

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PICTURE AND POLITICAL SITUATION OF THE EASTERN PROVINCES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE 1830s AND 1840s (ACCORDING TO THE ENGLISH DIPLOMAT JAMES BRANT)

Sona Vardanyan*

Abstract

The study aims to uncover the real objectives behind the creation of the British consular network in the Ottoman Empire by analyzing the travel publications of James Brant, the British Consul in Erzurum. These records allow for the clarification of his position, particularly regarding the Armenians and the Kurds, as well as the stereotypes about the “East” prevalent in Europe at the time that influenced his observations.

The demographic shifts recorded by Brant, to the detriment of Armenians and the benefit of Kurds and other ethnic groups, reflect the structural changes that took place in the region after the Russo-Turkish wars. His meetings with Kurdish tribal leaders and local chiefs reveal the power dynamics in the region: Turko-Kurdish and Armeno-Kurdish relations, as well as the position of the Armenians towards these realities. Brant’s observations also contain keen insights into the economic and social life of the region.

Thus, J. Brant’s travelogues reflect the activation of the British presence in the region starting from the 1830s as a factor that played an important role in the subsequent developments of the region.

Keywords: James Brant, Eastern Provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Armeno-Kurdish Relations, British Consular Activity.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, the British consular network in the Ottoman Empire began to expand, intended to become an instrument for spreading British influence in the region. This was a unique information network through which London constantly received detailed information about any changes occurring within the Empire.

The expansion of the consular network, and European presence in general, was conditioned by the centralization policy taking place in the Ottoman Empire, which aimed to create a unified administrative system and strengthen control over the provinces and various segments of society.¹ European influence was utilized in favor of the Tanzimat reforms, provided they did not harm the interests of European states. As a result, consuls not only traveled and operated freely, but ambassadors and consuls also

**Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS of the RA*

Received 18.11.2025, revised 08.12.2025, accepted 12.12.2025

© 2025 The Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

¹ Barkey 2008: 266-277.

began to play a greater role in the political life of the Empire. Consequently, the role of British consuls transformed at the beginning of the 19th century, gradually acquiring the nature of an unintentional mediator in local politics. Their authority and accessibility to the population led to consuls often being perceived as intermediaries between the populace and the authorities.² Each of them essentially acted as an ambassador, dealing with the problems of his area. The consuls' correspondence covered economic and political issues. In the political sphere, they addressed in detail the functioning of the provincial administration, the activities of foreign agents, and Turkish oppressions, as well as cases where the Sultan's orders regarding reforming the Empire were not carried out.³

The Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane in 1839, which marks the official start of the Tanzimat reform movement in the Ottoman Empire, also reshaped the relations between Christians and Muslims in the Eastern provinces over time.⁴ Although these reforms did not yield long-term results and did not change the social situation of Christian Armenians, they attested to a certain understanding of the new European liberal ideas by the central authorities.⁵

It is in the context of these processes that the British Consul James Brant undertook his journey, at a time when the Ottoman government was attempting to eliminate the autonomy of the semi-independent Kurdish principalities that had existed for centuries in the peripheries of the Empire and integrate them into the imperial administrative system. Brant studied the economic potential of the region and presented proposals to the governors regarding the development of economic resources. His excellent knowledge of Turkish allowed him to communicate effectively with both representatives of the Ottoman administration and the local population. Brant closely followed the events taking place in the Eastern provinces and Russian policy in the region. He meticulously studied the Ottoman social, economic, and military reforms being implemented during this period and used this information in his consular reports.⁶

James Brant was appointed Vice-Consul of Trebizond on March 2, 1830. He attached particular importance to Erzurum, emphasizing its strategic and economic significance, and also taking into consideration the growing Russian influence in the region. At his suggestion, Great Britain opened a consulate in Erzurum in 1836, and Brant was appointed to the post. His zone of influence included Sebastia, Trebizond, and Erzurum. Brant was responsible for collecting relevant information on trade, navigation, agriculture, and other fields.⁷ The importance of the Ottoman Empire in

² Hourani 1968: 67.

³ Yurdusev 2009: 523.

⁴ Jongerden and Verheij 2012: 35.

⁵ Nalbandian 1963: 43.

⁶ Gencer 2024: 281-282.

⁷ Gencer 2024: 282.

British politics was primarily due to the need to develop commercial relations with the Empire.⁸

Brant's travel records are important as reliable information received from the site of events. He focused on Armeno-Kurdish and Turko-Kurdish relations, attempting to understand the nature of the interaction between local forces. Armenians and Kurds were viewed as the elements of the Empire through which it was possible to influence regional politics and guide certain developments. During his journey, Brant conversed with various Kurdish tribal leaders, presenting their viewpoints on the ongoing events. He considered the information received to be trustworthy because, in his estimation, the Kurdish chiefs, as respected and honorable individuals, were worthy of confidence. His reports provide insight into the internal structure, ethnic placement, daily life, and relations with the authorities of the Kurdish community in the 1830s.

Brant notes that he started his journey in an official capacity as a British Consul, possessing a Sultan's firman.⁹ He was accompanied by one dragoman¹⁰ (interpreter), and during the journey, he was also assigned one Tatar¹¹ (fast courier) and two servants, and 12 horses were provided as required by the route. The costs of the journey, according to Brant, amounted to around 30 lire for every 100 postal hours or about 300 miles, not including unforeseen additional expenses. This amount did not include gifts and other expenses. According to Brant's calculations, the allocated amount was sufficient for a traveler moving at a moderate speed, with a small amount of baggage and not many companions.¹²

Brant's attitude toward Armenians, Kurds, as well as the individuals with whom he interacted, is of particular interest. His evaluations of the locals must be viewed in the context of the fact that he was acting as a representative of British foreign policy, and his observations and reported information could directly influence British positions and

⁸ Bailey 1942: 40.

⁹ The route of movement toward Armenia, as presented in Brant's report, commenced on 19 May 1835. Trebizond, Yomurah, Surmenah, Of, Rizah, Lazistan, Batum, Choruk Su, Pashalik of Kars, the valley of Khino, Zerehbozel, Didewaghi, Kolowah Dagh, valley of Ako, Kulah or Ajerah valley, (Kulah was the hereditary possession of Ahmed Pasha of Kars), Danesvorolah, Poshkov, Digwir (village), Ardahan, Kars, Pasin, Hasan Kaleh, Erzurum, Terjan, Dujik (Gujik) mountains, Erzingan, Kemakh, Herhemeh, Hasan Ovah, Egin, Arabgir, Zeitun, Keban Maden, Kharput, Arghana, Diyarbekr, Malatayah, Aspuzi, Hasan Batrik, Hakim Khan, Ghurun, Manjelic, Ulash, Sivas, Kaisariyyeh, Yuzgat, Boaslian, Boaghaz Keuj, Tokat, Niksar, Karahisar, Gumish-khaneh.

¹⁰ A dragoman was a multilingual intermediary in the Ottoman Empire, serving as translator, interpreter, and diplomatic agent between European envoys and Ottoman authorities, facilitating communication, negotiation, and cultural exchange.

