The Reşwan Kurds and Ottoman Tribal Settlement in Syria, 1683-1741

Stefan Winter

Université du Québec à Montréal

winter.stefan@uqam.ca

Abstract

The Reşwan were one of the most important tribal confederations in the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. Yet their history remains almost completely ignored, while the few contemporary authors who refer them almost invariably fail to mention that they were Kurds. This article seeks to retrace the history of the Reşwan confederation and particularly their place in the Ottoman imperial tribal settlement (*iskan*) scheme of the eighteenth century. Drawing on both Ottoman chancery documents and local *şariat* archives, it seeks to show that the Reşwan enjoyed relatively good relations with the Ottoman authorities and a high degree of integration with other groups in northern Syria and Mesopotamia, with individual members attaining high office in the region. While the Reşwan name has virtually disappeared, members of the confederation in Turkey today still trace their origins to the Syrian settlement initiative.

Keywords

Ottoman – Kurds – Syria – tribes – archives

The study of the Kurds and Kurdistan under Ottoman rule, as Christopher Houston has recently noted, remains dominated by statist and nationalist perspectives: concentrated overwhelmingly on either the Kurdish emirates of eastern Anatolia and their integration into the Empire in the sixteenth century or on the reassertion of Ottoman central control during the Tanzimat reform

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period, the “historiographical corpus” shared by most modern authors “reduces the richness and suffering of the lives of Kurdish men and women to power relations organized through the state” and is marked by a “striking unified disinterest in late seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ottoman Kurdistan.”¹ The following contribution is meant to help redress this imbalance by concentrating on a less remarked population in a region and period often deemed marginal to Kurdish history. The Reşwan feature more prominently than perhaps any other tribal grouping in Ottoman administrative documents of the eighteenth century. Little regarded before this time, they became closely involved with Empire’s tribal sedentarization (*iskan*) initiative in 1690, giving rise to a vast amount of official correspondence concerning their relocation, taxation status, recruitment for military service, nominations to provincial posts and other regulatory matters which can be used to retrace their evolution today.

Yet their history remains virtually unknown, not only among specialists of the Ottoman period but also within the field of Kurdish history itself. The reasons for this are partly practical: with a paper trail that extends from the Ottoman archives in Istanbul and Ankara through the narrative literature of British, French, and other European travellers and the court records of a dozen former provincial capitals in Anatolia, Syria and even Lebanon, modern researchers have not shown much interest in the Reşwans’ fairly marginal presence in any one region or source, nor found it useful to study the confederation’s past as a whole. Of course the reasons are also political: to the extent that the Reşwans’ history largely played out in what is today Turkey and Syria, many historians of these countries have preferred to ignore or to simply not identify them as Kurds. In particular, Turkish nationalist authors beginning with Yusuf Halaçoğlu have tried to argue that the word “Kürd” (plur. “Ekrad”) in Ottoman sources only signifies “nomads” in a general sociological sense and should never be seen as indicating an actual Kurdish ethnic or linguistic identity; consequently Faruk Söylemez’s otherwise useful study on the Reşwan as an example of Ottoman tribal management, the only monograph-length work of its kind, fails to mention on a single page that they were consistently identified as Kurds and assimilates them instead to Turkish tribalism in Anatolia.² But the reasons are also academic or methodological: lacking a clearly defined leadership or tribal structure, the Reşwan (an appellation which has almost

1 Houston, Christopher. *Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008, 50.

2 Söylemez, Faruk. *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Yönetimi: Rişvan Aşireti Örneği*. İstanbul, Kitabevi, 2007.

completely disappeared from the region today, and which some historians posit was actually a generic term for nomad populations practising seasonal transhumance between eastern Anatolia and northern Syria³) may, like many other pre-modern “tribes”, have been more of an Ottoman government creation than an actual kin group.

