*newspapers*) in order to prove its strength and legitimacy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁶⁴ Moreover, the Pan-Islamist activities of Abdülhamid II in the Arabian region did not include only the public works in the Iraq

²⁶¹ BOA, BEO. 1243/93156.

²⁶² Takvim-i Vekayi, 1263.02.06 (24 Ocak 1847), p. 1.

²⁶³ Çetinsaya, "The Caliph and Mujtahids: Ottoman Policy towards the Shiite Community of Iraq in the Late Nineteenth Century," p. 563.

²⁶⁴ Özbek, "Imperial Gifts and Sultanic Legitimation During the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909," p. 206.

but also some other Muslim areas like Mecca, Medina, and Syria. During the reign of Abdülhamid II, the government was closely involved in building and repairing sacred spaces, tombs and operating public land and waterways, railroads and other public works in the whole Muslim world in order to enhance the visibility and respectability of the government.²⁶⁵

Also, the rebuilding of the Süleyman Shah Tomb in Rakka, the tomb of Shaikh Khalid (1852) in Damascus, and the tomb of Ertuğrul also paralleled the aim of the visibility of the empire and the policy of preserving all of the Islamic territory of Sultan Abdülhamid II.²⁶⁶ According to Selim Deringil, Abdülhamid II in all public works used his monogram (*Tuğra*) and Sultan Abdülhamid's name was written in his gifts, buildings and clock towers throughout the Ottoman Empire. Repairing and rebuilding the tombs of Ertuğrul Gazi, and sending imperial gifts to the sacred spaces like the holy mantle of Kabe, were the political vehicles of visibility of the Sultan Abdülhamid's sovereign image.²⁶⁷

In addition to these, as for is seen in the lists of Sultan Abdülhamid's beneficence records in the 1876-1909,²⁶⁸ the repair of tombs, the most part of the Abdülhamid's Privy Purse was used as the construction of schools and the building of mosques in the Ottoman Arabian provinces like Baghdad, Beirut, Mosul, Mecca and Medina. Especially, the construction and repairing of famous mosques, *Dergah*,

²⁶⁵ Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization," p. 362.

²⁶⁶ BOA, BEO. 3821/286560 1326.08.28 (10 Kasım 1910). "*hazreti padişahi süleyman şah hazretlerinin rakka kazası dahilindeki türbesinin tamiri için evvel emirde keşfinin icrasıyla mikdar-ı masarifinin tayini ve evrak-ı keşfinin irsali lazım geleceğine vilayete ona göre tebligata ifa-yı himmet*"

²⁶⁷ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London: Tauris, 1998), pp. 29-34.

²⁶⁸ *Cülûs-ı hümayun-ı measadet-makrun-ı hazret-i hilafetpenahiden şimdiye kadar Emlak-ı Seniyye ve hazine-i Hassa-i Şahane varidatından hayrat ve müberrata vesair tesisat-ı Hayriye ve askeriye inayet ve ihsan buyurulan mebaliğın müfredatını mübeyyin defter.*

mevlevihane, tombs in the sacred spaces of the Muslim world like Mecca, Medina and Najaf stand out in this beneficence record of Abdülhamid II. The news of these philanthropic activities of Sultan were published the newspapers like *Takvim-i Vekayi, Malumat, Servet-i Fünun and İkdam*.²⁶⁹ The cases of financing of repairing and building of tombs and mosques in the Muslim sacred spaces by the Sultan illustrate that one of the main aims was to constitute the image of devout, intimate Sultan in his subjects by using Islamic religious motives.²⁷⁰

Although Abdülhamid II and his officials followed various Pan-Islamist activities in order to construct a brotherly nation, the financing of these activities is not known clearly because of the disorganization of the state finances at that time and relevant records and also, the spending of the Sultan with his own funds.²⁷¹ Therefore, there is speculation instead of real information such as Sultan Abdülhamid II spent half of his revenues on the Pan-Islamism or budget was basically covered by state and donations accepted from the Muslims. Unfortunately, there are not exact sources about that topic.²⁷² Nevertheless, according to Özbek, Abdülhamid II was the major financial contributor for Pan-Islamist activities, and almost six percent of all funds came from the Sultan's Privy Purse (*ceyb-i hümayun: şahsî hazine*).²⁷³ For example, in the looking at the total amount of the Sultan's Privy

²⁶⁹Sabit Bekçi, Ebul Faruk Önal, *Sultan İkinci Abdülhamit Han'ın Hayır Eserleri*, (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2006), p. 28.