¹¹ Tatar: In 19th-century Ottoman travel accounts, a term often used by British travelers for mobile Turkic-speaking pastoralists; they frequently acted as helpers for travelers, carrying news, letters, and other information.

¹² Brant 1836:195.

regional priorities. For a 19th-century British traveler, the Ottoman Empire was viewed more as a zone of imperial influence and interests than as an object of Orientalist interest.¹³ In his role as Consul, Brant often reflected the perceptions characteristic of the European mindset of the time. His memoirs also reflect the ideas that Britain's "imperial mission" was to protect the interests of weak states, assuming they aligned with Britain's interests.¹⁴ The ideas formed in the European travel literature of that time also greatly influenced Brant's observations. In his descriptions, the Kurds are sometimes presented as a difficult-to-control element, which, according to him, endangered the stability of the region.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that despite the presence of cultural stereotypes and expressions of superiority in some texts, Brant's records have documentary significance, presenting inter-ethnic relations in the region. His testimonies serve both as a source of information and as an expression of Western perceptions.

In this regard, it is no coincidence that his expressed opinions about the locals are highly contradictory. On the one hand, he speaks highly of the locals' hospitality, benevolence, and readiness to help a foreigner; on the other hand, he presents the natives as a "savage race," regardless of religious affiliation—characterizing both Christians and Muslims as "ignorant, rude, and fanatical." "The inhabitants, whether Christian or Musulman, are inclined to be inhospitable towards Europeans, and present an ignorant, rude, and superstitious (fanatical) race".¹⁵

Towards the Armenians, however, Brant expresses a certain sympathy, particularly emphasizing the heavy tax burden and various obligations imposed on them. He calls Armenians the native people of the given area, who were, however, often forced to leave their territory due to difficult conditions. He writes: "In the whole Plain of Mush there is not a single Muslim peasant intermingled with the Armenian population. This fact clearly shows that the country ought to be considered Armenian rather than Kurdish. The tent-Kurds are evidently invaders, and the stationary Kurds, no doubt, originally belonged to the wandering tribes".¹⁶ Brant emphasizes that the Armenians, as natives of these lands, are mainly engaged in trade in the cities or agriculture in the villages. They are legally deprived of the right to bear arms, and they are not conscripted as soldiers or appointed to state positions. By Brant's estimate, the number of Armenians constitutes approximately one-third of the Turks and one-seventh of the total population.¹⁷

Brant often stopped and resided in the homes of wealthy Armenian merchants for accommodation.¹⁸ However, he does not provide deeper descriptions but merely notes

¹³ Said 1978: 169.

¹⁴ Nash 2005: 5.

¹⁵ Brant 1836: 190.

¹⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 347.

¹⁷ Brant 1836: 221.

¹⁸ Brant 1836: 195.

that he visited the Khojabash¹⁹—the leader of the Armenian community—to observe the Armenian way of life. He stresses that the Khojabash's new house was spacious but very modest, both in its style and furniture, and that he “lived as well as any other Armenian of the higher class”.²⁰

J. Brant's 1835 journey began with surveys along the Russian borders, which was not accidental. It attested to his interest in gathering military and political information. After studying the coasts of Lazistan, Brant continued his journey, passing through Trebizond, Kars (via the Ardahan road leading from Digwar), the basen Plain to Erzurum, Terjan, Erzingan, Kemakh, Arabkir, Keban Maden, Kharput, Arghana, from there to Diyarbekir, Malatya, Sebastia, Caesarea, Yozgat, from Tokat, via Niksar, Karahisar, Gümüşhane, back to Trebizond.²¹

Brant's first travelogues concerned the situation created after the Russo-Turkish War. In his observation, a mass movement was particularly noticeable among the Christian population as a result of the war; formerly densely populated areas had turned into desolate places. Brant linked this phenomenon also to the possibility of settling in the territories of the Russian Empire, which created an expectation of a better environment for some Christians.

For example, according to Brant's data, many Armenian families from Pasin migrated with the Russian army, as a result of which “most of the villages are only half peopled, and a great many rich lands are left uncultivated”.²² Kars is a similar example: “Kars was formerly a large town, of 6,000 or 8,000 houses, but now it resembles more a heap of ruins, with a population not exceeding 1500 to 2000 families. The great majority of the Turkish population left the town during the Russian occupation, and all the Armenians retired with the Russian army, leaving many deserted villages and a great quantity of unused land. Only one of the villages outside Kars was Armenian; all the rest were under Turkish rule”.²³

Brant notes that Upper Basen is inhabited mainly by Muslims. Most of the Armenian peasantry had moved to Georgia after the Russian army left the territory of the Ottoman Empire following the Treaty of Adrianople. As a result of the emigration, the population of the villages had significantly decreased, and a large number of land

¹⁹ Khoja-bash (Turkish: *hoca-baş*): An Ottoman Turkish term, from Persian *khāja* (“master, teacher, or respected person”) + Turkish *baş* (“head, chief”). It referred to the chief or head of a community or religious group, responsible for leadership, administration, and protection of the local group.

²⁰ Brant and Glascott 1840: 391.

²¹ It should be noted that the place names found in J. Brant's records do not always correspond to their authentic form; the traveler transmitted them as he heard them from the locals. Some names were later changed or preserved in another form, and in some cases, it is not possible to accurately determine their geographic location.

²² Brant 1836: 200.

²³ Brant 1836: 199.

areas remained uncultivated due to the lack of labor.²⁴ He adds that during the advance of the Russian army, it reached as far as Mush, and when it withdrew from there, the Armenians wanted to join the Russian army, but this was not allowed. The Russians were advancing at the time, and the presence of the migrants with their families was an obstacle to their progress.²⁵

Brant records a similar phenomenon in Bayazet: "When the Russians occupied Erivan and established a quarantine on the border, all kind of interaction between Erivan and Bayazet ceased. From that moment, the decline of Bayazet can be considered to have begun, which became complete when the great majority of the Armenian population also migrated with the Russian army".²⁶

Thus, after the Russo-Turkish wars, the demographic balance in the Eastern Vilayets was disrupted, due to the mass movement of the Christian population and the growing influence of the predominantly Kurdish element, as well as the resettlement of other elements. Brant confirms that, for example, 30 years ago, in the Alashkert Plain, from Diadin to Molla Suleyman, many Armenian villages were widespread, each having 300-400 houses, while in the 1830s many villages were already abandoned or significantly thinned out; only in two villages had 20-40 houses been preserved. According to Brant, Armenians formed a small part of the population of that region, and almost all of the majority had migrated to Georgia. In recent years, five villages had been resettled by families moved from the areas near Erivan, who were considered nomadic groups of Persian origin and were called "Terakemeh" (i.e., Turkomans, who led a gypsy lifestyle but were not considered gypsies). Brant characterized them as "people of a restless disposition and doubtful honesty".²⁷ Brant also mentions such groups concerning the population of the Euphrates Valley and adjacent plains, in the area stretching from Ziro to the village of Yunjahli.²⁸

The consequences of the Armenian population's emigration were also noticeable in other settlements. For example, in the village of Deli Baba (on the road from Bayazet to Erzurum), the local Kaya [village elder] deeply regretted not following the other Armenians, because, according to reports from those who left, their relatives who had moved to Georgia were satisfied with the policy of the Russian authorities.²⁹

A similar picture was recorded in the village of Kôi-lî (on the road from Erzurum to Mush), where about 200 formerly residing Armenian families had migrated to Georgia, and 15 Muslim (mostly Kurdish) families lived in the extensive ruins.³⁰

²⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 341.