The Reşwans’ origins are the subject of some dispute among historians. According to sixteenth-century tax records for the *sancak* (province) of Urfa, the Reşwan were one of the last remnants of the Kara-Ulus (“Black Nation”), a confederation of mainly Kurdish tribes associated with the Turcoman Kara-Koyunlu (“Black Sheep”) dynasty which ruled much of eastern Anatolia, northern Iraq, Armenia and western Iran from the late fourteenth through the mid-fifteenth century.⁴ Like the “Boz-Ulus” (“Grey Nation”), a designation the Ottoman state gave the remnant tribes of the Ak-Koyunlu (“White Sheep”) dynasty after its defeat and amalgamation into the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth century, the Reşwan (whose name can be taken to mean “the Blacks” in Kurdish) were likely a political union of local Kurdish and possibly non-Kurdish populations devised by the Ottoman state for accounting and control purposes in the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the Reşwan appear in even greater numbers in the tax records of the neighbouring province of Maraş in this period, where they appear to have been concentrated in the districts of Behisni, Kahta and Hısn-ı Mansur (today Adıyaman).⁵ In later times, tribal subunits (alternately identified as *boy*, *cemaat*, *aşiret*, *taife*, etc., in Ottoman documents) became dispersed throughout central and eastern Anatolia and even as far as Rumelia in the European part of the Empire.⁶ The tax farm (*iltizam*) associated with the Reşwan settling in Syria, however, remained based in Hısn-ı Mansur throughout the period under consideration.

What is distinctive about the Reşwan as compared to other Ottoman tribal groupings is the unusually high degree of integration into, and autonomy within, the provincial administrative system they seem to have enjoyed. Like

3 Sakaoğlu, Necdet. *Anadolu Derebeyi Ocaklarından Köse Paşa Hanedanı*. İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı, 1998, 37-39, 369.

4 Turan, Ahmet Nezihi. *XVI. Yüzyılda Ruha (Urfa) Sancağı*. Şanlıurfa, Şurkav Yayınları, 2005, 55-56.

5 Taştımir, Mehmet. *XVI. Yüzyılda Adıyaman (Behisni, Hısn-ı Mansur, Gerger, Kâhta) Sosyal ve İktisadî Tarihi*. Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999; Söylemez. *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Yönetimi*, xv-xvi, 37-45.

6 Türkay, Cevdet. *Başbakanlık Arşivi Belgelerine Göre Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Oymak, Aşiret ve Cemaatlar*. İstanbul, İşaret Yayınları, 2001, 125, 541-542; Halaçoğlu, Yusuf. *Anadolu'da Aşiretler, Cemaatlar, Oymaklar (1453-1650)*. İstanbul, Togan Yayıncılık, 2009, 1912-1914.

many pastoral stockbreeding populations in the region, the Reşwans' mobility brought them into frequent contact and sometimes violent conflict with rival groups and villages. As early as 1615, for example, orders sent to the authorities in Diyarbekir, Urfa, Samsat (on the upper Euphrates) and Aleppo note that Mustafa Reşwan "of the Reşwan Kurds", who had recently been dismissed apparently as governor of the *sancak* of Malatya, gave two tax farms in the vicinity of Hısn-ı Mansur to his own son Kalender and was continually deploying a private militia "of 200-300 horsemen and retainers and over a hundred brigand irregulars" to oppress the local population.⁷ Only the next year, Kalender (presumably the same individual) was accused of stabbing and seriously injuring a local resident, while Mirza Ali and other members of the tribe were accused of insubordination and not paying their taxes; in both cases they were to be brought to account by the sergeant (*çavuş*) of Hısn-ı Mansur.⁸ Far more frequently, however, we see the Reşwan cited as taking on various government responsibilities and essentially policing themselves. Documents from the imperial financial complaints (*şikayet*) registers, for example, refer to two petitions sent to the "*kadı* [judge] of the Reşwan" in 1665, asking him to take action against several nomadic (*konar-göçer*) members of the confederation who were stealing from local villagers.⁹ From an administrative point of view, the Reşwan by this point constituted a collective *hass* or private fiscal reserve of the sultanate, and the *voyvoda* or intendant of this reserve would also be in charge of collecting taxes as well as wintering dues (*kışlak*) when members of the community drove their flocks to pasture outside their home district. On occasion the *voyvoda* himself could solicit help from the Ottoman authorities at Maraş when his subjects were rebelling, "harming the Kurdish subjects" or otherwise causing trouble in his area of jurisdiction.¹⁰

An important turning point in the Reşwans' history was probably their incorporation into the Atik Valide Sultan (Ottoman queen dowager) pious foundation (*vakıf*). Named for the mother of sultan Murat III, the foundation was established in 1583 to provide for the construction and upkeep of a major mosque complex, sufi hospice and other charitable institutions on the hill-top of Üsküdar overlooking the Bosphorus across from Istanbul. Among the most important sources of revenue bequeathed to this *vakıf* were the sultanic *hass* reserves of various tribal confederations in Anatolia and northern Syria,

7 Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives (BOA). Istanbul, Mühimme Defteri (MD) 80:525, 540.