²⁷⁰ Nadir Özbek, "Imperial Gifts and Sultanic Legitimation During the Reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, 1876-1909" *In Poverty and Charity in the Middle Eastern Contexts*, edited by Mine Ener, Amy Singer and Michael Bonner, New York: State University of New York Press (2003), p. 216.

²⁷¹ Nadir Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 2005), p. 72.

²⁷² Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism: Ideology and Organization*, p. 56.

²⁷³ Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909," p. 73.

Purse about the repair of the Imami Ali tomb, the Sultan helped financially with 27,717 piasters in the between 1876-1900.²⁷⁴

Sultan Abdülhamid II and his officials were in need of money in order to make reformist activities in separatist regions like Iraq. Even if the Sultan Abdülhamid II was one of the greatest contributors for these activities, there were still the lack of money and it was the greatest obstacle to the reforms.²⁷⁵ Perhaps, in this sense it is useful to open a new title: “philanthropic activity”. The pious donations could be another important source in order to make these reformist activities. It is a well known fact that Muslims were willing to make the voluntary activities for just the approval of God or in other words, for philanthropic activity. The Hamidian regime also encouraged public participation in voluntary activities in order to unify the fragmented Ottoman society.²⁷⁶ Namely, aid campaign (*iane*) made by not only by the empire but also the citizens; Abdülhamid II supported the society for donations in order to reach a participatory public sphere. While Abdülhamid II allowed the public donations of the society, he showed his flexible and extensive state policy.

The public sphere concept in voluntary dynamism was also very important for the visibility of the government. To put it Özbek’s words: “a dynamic public sphere was one of the key elements of the Hamidian regime’s legitimation strategies.”²⁷⁷ That is to say, while Abdülhamid II provided services for society in the context of philanthropic activities, at the same time he tried to impose the state’s visibility. This

²⁷⁴ Bekçi, Ebul Faruk Önal, *Sultan İkinci Abdülhamit Han’ın Hayır Eserleri*, p. 26.

²⁷⁵ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*, pp. 55-56.

²⁷⁶ Özbek, “Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909,” p. 59.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 63.

particular philanthropic activity of the Ottoman Empire was effectively used in the repair of Imami tombs in the shrine cities and education of Shiite children with a Sunni perspective.

Iraq was a major frontier zone between Sunni Ottoman and Shiite Iran. Therefore, Iraq was the ideal region to show of the Empire's visibility. For example, the cities of Najaf and Karbala in southern Iraq attracted large number of pilgrims annually from Indian and Iranian Shiites, every year, 100,000 Shiite pilgrims from Iran and India visited shrine cities of Iraq and came to bury their relatives at Atabat.²⁷⁸ Therefore, Abdülhamid II saw Iraq as the most appropriate region in order to increase the empire's visibility and show the power of the state. And he made some philanthropic activities like the repair of the tombs of Imam Ali and Imam Husain.²⁷⁹

These activities can be evaluated in terms of the philanthropic activity, too. Except for the Iraqi region, Abdülhamid II also pursued such philanthropic activities in the Syrian lands. For instance, according to the Ottoman archival documents, he made the Süleyman Shah Tomb in Rakka and also the repair costs were undertaken later by him.²⁸⁰ Another example was the building of zawiya over the tomb of Sheikh Khalid in Damascus. Sultan Abdülhamid II sustained the financial and governmental support for the construction of large zawiya over the sheikhs Khalid tomb by using his endowments in 1894 and Sultan paid the salaries of certain Naqshbandiyya sheikhs in Damascus and Istanbul.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908*, p. 151.