²⁵ Brant and Glascott 1840: 348.

²⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 421-422.

²⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 424.

²⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 426.

²⁹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 429.

³⁰ Brant and Glascott 1840: 344.

According to Brant's data, the population of the areas he visited compared to the past was as follows:

Location	Former Status / 1830s Status	Breakdown (1830s Estimate)
Trebizond	25,000–30,000 inhabitants	Greeks: 3,500–4,000; Armenians: 1,500–2,000; Muslims: 20,000–24,000
Ardahan	Formerly 300 houses	Now 70 families (after the Russian siege and destruction)
Kars	Formerly 6,000–8,000 families	Now not more than 1,500–2,000 families
Erzurum	130,000 inhabitants in 1827	Now not more than 15,000
Erzingan	3,000 houses or families	800 Armenian, the rest Turkish
Kemakh		400 Turkish, 30 Armenian houses
Eğir (Akn)	2,700 houses	2,000 Muslim, 700 Armenian
Arabkir	6,000 houses	4,800 Muslim, 1,200 Armenian
Kharput	1,720 families	1,400 Turkish, 300 Armenian, and 20 Catholic
Arghana	600 families	Half Muslim, half Armenian
Diyarbakir	Formerly 40,000 families or houses	Now 8,000 (1,500 Armenian, 85 Catholic, 70 Greek, 50 Jewish, and 6,300 Turkish)
Malatya	3,923 families	2,800 Turkish, 1,123 Armenian
Hakim Khan		250 Turkish, 35 Armenian
Gürün		850 Turkish, 860 Armenian, 63 Catholic families
Manjelic	Formerly 100 families	Now 15 Armenian families
Sebastia		5,000 Turkish and 12,000 Armenian families
Caesarea		8,000 Turkish, 2,500 Armenian, and 500 Greek houses
Tokat	6,730 families	5,000 Turkish, 1,500 Armenian, 30 Roman Catholic, 50 Jewish, 150 Greek

Thus, Brant's information is important for gaining at least an approximate idea of the post-Russo-Turkish War demographic changes. According to his observations, many villages that were previously inhabited by Armenians are now either sparsely populated or emptied, and a large number of families had migrated to Georgia. At the same time, some areas were resettled by Turkoman tribes, and the Kurdish element became more influential.

Brant's observations allow for the reconstruction of the region's socio-economic character. According to him, the socio-economic conditions of the Armenian population

in the Eastern provinces of the Empire were particularly severe compared to other provinces of the Empire. This was contributed to by manifold tax obligations, the still underdeveloped nature of economic relations, and the fact that a significant part of the region was under Kurdish control.

Brant mentions the Saliyaneh³¹ as a type of tax collected to cover the state administrative expenses of the pashalik. In his description, the Saliyaneh was collected in the following way: first, the Pasha set the total amount to be collected; then, the heads of each religious community gathered at the administrative center and distributed this sum among the districts of the pashalik. Then, the heads of the communities in the districts divided the sum allocated to their district among the villages, and in the villages, the village elders redistributed it among the inhabitants. The Saliyaneh was arbitrary in a certain sense and varied in amount depending on Pasha's desire. Pasha did not present an account regarding the justification of this amount, and no one could dispute the appropriateness of the collection. However, the amount of the tax could not be significantly increased without an obvious reason, so as not to cause discontent and resistance of the people. For this reason, the Saliyaneh for the current year usually did not significantly exceed the amount of the previous year.³² For example, the village of Kiravi in Mush, which belonged to the Beg of Khnus, according to Brant, paid three saliyanes annually, each amounting to about 5–6 lire³³; the saliyaneh of the city of Mush amounted to 2,000 lire annually.³⁴

Brant notes that in some regions, the saliyaneh was replaced by other obligations. For instance, in Khnus, instead of the saliyaneh, the villagers were obligated to host guests—especially since it was a postal station, and the flow of visitors was high, making this tax not light. Besides the saliyaneh, the peasant had to pay the tithe on the harvest: the “ordinary and legal income of the Beg of Khinis (Khnuş) is derived from the tithe of the produce of the land, which annually secures him about 150 lire”.³⁵ Another example was Hasan Kaleh, where the residents were exempt from the annual payment. However, in its place, they paid about 50 lire for the maintenance expenses of the postal system, and besides that, they were obliged to host foreigners. Brant concludes: “This obligation itself is not a light tax, as natives seldom pay anything for lodging and food provided them.”

Thus, the absence of a tax obligation did not entirely mean a reduction of the actual burden but rather its transformation into another form, with another material obligation on the community. Hosting foreigners, despite being formally a “non-tax,” was

³¹ Saliyaneh (or Salyaneh): A Persian- and Arabic-derived term used in Ottoman and Persian administrative language, meaning a yearly tax or annual payment.

³² Brant and Glascott 1840: 342-343.

³³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 348.

³⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 351.

³⁵ Brant and Glascott 1840: 345.

a material burden for the villagers.³⁶ Sometimes partial or general forgiveness of taxes was made to appease the population. For example, the population of the village of Eypler, presenting their poverty, received a concession of half of the saliyaneh, “although the total sum was only 12 lire”³⁷, writes Brant.

According to Brant’s observation, the Pasha of Mush did not exploit the rayah population, but it was said that he did not spare the leaders of the Kurdish tribes when opportunities arose to collect taxes. We should note, however, that this information was taken from Pasha’s own words.³⁸

In contrast, in the village of Arnis, in Bargir Kale (Van region), Kurds were encouraged by being exempt from taxes, and in return, they were obligated to ensure the safety of the road and the reception of travelers.³⁹ Generally, nomadic tribes in the Ottoman Empire were exempt from many taxes and fees that were applied to the majority of peasant economies. Even with special taxes levied on them, the tax burden on nomadic tribes was lighter than the obligations of sedentary farmers.⁴⁰

Brant observed that the system of tax collection was aimed not so much at the real needs of the state but at “feeding greedy Pashas or their attendants.” Thus, he recounts how the Sarraf⁴¹ of Diyarbekir had given a loan to the Musellim⁴² for the purpose of presenting gifts to obtain his position, and had come here almost immediately to reclaim his money, as preparations were underway to impose the Saliyaneh tax on the population for this purpose.⁴³

Brant reports on a tax called Kishlak⁴⁴, an obligation to provide winter quarters, according to which Armenians had to provide shelter to Kurds during the winter months.⁴⁵ The Kurds paid the Armenians for the accommodation. In the village of Kızıl Ağaç, Brant speaks with Sherif Agha, one of the leaders of a Kurdish tribe. During the conversation, Brant asks why the tribe prefers to pay around 480 lire every year to use winter quarters, instead of building a permanent settlement. Sherif Agha replies that such permanent settlement would require not only houses but also permanent land for haymaking, wheat, and animal feed, which are already occupied. Brant concludes: “He

³⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 342-343.

³⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 343.

³⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 351.

³⁹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 401.

⁴⁰ Kasaba 2009: 27.

⁴¹ Sarraf: A Persian- and Arabic-derived term denoting a money-changer or banker, responsible for currency exchange, credit, and financial services in Ottoman and Middle Eastern trade networks.

⁴² Musellim (Turkish: *Müsellim* or *Mütesellim*): An Ottoman Turkish term denoting a local official appointed to collect taxes, enforce law and order, and oversee administrative affairs in a town or district.

⁴³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 363.

⁴⁴ Kishlak: A Turkic- and Persian-derived term denoting a winter settlement used by nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists, as opposed to their summer pastures (*yaylak*).

⁴⁵ Brant and Glascott 1840: 348.

might also have added, that as shepherds they could not attend to husbandry without entirely changing their habits of life. And at the season when the hay ought to be collected and the fields tilled, they are entirely employed in following their flocks to the mountains.” Brant concludes that the current method of providing winter quarters to the Kurds might not be bad if they did not abuse the Armenians, if the fixed sum was a fair compensation for the peasant’s labor and inconvenience, and if that sum were given to the peasant himself, and not to the Serasker of Erzurum.⁴⁶

According to Brant, the Kharaj⁴⁷ collected from the entire area of the Bitlis pashalik amounted to 23,000 Ottoman lire, and by his approximate calculation, it can be assumed that the male rayah population over the age of four was about 12,000 people, taking into consideration the fact that kharaj was not collected from children below that age.⁴⁸

As noted, starting from the 1830s, a series of campaigns were carried out against the Kurds, as a result of which several Kurdish emirates and tribal chiefdoms were eliminated one after another, or they were subjected to dispossession. The first phase of the Turkish reconquest campaign lasted from 1834 to 1839. The Ottoman commander Mohammed Reshid Pasha, whose general staff was in Diyarbekir, received an entire Nizam corps, supplemented by guard units, cavalry, and artillery, with the aim of suppressing the Kurdish rebellions.⁴⁹

In this political and military context, Brant presents detailed observations about the Kurdish-inhabited territories.⁵⁰ Brant describes the lifestyle of the Kurds living in them, the nature of their movements, and their relations with neighboring groups.

Until the end of the 19th century, the majority of Kurds were nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists, united in tribal associations. The leaders of the tribes often gathered several tribes under their authority, but the struggle for pastures and the desire

⁴⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 353-354.

⁴⁷ Kharaj: A Persian- and Arabic-derived term denoting a land tax or tribute, typically levied on agricultural land by non-Muslim subjects in the Ottoman and Islamic administrative systems.

⁴⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 377.

⁴⁹ Safrastyan 1948: 50.

⁵⁰ The route of movement toward Armenia, as presented in Brant’s report, commenced on 16 June 1838. Erzurum, Hasan Kaleh, Pasin, Eipler-Koi-li, Aghveran, Khinis, Aruz Su, Gumgum, Char Buhur, Sikawah, Kirawi, Murad Chai, Chevermeh, Bin gol Tagh, Mush, Kizil Aghaj, Murad Chai, Antogh Tagh, Shin, Darkush Tagh, Agharun, Kolb Su, Nerjki, Darakol, Sarum Su, Ilijeh, Hazero, Khini. Anbar Su, Zibeneh, Arghana Maden, Kizin, Goljik, Mezirah, Kharput, Alishan, Palu, Habab, Mezirah, Chevli, Pakengog, Boghlan, Monastery of Changeri, Ziyaret, Shekiran, Arshiban, Khass-Koi, Mushaksir, Kafir Borg, Bitlis, Rashwak Khan, Tadvan, Avatak, Garzit, Gol-li, Khan-jaik, Norkukh, Akavansk, Vastan, Artemid, Van, Iskeleh Koi, Ala Koi, Merek, Bargir Kaleh, Arnis, Haidar Beg, Ardish, Ashraf, Arin, AD-el-jivaz, Akhlat, Norshunjuk, Sapan Tagh, Gujiyeh, Arbunzunk, Kara Kilisa, Kunduk, Ala Tagh, Source of the Murad, Bayazid, Ararat, Diyadin, Uch Kilisa, Murad Su, Kara Kilisa, Molla Osman, Toprak Kaleh, Chat Dereh-si, Deli Baba, Emrakum, Erzurum.

to expand power led to constant fragmentation and the formation of new tribal associations.⁵¹ According to Brant, the Dujik mountain range, stretching between the plateaus of Terjan and Erzingan, with strong and defensible passes, was a Kurdish-inhabited zone. Brant described the behavior of the Kurds living there as unruly. They did not pay taxes to the Sultan's authorities, but constantly collected road tolls and plundered neighboring villages. Inside the mountain range, two influential tribes stood out: Shah Hussein and Balaban, each capable of fielding around 4,000–5,000 armed men. Brant did not have the opportunity to study the other tribal groups located south of here.⁵²

In Mush, Emin Pasha was dominant, the founder of whose family was Alauddin Beg. According to Brant, thanks to their social position and personal qualities, this family had great influence in the country.⁵³ Brant notes that near the village of Sikava there is a small hill called Osp-polur, where the Kurdish leader Alauddin Beg successfully resisted the government forces that were sent to eliminate the independence he was trying to achieve. Since those times, with a few short interruptions, a member of the family has always governed the Pashalik of Mush with more or less independence.⁵⁴

The Ottoman state was very consistent in ensuring that power was transferred and maintained in the hands of the same ruling dynasties. The goal of this policy was to form stable and strong leadership, free from threats posed by internal rivals. Under no circumstances was power allowed to pass to any person outside the ruling dynasty. If the Bey did not have a son to succeed him, the other Beys of Kurdistan were obliged to nominate a new leader, usually chosen from another branch of the same dynasty. It is noteworthy that the Sultan did not favor the appointment of non-Kurdish governors. As a result, most of the Kurdish Mirs⁵⁵ became significantly dependent on the support of the Ottoman authorities to maintain their positions, through which the state gained the opportunity to intervene and control the Kurdish tribal structures.⁵⁶

Brant also gives the important information that Emin Pasha and his brothers were highly respected by Reshid Mohammed Pasha and had provided significant support to his actions directed against certain Kurdish forces.⁵⁷ Essentially, these were relations stemming from political interests. In contrast to this, Brant mentions the Kurdish Badikanlı tribe (Shin Valley), which resisted Reshid Mohammed Pasha but was stripped

⁵¹ Bayburdyan 2008: 30.

⁵² Brant 1836: 201-202.

⁵³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 350.

⁵⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 348.

⁵⁵ The term “Mir” is derived from the Arabic “Emir,” meaning commander, prince, or leader. In the 19th-century Ottoman Empire, it was often used as a title for local Kurdish or regional rulers who held political, military, or administrative authority over a specific area.

⁵⁶ Özoglu 2004: 54.