8 MD 81:39.

9 BOA. Şikayet Defteri (ŞD) 4:122.

10 ŞD 6:46, 133, 157.

FIGURE 1 *Atik Valide Sultan mosque, Üsküdar.*
PHOTO: S. WINTER

including the Yeni İl Turcomans, the Kilis Kurds, and the Reşwan.¹¹ It is not entirely clear when the Reşwan *hass* was first assigned to the foundation, but the oldest documentary evidence in this regard appears to date from 1683, when an Atik Valide Sultan *vakf* official complained to the Sublime Porte that members of the confederation were being harassed by the people of Sivas and prevented from moving to their traditional *yaylas* (summer pastures) at Bin Dağ and Köse Dağ.¹² Beginning in 1683 there are also numerous documents from the Vakıf Directorate in Ankara (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*) recording the assignment of the “Reşwan and associated *hasses*” to various officials on a contractual basis.¹³

This date would in fact coincide with the start of a vast new Ottoman government program to extend control over the Syrian desert interior. The Ottoman “*iskan siyaseti*” (tribal settlement policy) famously described by Cengiz Orhonlu and other Turkish historians began in 1690, when the Sublime Porte attempted to relocate numerous nomadic groups mainly to the Balikh and middle Euphrates valleys in the province of Raqqa as a means to take pressure off the tax-producing agrarian population in Anatolia, defend the region's settled margins against bedouin incursions and contribute to raising state revenues.¹⁴ However, it appears that the Sublime Porte's new interest in the area preceded the *iskan* initiative by some years. Already around 1676, the position of *çöl beği* (“desert emir”) which had once been exercised by the Abu-Rish emirs was revived and assigned, along with the governorship of Salamiyyah (east of Hama on the edge of the Syrian steppe) to the Mawali bedouin leader ‘Abbās and his family. More important, in 1683 grand vezir Kara Mustafa Paşa undertook an extensive renovation of the citadel of Raqqa, as evidenced by a highly ornate stone plaque preserved today in the city's museum. Long a ghost town, Raqqa's resurrection as the centre of Ottoman tribal control in

11 See Şahin, İlhan. “XVI. Yüzyılda Halep ve Yeni-İl Türkmenleri”. In: *Anadolu'da ve Rumeli'de Yörükler ve Türkmenler Sempozyumu Bildirileri*. Istanbul, Yör-Türk Vakfı, 2000, 234-235, and Winter, Stefan. “Les Kurdes du Nord-Ouest syrien et l'État ottoman, 1690-1750”. In: Mohammad Afifi *et al.* (eds). *Sociétés rurales ottomanes*. Cairo, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2005, 248-250, respectively.

12 ŞD 8:484.

13 Ankara, Vakıflar. Genel Müdürlüğü (VGM). Register 341:34-35, 69, 91, 102, 105-106.

14 Orhonlu, Cengiz. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskânı*. Istanbul, Eren, 1987; Halaçoğlu, Yusuf. *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskân Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi*. Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988; Çelikdemir, Murat. *Osmanlı Döneminde Aşiretleri Rakka'ya İskanı (1690-1840)*. Unpublished Fırat University (Elazığ) doctoral dissertation, 2001.

1683 marked the beginning of one of the most brilliant periods in the region's history.¹⁵