²⁷⁹ BOA, BEO. 1243/9316 1319.08.03 (15 Kasım 1901).

²⁸⁰ BOA, BEO. 3821/286560.

²⁸¹ Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881," p. 324.

Unifying Shiites and Sunnis: A Second Attempt, (1920)

In 1920, a brief pan-Islamic unity was experienced Iraqi region between the Sunni and Shiite groups with the aim of providing security of Iraq and the Holy Cities. In Iraq, two significant factors played major roles in the formation of this Shiite-Sunni cooperation in 1920. One of them was the onset of a liberation movement together with the outbreak of the armed revolt in 1920, and, secondly, the poems of Sunni Yusuf al- Suveydi about the Shiite Imams in Karbala consolidated the Sunni and Shiite unity.²⁸² In the time of armed revolt against the British, the nationalist leaders of the major sects in Iraq like the tribal leaders of Sunni and Shiites allied with each other and they acted as members of good family in many cases in Iraq and they protected their revenues against the British.²⁸³ Also, during the outbreak of armed revolt in 1920, the Sunnis and Shiites joined the party of Haras al-Istiklal which was a decisive component in the liberation movement against Britain.²⁸⁴ Then, The Shiite and Sunni tribesmen participated together in the war of liberation against the British occupation.²⁸⁵

At the same time, Yusuf al- Suveydi was the Sunni leader of the Haras al-Istiklal Party and the efficient member of Rifaiyya Tariqat in Iraq. He played a major role in the Iraqi revolt and he became a bridge on the gap between the Sunnis and Shiites by way of his poems and his participation in Shiite religious activities. He

²⁸² Eich, "Patterns of the 1920 Rising in Iraq: The Rifaiyya Tariqa and Shiism" p. 118.

²⁸³ Sluglet Peter, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), p. 311.

²⁸⁴ Eich, "Patterns of the 1920 rising in Iraq: The Rifaiyya Tariqa and Shiism" p. 118.

²⁸⁵ Mehdi Noorbaksh, "Shiism and ethnic politics in Iraq," *Middle East Policy* XV, no. 2 (Summer 2008), p. 54.

wrote influential poems about Ali and his family and in the pilgrimage seasons. He regularly visited the shrine cities Karbala and Najaf and he read poems martyr of Karbala.²⁸⁶ Moreover, this Shiite Sunni cooperation began to show in the occasion of popular Shiite religious practices such as Mevlids, Ramadan activity, commemoration in the seasons of pilgrimage.

It is interesting that Rifaiyya Tariqat, who was supported as a means of counter-propaganda against the Shiite sect in Iraq by Abdülhamid II in 1890s played a major role in the Shiite and Sunni unity against the Britain in 1920. Participating in Shiite religious ceremonies by the some members of Rifaiyya were highly affected in the strengthening of the Shiite-Sunni alliances in Iraq. However, in the 1920s, the Shiite- Sunni unity among the Arabs could not be maintained in the future time and today, the Shiite inhabitants continued to seen as potential risk from the Arab Sunnis in Iraq. The Arabian Sunnis think that there were Iranian hegemonic ambitions over the Shiite population in Iraq.²⁸⁷

To conclude, after the lands of the non-Muslim population of Ottoman separated from the empire, Abdülhamid II decided to follow a religious policy under the title of Caliphate. With this Islamist policy, the Sultan aimed to integrate all of different sects in the empire in order to live in a peaceful environment. Even if most of the population of the empire was Sunni, Ahdülhamid II tried to satisfy all of these different sects. Considering Pan-Islamism in the context of Shiite-Sunni unity, Pan-Islamism tried to find a peaceful way to solve the Shiite problem in Iraq in the nineteenth century.

²⁸⁶ Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq*, p. 68.