⁵⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 351.

of its property and armed forces after defeat.⁵⁸ He also mentions the Kurdish Elmanlı tribe, which lived in the mountains surrounding the southern edge of the Mush Plain and at their foothills.⁵⁹

Brant describes his meeting with an old Kurdish leader of Diyarbekir, Haji Zilal Agha, whose residence was the village of Nerjki (on the road from Mush to Kharput), who had resisted Reshid Mohammed Pasha. As a result, his house was burned, his wealth lost, and his sons died due to the climate of Diyarbekir. Despite his exile, he was later returned to his district and reappointed, but was effectively stripped of power. In his words, “neither he nor his ancestors were ever subject to the Pashas or paid tribute to the Sultan, and he did not understand why he should do so now. Therefore, he resisted as much as he could”.⁶⁰ This idea testifies that some Kurdish tribes maintained traditional autonomy and free status towards the Ottoman Empire. The semi-independent Kurdish principalities maintained their influence from generation to generation.

According to Brant’s reports, the independent Kurdish Beys of Hazro, Ilijeh, and Khnus, who were included in the Sanjak of Tevrik, were operating in Ilijeh (Hot Spring). The first included approximately 60 villages and was governed by Rejeb Beg. In his service, there were 600 cavalymen who were regularly paid and well-armed. In addition to this, he could gather approximately 700 cavalry and 3,000–4,000 infantry from his villages, armed with swords and muskets. He was considered the richest and most powerful of the three Beys. He acquired his wealth by plundering three or four Pashas of Diyarbekir, as well as various rich caravans. However, it is generally believed that many such actions, which were carried out by others, were attributed to him.⁶¹ After being defeated by Reshid Muhammed Pasha, the Bey was exiled to Adrianople (Edirne), where he lived. The income from his former territory and personal property was collected by the government, from which he was given a monthly pension of 180 lire, which was, however, very small compared to the actual amount of the collected income. This was a typical and widely used Ottoman practice.

The Beylik of Ilijeh previously belonged to Hussein Agha, who was succeeded by his eldest son, Beyram Beg—also currently exiled. After their defeat, his Beylik passed under the control of the state. The Beylik of Ilijeh included about 70 villages. The Bey could gather about 300 horsemen and 4,000–5,000 armed infantry, armed with swords and muskets. He had considerable income, but spent everything to ensure the loyalty of his subordinates.

The Bey of Khnus, Ismail, was also exiled to Adrianople. He could field 200 horsemen and 2,000–3,000 infantry. His Beylik included about 60 villages.

⁵⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 354.

⁵⁹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 353.

⁶⁰ Brant and Glascott 1840: 357.

⁶¹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 359.

These three Beys were constantly in alliance and were in almost constant war for about 15 years with Mirza Agha, whose residence was in the village of Banuka, near Hazro. He had only 100 horsemen, but about 5,000–6,000 rifle-armed infantry, but as the leader of the Silvan Kurdish tribe living near him, he could gather an additional 500 cavalymen. The clashes between the parties mainly took the form of attacks on villages. The allies would gather at a predetermined location, trying to capture the population by a sudden assault and seize everything possible. These plunders took place in the autumn, after the harvest, because the spoils were most abundant at that time.⁶² In 1838, the Kurdish Beys, including the Beys of Hazro, Khnus, and Ilijeh, were defeated by Reshid Muhammed Pasha. Their residences were burned, and when Mirza Agha surrendered, the other Beys immediately surrendered as well, realizing that resistance was futile.⁶³

In the Bitlis region, the Kurds of Harzan occupied vast territories. Before the final defeat of the Harzancis by Emin Pasha, the Bey's son noted that a traveler could not camp without danger where he was now stopping, and had to rely on the protection of a house, because the Kurds of Harzan constantly crossed the mountains at night for the purpose of plunder and cattle theft.⁶⁴ During the confrontation with Hafiz Pasha, the casualties among the Harzanci Kurds were presented as numerous. About two-thirds of the population were Armenians, but they had not participated in the conflict. The Harzancis themselves were divided among themselves. The Bey and his supporters had sided with the Pasha, and only the inhabitants of the mountainous regions had offered resistance. According to the Bey's son, if the entire population had been united, the attack probably would not have succeeded.⁶⁵ The region was, as always, unstable due to internal Kurdish disagreements, tribal rivalries, and relations with the central government. The Armenians, despite being numerous, remained neutral. The Beys of Bitlis were always powerful enough to maintain their independence until Emin Pasha's father finally subdued them. From that moment, the Beylik was annexed to the Pashalik of Mush, and Sherif Bey's domains—only eighty villages—constituted about one-third of the entire Pashalik⁶⁶. Brant presents that a Pasha named Dervish in Van had succeeded in maintaining independence from the Sublime Porte for a long time. He had defeated three Pashas who were sent to overthrow him, but was finally defeated by Sert Mahmut Pasha, who received the help of the Pashas of Erzurum, Kars, and Bayazet.⁶⁷ According to Brant, Khan Mahmud and his brothers were active in the areas adjacent to the Van region, belonging to the independent Kurdish dynasty whose center was located on the southern side of the Aljeros mountains, in the district of Müküs. Although

⁶² Brant and Glascott 1840: 360.

⁶³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 361.

⁶⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 376-377.

⁶⁵ Brant and Glascott 1840: 377.

⁶⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 380.

⁶⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 395.

the traditional inheritance of the family had passed to the eldest brother's son, Mahmud and his other brothers had acquired about 100 villages on their own, which had previously belonged to the Pashalik of Van. They often raided the Persian border for plunder, and the income from their villages allowed them to have great influence, maintain a group of armed followers, and resist both the authorities of Van and Persia. Recently, Mahmud had attempted to officially submit to the Serasker operating in Erzurum, through Ishak Pasha, and for this purpose, he had sent his brother, who was well received and returned with great honors. However, Mahmud rarely appeared in the city of Van, and even in those cases, he was accompanied by 400–600 armed men. Their main fortified center was the fortress in Mahmudiye.⁶⁸

During a meeting with the Pasha of Van, Brant became acquainted with Sultan Agha, the leader of the powerful Hayderanlı Kurdish tribe. Although Khan Mahmud and his brothers maintained some autonomy, they were forced to make concessions to the Ottoman central authority. They had agreed to transfer taxes to the Sultan, rather than to their own treasury, and to provide military forces for the Ottoman army. They were allowed to conduct a census in their territory. The issue of other concessions demanded by the Pasha of Erzurum had not yet been clarified, but he found that if all demands were met, Khan Mahmud and Khan Abdal would receive the positions of *Müsellim*, meaning they would become the governors of their districts.⁶⁹

This example shows the frequent practice of the Ottoman Empire. Instead of forcibly eliminating the positions of local authorities, they tried to integrate them into the state administration system by giving them positions, but in return demanding obedience. It is also noteworthy that the Ottoman state attempted to carry out a census and property registration in the provincial peripheries for the army and taxes, but especially in areas where the hereditary rule of Kurdish Beys existed, such processes were mostly unsuccessful.⁷⁰

According to the testimony of the Kurdish leader Sultan Agha, the Hayderanlı Kurdish tribe was divided into two branches, one of which constantly had ties with Persia, and its territories were later recognized as Persian by the Sultan. The leadership of that branch was initially held by Sultan Agha's brother, Qasim Agha, and after his death, by his son. Although Sultan Agha was considered the leader of the Hayderanlı tribe, in fact, he led only the council of elders and did not have significant political or economic power. His position was mostly symbolic: he was the tribal chief but was not particularly rich, unlike the other influential Kurdish leaders. Agha also tells about his conflict with the Hasan Ali tribe, subordinate to the Mush Pashalik, during which the latter killed two of his men, but he did not receive justice from the Pasha of Erzurum. Brant urged him to refrain from revenge to avoid new clashes.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 387.