The Reşwan were among the tribes most directly concerned by this development. The governor of Raqqa (who was generally based in the city of Urfa, rather than in Raqqa) is invoked in countless documents of the period regarding the Reşwans' taxation, settlement and control; in 1697 a group of Reşwan "brigands" were even imprisoned in the citadel of Raqqa after an administrator (*kethüda*) of the Valide Sultan *vakıf* had complained of their attacking the Yeni İl Turcomans, who belonged to the same foundation.¹⁶ While many of the Reşwan were of course already present in the province of Raqqa, the governor was also frequently called upon to intervene in Hısn-ı Mansur and other neighbouring districts when the Reşwan complained to the authorities of fiscal abuses, livestock theft or problems encountered when they set out for their summer or winter pastures. Many of these conflicts seem to have occurred with other tribes which had come to or been resettled in Raqqa from further away. As early as the summer of 1690, for example, the governor of Raqqa was notified that a *konar-göçer* (nomadic) division of Reşwan had been attacked and robbed of their sheep and oxen by another nomadic Kurdish tribe, the Aleppo-based Kılıçlı; some years later, the authorities of Raqqa, Maraş and Aleppo received orders to protect the Reşwan against a group of Reşi Kurds who had seized and were occupying their houses.¹⁷ Relations with *iskan* tribes were not always necessarily conflictual, however. In 1701, to cite one example, the governor of Raqqa was warned that Turcomans who had been settled in the province had fled and taken refuge among the Reşwan *hass* subjects of the Valide Sultan foundation; the governor was to remove them from the Reşwans' area and return them to their settlements in Raqqa.¹⁸ In 1733, the elders of the Omranlo and other sedentary Reşwan sub-tribes appeared in court in Hısn-ı Mansur to complain of the attacks they were being subjected to by *konar-göçer* Turcomans of the Raqqa settlement project.¹⁹ Another time, the Reşwan were in turn denounced for raiding areas in the Balikh valley assigned to the Yeni İl.²⁰

15 Winter, Stefan. "The Province of Raqqa under Ottoman Rule, 1535-1800: A Preliminary Study". *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 68 (2009), 260-264.

16 MD 110:176.

17 ŞD 14:69; ŞD 21:3.

18 Refik, Ahmet. *Anadolu'da Türk Aşiretleri (966-1200): Anadolu'da yaşayan türk aşiretleri hakkında Divanı Hümayun mühimme defterlerinde mukayyet hükümleri havidir*. Istanbul, Enderun Kitabevi, 1989, 124.

19 ŞD 140 :505.

20 VGM 344:272.

Among the Reşwans' most problematic relations were with the *çöl beğis* (desert emirs) of the above-mentioned 'Abbās family. In the autumn of 1694, the Reşwan complained that Ḥusayn al-'Abbās, who had temporarily been dismissed as *çöl beği* and governor of Salamiyyah, along with several of his brothers and over 400 Arab bedouins had attacked their camps in the triangle between Aleppo, Balis (on the Euphrates east of Aleppo) and Salamiyyah, killing 11 of their men "without reason", making off with 125,300 sheep and goats, 80,000 lambs, 18 horses, 244 donkeys and cattle, and stealing effects from 400 families. Orders were thereupon issued to the provincial authorities throughout the region (Kilis, Aleppo, Raqqā, Dayr al-Zor/Raḥbah and Damascus) to find the perpetrators and return everything to the victims.²¹ Besides the details on the extent of the Reşwans' livestock holdings, this document is of course valuable for providing a precise indication of where their pastures were located in this period. According to a petition sent by the notables of Aleppo to the Sublime Porte some years later, "the *konar-göçer* Reşwan Kurds did not usually pass places where they could cause harm in the unfarmed area east of Aleppo when they migrate from their winter pastures around the Gök Su [a tributary of the Euphrates north of Birecik] and go to their summer pastures in the desert of the province of Salamiyyah", but had begun to do so that year, eating their way through and causing damage in 20 villages along the way.²² This may also help explain their increasing friction with the 'Abbās emirs, who had wide-ranging authority in the region but were causing the Ottoman authorities numerous problems on account of infighting within their own tribes. In the early winter of 1728, we again learn that the governor of Damascus was ordered to be on guard against the excesses of the 'Abbās emirs around Hama and Homs, "when, as per tradition, people of the Reşwan tribe head out to the desert with their flocks these days."²³

Perhaps owing to the tribal settlement initiative, it in fact seems that some Reşwan were now wintering or beginning to establish a more permanent presence in northern Syria. Other documents, for example, tell of a debt dispute between members of the Reşwan and another tribe in the Hama area, and of a further confrontation with animal thieves in Salamiyyah, in 1698.²⁴ In 1712, the governors of Raqqā and Aleppo as well as a local *kadı* were called upon to resolve a conflict with a village in the Harim district west of Aleppo where the Reşwan had "designated winter pastures" but where they had let their

²¹ ŞD 17:547.

²² Centre for Historical Documents. Damascus, Evamir-i Sultaniye for Aleppo (ES-A) 3:312.

²³ MD 134:327.

²⁴ ŞD 29:256.