²⁸⁷ Israel Elad Altman, "The Sunni-Shia Conversion Controversy," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 5(2007), p.1.

Sultan Abdülhamid II also followed an intense Shiite-Sunni unity policy in Iraq. Because Iraq was neighbor of the missionary Iran, the Shiite population of the Iraq was increasing day by day. And this was very harmful to the Sunni image of the empire. Therefore, at first Abdülhamid II tried to prevent the Iranian Shah's activities and the influence of the Iranian ulema in the Iraq region. Later, the empire undertook the costs of repairing holy places, like the turbes of Imam Ali and Hüseyin in the Shiite shrine cities. The Sultan was trying to get the hearts of Shiites who had been offended since the Wahhabi attack. Also, while the sultan was repairing such places, he also serviced both the visibility and legitimization policy of the empire.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In my thesis, I try to answer to the question how Shiite beliefs spread in late-nineteenth century Iraq. The question of the rise of Shiism in Iraq has already been discussed by Juan Cole, Yitzhak Nakash and Hala Fattah. Each of them has contributed some parts to the subject matter; some more than others. However, I try to contribute to this literature by implementing some differences in historiographical perspective with different set of archival material. First, I wanted to include common people. With substantially use of archival materials, these writers maintain that the reason for the spread of Shiism was a result of the Ottoman government's attitudes against the Shiites in Iraq such as forced settlings of tribes in Ottoman Iraqi provinces, taxation or compulsory military service. I also presented ineffective politics against Shiism like the limits of the Ottoman state power over the Iraqi region, especially southern Iraq, Najaf and Karbala and absence of adequate Sunni educational institutions.

Furthermore, Ottoman Empire's new policies towards the Shiite population in Iraq could be associated with the increasing economic and political interests of Britain and Iran on Persian Gulf and Iraq. The revival of economic potential in Iraq such as increasing economic welfare through irrigation canals, fertile lands and developments of modern river transportation on the Euphrates and Tigris attracted the European powers to Iraqi province. Therefore, Ottoman Empire re-shaped the state politics to break European and Iranian growing influences in Iraqi province in the nineteenth century. With this growing economic potential of Iraq, the nomadic tribes potentially began to be considered as the sources of production, taxation during

the Tanzimat period. For this reason, the nomadic tribes were forced to place the cultivated lands in Iraq. However, the limitedness of state power, the increasing interaction with the Shiite persons in the new urban areas, the factor of the government sending an unattractive form of Sunnism to the region via old-school ulema led to the growth of Shiite population with the effects of Iranian ulema living in semi-autonomous region Najaf, Karbala and Samarra. With this process, Ottoman officers began to regard the increasing conversion to Shiism from Sunnism as a potential threat for the near future in Iraq and also the propagation of Shiism by way of Iranian ulema through the efforts of Iranian state to extend their religious and political hegemony on the Iraqi region. On the other hand, the government attitudes against the Shiites with the Pan-Islamic policy brought about reinterpretation of state policies against the Shiism in the late nineteenth century. The Shiite subjects in Iraq began to be considered as a significant part of the Islamic community. For that purpose, Sultan Abdülhamid II attempted to carry into practice the new projects on the Shiite-Sunni unity in Iraq in order to consolidate the Islamic brotherhood among the Shiites and Sunnis, like the repair of the Shiite tombs in Iraq and sending of valuable gifts to Shiite ulema. In this regard, the nineteenth century transformation of the Ottoman policy in Iraq had tried to examine the approaches of the Ottoman officials by way of the examples of Shiite subjects.

Finally this study as any M.A. thesis has its own limits. Despite my quest for the question how Shiism spread during the Hamidian period, I also discussed the reason why Shiite might have been propagated in Hamidian Iraq between the lines. Although, such question deserves more comprehensive answer with an extensive archival exceeding this work, I would like to recapitulate what might be the reasons behind the Shiite expansion in Iraq.