⁶⁹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 391.

⁷⁰ Özok-Gündoğan 2022: 117.

⁷¹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 413.

According to Brant, the Zebeki and Hayderanlı Kurds were forcibly returned to Persia because they refused to leave the Turkish territories. In the Ottoman Empire, the abundance of pastures and water provided significant advantages compared to Persia, although the latter's milder winter somewhat compensated for those harsh conditions.⁷² According to him, the Hayderanlı people were preparing to join the part of the tribe living in Persia. "An old Kurd noted that this country is no longer suitable for living." To Brant's question as to whether this was related to the fact that they were no longer allowed to plunder, he replied that he himself had never been a thief, but that the demands of Sultan Agha's Pashas had destroyed them.⁷³

A part of the Zilanlı Kurdish tribe, led by Qasim Agha, lived in the Diadin region. Some families of this tribal group had moved across the Russian borders toward Persia, but their representatives noted that the conditions for living in the territory of Ottoman Turkey were more favorable, especially due to the abundance of water and some other advantages.⁷⁴

Of interest here is the phenomenon that has been characteristic of Kurdish tribal groups living in the border regions of the two states for centuries. They took advantage of the military and political opportunities of both the Ottoman and Persian Empires, crossing the demarcation line and serving as a fighting force—a tool for creating a balance of power between these states. Both states made concessions to the tribal chiefs to maintain their loyalty, as their "presence" in the border region was considered both a threat and a strategic measure.⁷⁵

The Pashalik of Bayazet was led for several generations by the ancestors of Behlül Pasha, nominally submitting to the central authority of Erzurum. However, the father of the current Pasha, Mahmud, established *de facto* independence and became an influential, though not legally established, ruler. His undertaken obligation to restore the property plundered by the Jalali Kurds from a Persian caravan in 1834 caused dissatisfaction with Esad, the Pasha of Erzurum, who appointed Demir Pasha instead of Behlül Pasha. However, the latter was so tyrannical that the locals demanded his immediate removal, threatening that if the demand was not met, they would migrate to Georgia. As a result, Demir Pasha was removed from office, and Behlül was reappointed, after which he maintained that position.⁷⁶

Brant paid particular attention to the question of how the Armenians participated in the Kurdish resistance against the Ottoman authorities. For example, in the village of Darakol (on the road from Mush to Kharput), Brant asked whether the Christians had joined the Muslims during the resistance against Reshid Mohammed Pasha. The Armenians replied that they were forced to do so. However, the local Ahmed Agha

⁷² Brant and Glascott 1840: 414.

⁷³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 417-418.

⁷⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 419.

⁷⁵ Özok-Gündoğan 2022: 112.

⁷⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 422.

denied this and declared that “the Armenians were as obstinate in their resistance as the Musulmans”.⁷⁷ This somewhat reflected the inter-ethnic relations. Brant tried to find out whether the Armenians participated in the political processes on their own initiative or were forced to submit to the situation.

Another testimony records the cautious behavior of the Armenian population of the Khnus region during the Bey’s conflict with Reshid Muhammed Pasha. According to the report of the Kyaya⁷⁸, the Armenians were extremely poor, and the taxes paid through various means totaled about 300 lire. However, from the perspective of peace, their situation had now significantly improved, so under these conditions, they did not join their Bey’s fight against the Pasha, and when the latter demanded it, they obediently surrendered their weapons.⁷⁹

Thus, the position of the Armenians during the Kurdish armed clashes was mainly determined by the situation. The two testimonies together emphasize that the Armenians did not take a unified stand. The severe economic situation and security considerations often drove them to cautious or neutral behavior, which in some cases was expressed by refusing armed resistance. At the same time, inter-ethnic relations were complicated by Turkish policy: the central authority, on the one hand, tried to win the Armenians to its side and oppose them to the Kurds, and on the other hand, sought to subdue, but not destroy, the Kurds by giving them land and demanding military service in return. Under these contradictory conditions, the Armenians were forced to balance interests, first and foremost to preserve their existence and security.⁸⁰

An example of such sentiments is that Brant met the village Kyaya in Kiravi, one of the villages of Mush, who answered all his questions uniformly: “How can I know about that?” However, Brant later met a priest who communicated with him more willingly and confessed that the Kyaya was afraid that if it were revealed that he had conveyed any information about their affairs, it could have painful consequences. To mitigate this concern, Brant assured the priest that he would never reveal his source of information.⁸¹

Thus, the information reported by Brant shows that in the 1830s, a number of influential Kurdish families, such as the dynasties of Emin Pasha or Mahmud and his brothers, had maintained their autonomy, while simultaneously cooperating with the Ottoman authorities when it was necessary to maintain their positions. The Ottoman state showed targeted consistency by maintaining power in the hands of hereditary and influential dynasties. This allowed the center to control the activities of local forces,

⁷⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 358.

⁷⁸ Kyaya (Turkish: *Kâhya*): Derived from the Turkish word, meaning a village headman or local chief in the Ottoman Empire, responsible for local administration, tax collection, and representing the community to authorities.

⁷⁹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 361.

⁸⁰ Ghazaryan 1967: 231.

⁸¹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 346-347.

while avoiding complete military and administrative intervention, which contributed to maintaining a certain degree of political stability in the unstable eastern provinces.

Brant's memoirs provide valuable insight into the local Kurdish tribal customs. For example, when traveling from Mush to Bitlis, in the village of Arshiban, he witnesses how the Kurdish Pasha tries to secure the support and loyalty of the local Kurdish leaders, including Mahmud Bey, Sherif Bey, and Murad Bey. Sherif Bey and Murad Bey, Mahmud's brothers, who had arrived from Bitlis, were discussing on the spot how to respond to Emin Pasha's assumption of power from Hafiz Pasha. They also discuss the order of presenting gifts to the new superior, with the goal of ensuring Emin Pasha's reappointment.⁸²

This scene is an important indicator of the reality that Ottoman provincial governance was mainly based on the support of local influential leaders, and state power at the provincial level was formed through interactive relationships. In this context, Pasha's reappointment became a mechanism either to gain influence or to re-establish existing political ties. It is also interesting that the British Consul was accorded special attention and respect, likely due to fear of the foreign observer's records, especially those of the British, whose reports could have an influence in the capital.