FIGURE 2 Order regarding the Reşwans' depredations near Tizîn (Harim), *Şikayet Defteri* 60:264 (Başbakanlık Archives).

flocks graze on the villagers' farms and vegetable gardens; a few years later the taxes the Reşwan paid for their winter pasturages in Aleppo were the subject of a complaint made by a clan leader (*boy beği*) to the Sublime Porte.²⁵ Most strikingly, perhaps, documents from the Islamic court records of Tripoli indicate that three Reşwan chiefs asked to be allowed to settle with 600 families (and their 40,000 sheep) in the 'Akkār district at the northern edge of Mount Lebanon in 1741. They were assigned a specific area on the condition of paying a set amount of taxes and keeping the peace in the region.²⁶ A few years later, the concessionaries of the overall Reşwan tax farm (*iltizam*) complained that this arrangement was causing a shortfall in their revenues, so that they received permission to collect from the settlers in the 'Akkār.²⁷

25 ŞD 60:264; ŞD 99:145.

26 Qasr Nawfal Library. Tripoli, Shar'īyya Court Register (TShCR), 7:280-281.

27 TShCR 9:148.

What is again striking is how often the Ottoman authorities seem to have responded to the Reşwans' petitions and attempted to intervene in their interests. As Faruk Söylemez has rightly noted, the Reşwan were regularly recruited for military services and never entered into outright rebellion against the empire,²⁸ the occasional instances of tribal feuding or brigandage notwithstanding. Moreover, individual members were frequently employed not only as *voyvodas*, *boy beğis* or other tribal representatives, but even as *valis* (governors) of Adana and Malatya, the "Reşvan-zade" family arguably forming one of the leading provincial governor dynasties in all of eighteenth-century Anatolia. The career of the Reşvan-zades (or Reşvan-oğlus) in the service of the Ottoman state still awaits a study in its own right. It nevertheless appears that they remained grounded to some degree in their original tribal milieu: in the winter of 1723-1724, most notably, Mehmed Paşa, son of a famous governor of Raqqa, Halil Paşa Reşvan-oğlu, who had just been executed for insubordination, contributed an army of over 10,000 Reşwan Kurds and local Turcomans to help with the ouster of an equally refractory governor in Damascus, thereby buying himself and his family back into the Ottomans' good graces.²⁹

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the Sublime Porte consistently came to the Reşwan tribes' defence against adversaries such as the 'Abbās emirs, and ultimately even gave them a stake in the selection of the *çöl beği* in northern Syria. In 1738, for example, the heads of the *konar-göçer* Reşwan attached to the Atik Valide Sultan *hass* again had reason to complain of their ill treatment at the hands of the 'Abbās: until then they had always paid a fixed price (1000 *guruş* and 2 mares) to winter in the provinces of Dayr al-Zor/Raḥbah and Salamiyyah, but now the desert emirs were asking for a large increase. The governors of Aleppo and Raqqa were issued orders to provide the Reşwan with an armed escort of 1500 men all the way to the Euphrates to defend them against the 'Abbās brothers, who in their fight over the succession to the *çöl beğlik* were endangering the entire region. Moreover, safeguarding the Reşwans' interests was to be one of the main criteria for choosing the new *çöl beği*. Henceforth, however, the Reşwan were to pay a yearly price of 15,000 *guruş*, perhaps an indication of their increasing numbers. In return the emirs were put under obligation to defend them and other "settler tribes" (*tavaif-i iskan*) in the region against sheep rustlers and bedouins, failing which they

28 Söylemez, *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Yönetimi*, esp. 287-289.

29 Raşid Efendi. *Tarih-i Raşid*. Istanbul, n.p., 1865/66, 414; von Hammer, Joseph. *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*. vol. 7: *Vom Carlowicz bis zum Belgrader Frieden, 1699-1739*. [Buda-]Pest, C.A. Hartleben, 1831, 170-171.

FIGURE 3 *Steppe east of Hama.*
PHOTO: S. WINTER

could be dismissed.³⁰ Three years later, in 1741, the Sublime Porte ordered the governor of Raqqa to identify “the most apt and fitting” of the ‘Abbās sons to serve as *çöl beği*; significantly, however, the nomination was no longer automatic but would have to be approved by the Reşwan themselves, before being submitted to the *shar‘iyya* court of Aleppo for ratification.³¹

