PART I

THE LANDSCAPE, THE PEOPLE AND THE STATE
CHAPTER ONE

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DYNAMICS:
NOMADS AND SETTLERS

And to the east beyond river Ceyhan, ‘adem geçemez’.

In 1671, Evliya Çelebi described the town of Adana with considerable vitality: a center of trade with 2 gates, 17 khans, 700 stores, and 1 bazaar. The liveliness of 17th century Adana, however, was in sharp contrast with the rest of this huge region as the landscape beyond the city gave the impression of an empty space. A few more towns such as Tarsus, Sis, Kars-ul Zulkadriye and villages in the valleys stood out against thinly populated zones of tribal control.

From the 16th to the 19th centuries, the juxtaposition of Mediterranean, steppe and mountain climates profoundly influenced this landscape’s patterns of population distribution and settlement. The economy of Çukurova, full of marshland and swamps, remained limited to the subsistence of the few settlements and numerous nomadic tribes. Even at the beginning of the 19th century, Çukurova was still described as “no more than a badly drained, fever-ridden, thinly populated country”. The settled population then consisted of peasants and traders who managed the transit traffic between Erzurum and Adana, Konya and Aleppo, Istanbul and Baghdad. Nomads, on the other hand, exhibited a variety of habitation patterns from semi-nomadism to transhumance. Some had established a kind of symbiotic relationship to the settled societies in order to acquire the goods they could not produce themselves. The maintenance of this relationship and a pastoral economy meant highly complex processes of transformation

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1 In 1671, the famed traveler Evliya Çelebi described Çukurova beyond a few towns up to the Ceyhan River, as such a space, impassable by humans. Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, Vol. 9 (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1935) p. 333.

2 Ibid., p. 333.

3 BOA: Tapu Tahrir 998, 923 (1517–1518). Pages 390, 405, 353, 347, 542 show the evkaf of these towns.