Brant describes in detail the nomadic lifestyle and everyday characteristics of the Kurdish tribes. According to his testimony, Malatya had a summer residence, Aspuzi, from where the residents moved to Malatya every year for six months, and returned in the autumn to carry out the harvest and spend the winter there. During the summer months, Aspuzi was almost completely deserted; only a few people remained there to guard the houses. Brant notes that it was a rather unique phenomenon to see the entire population of a city moving to another place without any obvious natural or geographical reason for it.⁸³

The same picture was on the road to Mush, where the villages were empty during the summer months because the residents were in the mountains in search of the best pastures.⁸⁴ According to his testimony, the Kurds go to their winter quarters at the end of October, where they stay for five to six months, depending on the weather in the spring. Brant also notes that the Kurds of this region do not have the custom of wearing protective armor. They carry a spear, two pistols, a rifle, a sword, and a shield. Sometimes a small bag with three arrows could be seen with them, but that weapon was now mostly unused. Brant distinguishes the Hayderanlı Kurds as brave warriors and good horse breeders.⁸⁵

It should be noted that the Kurds' awareness of the world outside Kurdistan was limited, and their observations were focused on local forces—leaders and Ottoman authorities. The attempts of Kurdish tribes or Emirs to cooperate with Russia or Britain

⁸² Brant and Glascott 1840: 375.

⁸³ Brant 1836: 211.

⁸⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 346.

⁸⁵ Brant and Glascott 1840: 415.

were conditioned by the hope of strengthening their own autonomy or practical independence from the Ottoman center.⁸⁶ According to Brant's testimony, some of them could not even write or read Turkish. In their thinking, it was an utterly useless activity, since from the age of bearing arms, they had hardly spent an hour without military work.⁸⁷

Brant conveys information about Yazidi Kurds and other groups, based on the stories of a Kurdish tribal chief, Sherif Agha. The Yazidis reject Islam, curse Muhammad, and worship Malak Taus. They are severely offended by the word "Sheytan" (devil) and believe that if a line is drawn around them on the ground, they will not move until it is erased. Although Sherif Agha confesses that he does not have detailed information about the Yazidi faith, he also mentions the "Çırağ Söndüren" group, whose worship includes the adoration of wooden beams decorated with precious clothes. Most of the Güzik Kurds belong to this group. Muslims call them "Kızılbaş," which is applied to followers of the Shia direction or pagan sects. In general, Kurdish tribal groups are religiously diverse, with one part being Muslim and the other having other faiths.⁸⁸ Brant does not provide detailed information about the geography of the Yazidis' residence, except for the fact that they mainly form a part of the Kurdish tribes.

Brant also draws attention to the fact that despite the increase in taxes, the establishment of Ottoman control had a beneficial effect on general security, unlike the former instability when people were under constant danger of being plundered or murdered. According to Brant, after the actions of Reshid Mohammed Pasha and Hafiz Pasha, especially since the formation of the militia of this pashalik, the Kurds no longer dare to openly plunder, and cases of secret theft have also become rare. Brant emphasizes that the militia has become a moral restraint for this savage tribal group—which is indeed noteworthy, considering how small the number of the militia is (only a few hundred people in this pashalik), how recently this system was introduced, and how imperfect that force is, both in terms of armament and discipline.⁸⁹ "Until the establishment of Reshid Mohammed Pasha's rule in Diyarbekir, the residents were in a state of virtual siege; no one dared to leave the city without an escorting caravan, and the connection with Baghdad was completely cut off. These destructions and desolation were carried out by the Kurds," writes Brant.⁹⁰

In the village of Alishan, before Reshid Muhammed Pasha's victory against the Kurds, the villagers were frequently subjected to plunder. However, according to Brant's testimony, complete safety prevailed after those events.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Eppel 2008: 248.

⁸⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 356-357.

⁸⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 354-355.

⁸⁹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 348.

⁹⁰ Brant 1836: 210.

⁹¹ Brant and Glascott 1840: 367.

According to Brant's report, a remarkable incident occurred near Çat (Chat) not long before 1833, when a Tatar, transporting precious stones to Persia, was subjected to an armed attack and wounded while defending his goods. However, in the subsequent period, almost no cases of plunder were recorded in the region. Brant attributes this to two main factors: first, the sharp decrease in the use of that particular trade route, and second, the establishment of a more systematic and effective control over the Kurdish population by the Ottoman authorities compared to the previous period.⁹²

He recorded these positive changes by citing the military road built by Reshid and Hafiz Pashas, which started from Samsun and reached the plain of Kharput, and which had significantly facilitated the passage of mountainous areas.⁹³ Nevertheless, despite the progress, many roads were impassable, especially in winter. According to his testimony, "the direct road to Erzurum is closed for three months in winter due to snow".⁹⁴ And generally, the road and transport network in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the deep regions of Western Armenia and Anatolia, was very poorly developed. The difficulties of communication were another obstacle to the development of agriculture and trade.⁹⁵

Brant, as a consul dispatched to the Ottoman Empire for the purpose of developing trade and economic relations, addresses changes in trade routes in his notes. In the first half of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire gained important significance for Britain as a source of raw material imports and a market for industrial product exports. The rapidly expanding British industry demanded new markets and supply routes, and the Ottoman Empire, with its geographical position and relatively open markets, acquired a specific strategic importance. This formulation of economic interests was codified by the Anglo-Turkish (Balta Liman) Convention of 1838.⁹⁶

With the expansion of British political and economic influence over the Ottoman Empire, the economic influence and control of Christians in the Ottoman Empire expanded. These groups became increasingly involved in state trade activities, acting as intermediaries between European interests and the local population.⁹⁷

Until 1832, a significant part of the trade between Europe and Persia carried out via the Black Sea was concentrated in the Russian port of Redut-Kale, located at the mouth of the Rioni River. However, after Russian customs restrictions and the blockade of the Georgian coast started by the Russians in 1831, the main trade route shifted to Trabzon, with the active participation of Armenian and Persian merchants. Thus, the trade route transitioned from the Redut-Kale–Tiflis–Caspian Sea–Persia route to the

⁹² Brant and Glascott 1840: 429.

⁹³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 365.

⁹⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 368.

⁹⁵ Petrosyan 2013: 220.

⁹⁶ Inalcik, Quartaert 1994: 825.

⁹⁷ Braude, Lewis 1982: 293.

south: Trabzon–Erzurum–Tabriz.⁹⁸ According to Brant, in 1830, only 5,000 bales of European goods passed through Trabzon on the road to Persia, whereas in 1835, about 20,000 bales were already being transported via the same route.⁹⁹

This was also due to the fact that land trade was gradually yielding its importance to sea trade based on steamships. Even in places where caravan trade was still maintained, it tended to change its direction and concentrate towards the nearest ports.¹⁰⁰ In this regard, Brant's observation about restoring Trabzon as a trade center and organizing trade with Iran via the Trabzon–Erzurum–Tabriz route, bypassing the Caucasus–Georgia road controlled by the Russians, was apt, as the caravan trade aimed to be replaced by the routes of English steamships.¹⁰¹ According to Brant, "Erzurum commands the roads to Persia, protects the entrance to Constantinople, and is now the first place of importance in Turkey, whether the entrance be from Georgia or Persia".¹⁰²