The Reşwans’ expansion into Tripoli and the extraordinary power granted them in the selection of the *çöl beği* can be taken to illustrate the extent of their presence and influence in northern Syria by 1741. Following Orhonlu, historians of Ottoman tribes and nomadism have identified the 1690s as the high-point of imperial tribal control policy but then only spoken vaguely of a “collapse” of the settlement initiative and the resurgence of tribalism in the course of the later eighteenth century.³² The experiences of the Reşwan (and other tribes) in northern Syria, however, suggest that the Ottoman state actually continued with its hands-on approach to tribal management well into the middle of the century, actively co-opting and in some cases promoting their leaderships as

30 ES-A 3:331.

31 ES-A 4:125.

32 Kasaba, Reşat. *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees*. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2009, 75-87.

a means of consolidating the government's hold over the provincial interior. Far from denoting a return to a "state of crisis", the role played locally by the Reşwan in Tripoli, Aleppo and Raqqa was seen as a stabilizing factor by the Ottoman authorities.

The Reşwans' history of course does not end in the mid-eighteenth century. In later years they still occasionally had to be protected against extortion by local bedouins;³³ brigandage by tribe members around Hısn-ı Mansur and Sivas remained a problem but throughout the 1750s and 60s the Reşvan-zades as well as the confederation's own *voivodas* were still frequently called upon to help put it down.³⁴ If the Ottoman state ultimately lost control of the rural periphery of northern Syria again toward the end of the century, this had more to do with its own weakness than with an autonomous resurgence of tribalism. In 1774, toward the end of its catastrophic war against Russia, the Sublime Porte acknowledged that Raqqa had been left empty of provincial governors for the past five or six years and the entire region essentially abandoned.³⁵ In the following years the Reşwan engaged in serious clashes with the remaining provincial authorities in the Syrian-Anatolian borderlands, thereby acquiring a reputation for perhaps the first time, in both the government documentation and the literature, as one of the area's problem tribes.³⁶ In early 1784, by way of provisionally ending this account, the Ottoman state appears to have begun to take exception with the Reşwans' "tribalism" *per se*: In orders issued to the governor of Raqqa, it is noted explicitly that the Reşwan, Millis, Kikis and other "tent-dwelling Kurdish tribes have increased in number of late", putting pressure on the sedentary population in northern Syria and pushing many of the latter to take up nomadism in turn.³⁷ The renewed sedentarization efforts of the reformist Tanzimat government in the nineteenth century, not surprisingly, would specifically target the remnants of the Reşwan in southern and central Anatolia.³⁸

The Reşwan, from the time of their incorporation into the Valide Sultan *vakıf* to the height of their participation in the local politics of Tripoli and Aleppo

33 MD 154:329.

34 MD 158:243; MD 159:153; MD 160:176; MD 163:181.

35 MD 175:138-39; Winter, "Province of Raqqa", 264-265.

36 Cevdet Paşa, Ahmed. *Tarih-i Cevdet*. Istanbul, Matbaa-ı Osmaniye, 1891/92, III:323; Kuroki, Hidemitsu. "Account Books of Oppression and Bargaining: Struggle for Justice and Profit in Ottoman Aleppo, 1784-1790". *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 20 (2005), 53-71.

37 MD 182:48.

38 See Köksal, Yonca. "Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Sedentarization of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire". *Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2006), 485-487.

in 1741, were doubtless one of the best-integrated and most visible tribal communities of the entire Ottoman Empire. This presence and influence is all but forgotten today, as the Reşwan, when they are remembered at all, are at best categorized as a “loyal” tribe of Adıyaman “having no foreign ties”.³⁹ It is essentially among the Kurds of ‘Inner Anatolia’ (the Konya-Ankara-Kırşehir area), many of whom trace their origins to the Reşwan, that the memory of a distant past in Syria is kept alive today.⁴⁰ This past, extensively documented in Ottoman sources but systematically ignored by nationalist historians of all persuasions, challenges numerous received myths regarding the situation of Kurdish tribes and their indigenous leaderships under Ottoman rule, relations between Kurds and Turcomans in southern Anatolia and northern Syria, or the historical Kurdish presence in the mountains of Lebanon and on the Syrian steppe. There is of course still much more to be learned of the actual experiences of the Reşwan and other Ottoman Kurds in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and this in turn would be an important step toward a more integrative understanding of the entire region’s shared history.

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39 Anon. *Aşiret Raporu*. Istanbul, Kaynak Yayınları, 1998, 24-34.

40 See Ateş, Nuh. *İç Anadolu Kürtleri (Konya-Ankara-Kırşehir)*. Cologne, Komkar Yayınları, 1992.

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