Within the context of the Tanzimat state, this thesis examined the increasing interest of the Ottoman administration in the Iraqi tribes in the nineteenth century. The increasing governmental pressures regarding conscription, taxation, and settlement, and the reactions to these Tanzimat policies like tribal rebellions against the taxes, conscription were undeniably important features in understanding of the spread of Shiism. However, looking from the Ottoman perspectives about these Shiite missionary activities, the assessments of Ottoman officials based the incapability of Sunni education and the effects of Iranian ulema living in Iraq on the less educated people as the reasons for the increase in the Shiite population in Iraq rather than the Tanzimat state policies.

To sum up, it is possible to put forward several claims. One of them was Ottoman Empire forcing the nomadic tribes to settle in fertile lands in the valley of the Euphrates in Iraq. These places were close to the Shiite cities like Najaf and Karbala. According to Ottoman archival sources, much of the conversion activities to Shiism from Sunnism occurred in the new settled areas near Shiite cities. It could have been that the spread of Shiism stemmed from the intense interaction between the new settled tribesmen and Shiite population in the Najaf and Karbala.

Also, the documents of Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives demonstrated that the Ottomans tried to enforce the tribal settlement policy throughout the nineteenth century. Therefore, the tribal settlement policy had a huge influence in restating the social and religious structure of Ottoman Iraq. In this respect, the tribes in Iraq never accepted to be closely controlled by the state. They resisted the settlement, taxation, and conscription policies of the Tanzimat state. In this regard, it is highly possible that these tyranny policies of the Ottoman Empire against the Iraqi tribes led to hostility against the Sunni Ottoman officials. The emergence of the

hostility led to the conversion of the tribesmen to Shiism in response to and resentment of the Ottoman state policies taxation and settlement. Also, accepting the Shiite identity provided the tribesmen to build a religious identity close to Iran, and to cross the Iranian frontier regions to avoid the Tanzimat policies, such as taxation, conscription, and settlement. Both of these arguments are based on the fact that some of Shiite tribes like the Beni Lam, Rabia, Milli and Müntefik had a lot of problems with the Ottoman state regarding settlement and taxation.

Finally, the thesis was also an attempt to study the Hamidian policies towards the Shiite community in Iraq in the nineteenth century. Abdülhamid II implemented several distinct policies toward the Shiite community in Iraq in that century. On the one hand, Sultan Abdülhamid II struggled in uniting all of the Muslims under the Caliphate of Islam due to the Britain's expansionist policy in Iraq and the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, he aimed to prevent the Shiite activities of Iran through Sunni educations on behalf of Sunnism. By breaking the influence of Iran and Great Britain over the Shiites, the Sultan wanted to make the Shiites devoted and obedient subjects of the Ottoman state. Also, with the project of Shiite-Sunni unity, he wanted to integrate the Shiite subjects into the Ottoman imperial order. In this sense, this study sought to demonstrate the tendencies and policies of the Ottoman Empire in Iraq, and examine the limits of the Ottoman state power were examined in the frontier regions.

This thesis studied state-Shiite subject relations in the nineteenth century by focusing on some particular events such as, the forcefully settling of the tribes on the cultivated lands, the growth of Shiism in Iraq and the Ottoman reactions against the Iranian ulema living in Iraq. In this connection, it is aimed to show the nineteenth century transformation of the Ottoman policy by looking at the approaches of the

Ottoman officials by way of the examples of Shiite subjects. In this way, this study contributes to the history of Iraqi and Gulf region in the nineteenth century.

I would like to emphasize the fact that some questions remain unanswered in this study. For example, the religious beliefs of these people prior to their conversion to the Shiite Islam are unclear. It is unclear if whether or not the Shiite persons truly believed in Sunni Islam, and if they really kept the concept of religion for tribesmen before Shiism. The question such as how such resentment reached the increasing sectarian crisis in Iraq is also unanswered. Future studies may answer them. What I intended to do was, however, to explain the reasons for growth of the Shiite supremacy in Iraq based on a number of documents from the Ottoman archives.

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