Brant noted that in many regions there were favorable conditions and fertile lands for the development of agriculture and trade, but the inefficient governance system and the atmosphere of insecurity hindered overall progress. According to his testimony, the Armenian population of Van was migrating en masse to Constantinople to work and earn money. This migration was mainly temporary: people returned home to spend their savings, and then left again to work. Recently, they were registered by the community leader, and according to him, only last year (1836-1837) there were 31,000 such persons on the list. About 3,000 returned to their families every year, and the same number departed for Constantinople again.¹⁰³

Brant also noted that the vast lands of the Van Pashalik often remain uncultivated or uninhabited, which testifies to serious deficiencies in governance. If the governance system were effective, such large-scale migration would not occur. Another main obstacle to the development of agriculture was the atmosphere of insecurity created by the Kurdish tribes, but according to him, there was hope that this evil would gradually disappear, as the abolition of kishlaks was planned in the region between Van and the Bandimah River. "If this is realized, it will greatly alleviate the condition of the peasantry of that region," he concluded.¹⁰⁴

Overall, economic growth in many provinces, especially in Kurdish sections, was hindered by a decline in productivity, as the disorders in the region favored the predominance of animal husbandry over agriculture.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ Braude, Lewis 1982: 290.

⁹⁹ Brant 1836: 189.

¹⁰⁰ Braude, Lewis 1982: 271.

¹⁰¹ Dönmez 2019: 366.

¹⁰² Brant, 1836: 200.

¹⁰³ Brant and Glascott 1840: 395.

¹⁰⁴ Brant and Glascott 1840: 395-396.

¹⁰⁵ McDowall 2021: 45.

Brant's conversation with the Müsellim of Khnus, Sherif Bey, is noteworthy in this regard. Sherif Bey characterized the inhabitants as "ignorant" and pointed out that they did not even use carts, even though they were widely used in other regions of the empire and were especially suitable for the local field economy. Brant, however, rightly observes that the problem was conditioned not so much by the diligence of the inhabitants as by the nature of state governance. If a person earned money through diligence and intelligence, some greedy governor would confiscate it, so that the entire incentive for industriousness disappeared. Sherif Bey partially agreed with this observation, noting that the natives, when they became rich, tended to become arrogant and forget their duty, and cited the Beys of that region as an example, who, upon becoming rich, became haughty and rebelled. Brant countered that such cases are more a manifestation of self-defense and that if the government were just and exercised proper control, there would be no incentive to rebel and the Beys would not be able to successfully become independent. Sherif Bey expressed hope that now, when the country is under the control of legal authorities, tranquility will prevail henceforth, and prosperity will follow as a natural consequence. The idea that the people should be kept under pressure and poverty to ensure obedience was characterized by Brant as "the Turkish expedient." The long-term application of this principle, according to him, was the very factor that had led the country to a socio-economically unfavorable state.¹⁰⁶

Brant's report mentions that "the trade of Van is insignificant, and the consumption of European goods is negligible, because poverty prevents people from acquiring them. Nevertheless, Van, with its geographical position, lands, climate, and all other circumstances, is capable of becoming an important commercial center. Bad governance and the lack of security are hindering the development of its natural advantages".¹⁰⁷

Brant also gave an assessment of the Pasha of Van, noting: "From all I saw and heard, the Pasha was a just and honorable old man, but with his age and mental unpreparedness, he was an unsuitable person to govern such a beautiful but uncultivated Pashalik. Whereas, when the formation of new orders began in Turkey, such regions should be governed by active, energetic, and enlightened leaders".¹⁰⁸ These words of the British consul were aimed at showing that the real progress of the region is possible only in the event of a radical reform of the Ottoman governance system, which would be guaranteed by a British presence.

Conclusion

The study shows that the British consular presence, which became active in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 19th century, was not only a diplomatic mission but also had clear strategic goals. Through the journeys and publications of the Consul

¹⁰⁶ Brant and Glascott 1840: 363.

¹⁰⁷ Brant and Glascott 1840: 396.

¹⁰⁸ Brant and Glascott 1840: 395-396.

of Erzurum, James Brant, not only the socio-economic and political realities of the eastern provinces of the empire come to light, but also the real goals and practices of British foreign policy. Brant's travelogues testify that consular reports served not only as informational but also as control and influence tools, while simultaneously reflecting Britain's growing interest in the internal life of the Ottoman state.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bailey F.E. 1942. *British Policy And The Turkish Reform Movement, A Study In Anglo-Turkish Relations 1826-1853*. Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University press.

Barkey K. 2008. *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Bayburtyan V. 2008. *Kurds, Armenian Question and Armenian-Kurdish Relations under the Light of History*. Yerevan: Authors publ. (In Arm.).

Brant J. 1836. *Journey Through a Part of Armenia and Asia Minor, in the Year 1835*, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 6, 187-223.

Brant J. and A. G. Glascott 1840. *Notes of a Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan, in the Summer of 1838*, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 10, 341-434.

Braude B., B. Lewis 1982. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*. Boulder/Co. - London: Lynne Rienner.

Dönmez A. 2019. *The Role of James Brant in the Process of Structural Changes in British Consulates*, *ADALYA 22, The Annual of the Koç University Suna & İnan Kiraç Research Center for Mediterranean Civilizations*, 363-379.

Eppel M. 2008. *The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates: The Impact of Ottoman Reforms and International Relations on Kurdistan during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, *Middle Eastern Studies* 44/2, 237-258.

Gencer F. 2024. *British Consul James Brant and His Reports on the Problems in Erzurum and Muş, Turkey*, *İçtimaiyat*, C.8, S.1, 281-291.

Ghazaryan H. 1967. *Social-economic and Political situation of Western Armenians in 1800-1870*. Yerevan: Academy of Sciences press (In Arm.).

Hourani A. 1968. *Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables: Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, The Nineteenth Century*, In W.R.Polk and R.L.Chambers (eds) *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago press, 4-68.

Inalcık H., D. Quartaert 1994. *An Economic and Social History of The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Jongerden J. and J. Verheij 2012. *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870–1915*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.

Kasaba R. 2009. *A Movable Empire, Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, And Refugees*. Seattle and London: University of Washington press.

- McDowall D. 2021. A Modern History of the Kurds. London – New York: I.B.Tauris.
- Nalbandian L. 1963. The Armenian Revolutionary Movement, The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century. Berkeley-Los Angeles, London: University of California press.
- Nash G. 2005. From Empire to Orient: Travellers to the Middle East 1830-1926. London – New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Özoglu H. 2004. Kurdish Notables and The Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries. Albany: State University of New press.
- Özok-Gündoğan N. 2022. The Kurdish Nobility in The Ottoman Empire: Loyalty, Autonomy and Privilege. Edinburg: Edinburg University press.
- Petrosyan Yu.A. 2013. The Ottoman Empire. Moscow: Algoritm (In Russian).
- Safrastyan A. 1948. Kurds and Kurdistan. London: Thevharvill.
- Said E.W. 1978. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books.
- Yurdusev E. 2009. The British Ambassadors to Istanbul in The Mid-Nineteenth Century: Sources of Intelligence and Political Reporting, Belleten. Turk Tarih Kurumu, C.73, S.267, 523-554.

Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan