Examining 16th-century Kurdish politics, particularly in the frontier districts between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, aptly serves as a starting point for understanding Kurdish regional semi-autonomy. This paper, dedicated to the activities of Kurdish individuals involved in information-gathering on behalf of both the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires, is the first of its kind. The findings presented here are the result of close exploration in the Ottoman archives as well as detailed reading of a number of materials from Ottoman and Safavid chronicles. The paper discusses three main subjects. The introductory section briefly explains the methods and potentials of Kurdish spying as well as some of the particulars of Ottoman–Safavid espionage. The second section provides an overview of two famous Kurdish intellectual historians and the role each played in information-gathering. The third section discusses cases of espionage throughout the political careers of several Kurdish frontier emirs.

Key words: Kurds, Ottomans, Safavids, information-gathering, spy, Kurdistan, 16th century.

I. Introduction

Little is known about the control of information in the 16th century, but it must have been quite considerable, especially in the Middle East. In the political arena of the time, information played a significant role and gave a certain advantage to those
empires that developed their policies based on information provided by accurate sources. In a battle with the logistical difficulties of the 16th century, empires had to make investment in espionage networks which, albeit incapable and simple by modern criterions, still provided them with the most reliable information according to which they were to distribute their resources and create their policies. As might be expected, empires sought to make use of and control information in order to get advantage over their rivals.

Control of information is an important facet of 16th-century Ottoman–Safavid politics as well. The length and the scope of Ottoman–Safavid rivalry convinced both empires to establish some espionage networks that gathered information in a large frontier geography. Nevertheless, in the war of information between Ottomans and Safavids on their frontier territories, the success of both empires was essentially based on the Kurdish principalities and individuals.

The emergence of Safavid power – a special change in the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire – introduced to keep a close eye on the military progress, tribal movements, and economic capability of the new Shiite rivals. At the very beginning of the 16th century the Safavids appeared on the political scene of the region with a new set of religious claims. Besides the very harsh religious answer that Safavids received from the Ottomans, another result was that Ottoman sensitivity became stronger than had originally been planned. Without a doubt, espionage made a significant mark on the Ottoman–Safavid relations since the beginning of this longstanding conflict. Initially, both empires relied by necessity on Kurdish espionage networks. The lack of information readily available to the Ottomans on Ismā‘īl I, for example, obliged them to gather information on Safavid activities much beyond the Euphrates (see Walsh 1962, p. 206).

In the 16th century, there was no assured way of effectively controlling Kurdish frontier tribes. Espionage was also the quickest way by which the Ottomans and Safavids could improve their situation in Kurdistan. In accordance with their “intelligence strategy”, Ottomans and Safavids engaged in a number of different activities such as information analysis, disinformation, bribery, propaganda, cryptanalysis, and counter-intelligence (see Gürkan 2012a).

No effort was made to analyse Kurdish spies and informants in the 16th century. The sources for the Ottoman and Safavid spies are hardly accessible even today. In his informative and invaluable PhD dissertation, Emrah Safa Gürkan made a major contribution especially to the study of Ottoman espionage on the western Ottoman frontiers (see Gürkan 2012b). No mention was, however, made about the Kurdish spies in the 16th century. The inclusion of the Safavid espionage is also very brief and superficial. On the subject of spies in the Safavid Empire, other than the spies and informants acted on the Ottoman frontier, our main source of information is the article by Vural Genç (forthcoming). The following pages aim to supplement these past researches and especially to make an important contribution to the neglected subject of Kurdish information-gathering. The potential to act as brokers of information was a

1 For details, see Skilliter (1976, pp. 47–59).
source of Kurdish power and leverage, allowing them to exchange one patron for another. What we are dealing with here is also this strategic position of Kurdish frontier emirates as an excellent factor for negotiating with neighbouring empires.

II. Methods and Potentials of Kurdish Espionage

Specific terms are used in both Ottoman and Safavid documents to refer to and describe spies and information-gathering. The technical term for espionage in both Safavid and Ottoman texts is either the Persian zabāngīrī or the Turkish dil almak, the literal translation of which is ‘catching a tongue’. The most ubiquitous term, however, is jāsūsī or tecessūs. The term rasm-i zabāngīrī should also be mentioned. It can be translated as either ‘espionage method’ or ‘espionage fashion’ (see Turksman 2008, Vol. I, p. 509). While literature on espionage has alluded to uses of words like rasm-i zabāngīrī, the subject of terminology has received neither any detailed, nor even clear methodological attention.

It is true that the 16th-century authors rarely identify a specifically Kurdish approach to espionage, which is distinguishable from a characteristically Ottoman or Safavid approach. The standard understanding of Kurdish espionage is possibly hindered by a lack of understanding of what the term Kurdish spy may have referred to in the 16th century.

Non-Kurdish Safavid and Ottoman spies were probably considered more trustworthy because, unlike their Kurdish counterparts who had close ties with Kurdish emirs whose loyalty was extremely fluid, they did not have potentially competing loyalties. The forms in which the Kurdish spies appeared were many and varied. They normally came into imperial service as (i) frontier tribal agents, (ii) envoys, (iii) pilgrims, (iv) travellers, and (v) merchants. Often pursued by imperial authorities, they normally travelled in disguise (tebdil-i sûret).

Influential Kurdish emirs and intellectuals were particularly interested in information-gathering. These emirs and their principalities were home to many tribal chieftains and local merchants, pilgrims, and agents that crossed the Ottoman–Safavid boundary regularly. For the imperial authorities, having a Kurdish emir in their service meant that they had widespread access to hundreds of tribal men, chieftains, and equipment.

Broader regional interests often influenced Kurdish interactions with both the Ottomans and the Safavids. The fact that Kurdish emirs had Kurdish allies on either

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2 In both Ottoman and Safavid traditions, the word jāsūs (sometimes as ādam) is often used to denote ‘spy, informant’. Common Persian and Arabic words (mukhbir, sāhib al-khabar, munahhi, mushrif) are not included. Interestingly, the Turkish word dil ‘tongue’ was occasionally used as a synonym for jāsūs. Compare Ispanaqchīpāşāzāda (2000, p. 177) and Ibn Manẓūr (1986, Vol. II, p. 283). To our knowledge, Kurdish nouns and verbs for espionage (e.g. destkîs, sîxur, cehg, cestandin, and qişirandin) were not mentioned in any Ottoman–Safavid or Kurdish texts from the 16th century.
side of the border proved to challenging for the imperial powers. Although no detailed account to this effect has been found to date, they seemed to have been very capable of simultaneously serving as spies for both powers without their duplicity being discovered.

Kurdish emirs sometimes even learned to be spies before they learned to be emirs. According to the archival reports, it is clear that spies of Kurdish emirs had connections to both the Sultan, and especially, the Shah. This provided them the opportunity to gather information from the centre unimpeded. It should be kept in mind, however, that Kurdish actions toward either empire could have been only a small part of a larger espionage project. A key to successful spying in the 16th century was to have an advantage in the politics of information. Kurdish espionage was not the only answer to the major queries that Ottoman–Safavid espionage engagement needed to ask. Kurdish emirs who co-operated with their Ottoman and Safavid overlords were strategic actors. As such, they sought to take advantage of political position on the frontier in order to achieve their personal objectives. This does not mean, however, that their objectives were predetermined by their Kurdishness. Additionally, the fact that Kurds provided services to both the Ottomans and the Safavids should not be considered treachery. It would be anachronistic to apply the concepts of nationhood and nationalism to the 16th century.

A. Kurdish Espionage and Bilingualism

The characteristics that set Kurdish spies apart from Ottoman and Safavid spies are their bilingualism and their frontier tribal affiliations. A substantial debate in Islamic sources on the capability of spies, emphasises the provision that the spy have excellent knowledge of the enemy’s language which was the rival empire (see Qalqashandī 1963, Vol. I, p. 124). This helps explain why Ottomans and Safavids gave priority to Kurdish-speaking people in frontier areas. Throughout the 16th century, this attention to linguistic capabilities retained its priority for imperial agents seeking to employ spies (see Olearius 1984, p. 200). The geographical landscape of Kurdistan, being a mountainous borderland, explains both the preservation of the Kurdish language and the populations’ practice of speaking neighbouring languages as well. This linguistic competence, also a contemporary characteristic of Kurdish populations, is likely to have made them quite attractive assets to both Ottoman and Safavid officials.

3 Some aspects of this capability were generally regarded as a ‘problem’ within the espionage duties. In his Sīvāsat-nāma, Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk provides an ethical advice for the spies, encouraging them to be only the agents of the sultan and not the agents of others. See Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī (2003, pp. 74–75).

4 Both at the Ottoman and the Safavid courts, Turkish was spoken, though there were dialectal differences. It should be mentioned that knowledge of the Turkish language might have been more important for the espionage activities in the Ottoman–Safavid frontiers, but the capabilities of the Kurdish bilingual spies cannot be denied.
A good sample of Kurdish bilingualism and the role it played in information-gathering comes from the manuscript of the Persian collection of Jāmī’s Ash’at al-Luma’āt, kept at the Majlis parliamentary collections in Tehran (see Jāmī n.d., fols 77r–78r). It is an undated copy of an espionage letter addressed to Süleymān I. Based on the context and the reference to Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayg, the Kurdish emir of ‘Amādīyya, it is certain that the unnamed spy in question was himself originally from Kurdistān who gathered information as an intermediary between Safavids and Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayg. It should be noted that the object of this letter is to investigate the political status of Safavids via the Safavid ḥājj caravan which was under the command of a pro-Safavid Kurd, that is Ḥājjī Bayg Dunbulī, a symbol of Safavid power in some parts of Ādharbāyjān where there were some linguistic and religious differences from the western Ottoman regions. It is wise to accept that the Kurdish spy in question had safer ways of communicating with the Kurdish-Safavid ṣāḥib ḥājj as he was able to speak Kurdish, Ottoman Turkish, and the Turkish dialect of Ādharbāyjān.

B. Kurdish Espionage and Religion

The frontier areas between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires were permeable, contributing to a rather fluid religious landscape. There is reason to assume, however, that religion played only a secondary role in the development of Kurdish espionage. A remarkable feature of the subject is the very large number of references to the term tajassus. As was mentioned above, Kurdish espionage was most often called tecessüs etmek or tecessüs, both of which bring to mind the Arabic legal term tajassus. Might the term be connected with Islamic fiqh? Despite the fact that both Sunnis and Shiites strongly objected to intra-family espionage (‘awrāt), both communities ardently encouraged spying on the secret plans of rival countries and enemies (see, for example, Warrām n.d., Vol. I, p. 115; Khārsī 1997, Vol. IV, p. 28; Majlīsī 1983, Vol. 64, pp. 312–313). It is interesting to note, however, that only the Shāfi’ite school (that of the Sunni Kurds) traditionally advocated tolerance toward captured spies, stating the need to refrain from making rushed judgements about them (see Anonymous 1986, Vol. X, p. 166). The inclusion of the term düşmen-i bi-din ‘irreligious enemy’ in reference to Iran (see, for example, BOA MD 38, khm. 376, dated 7 Jumādā II 987/1 August 1579) emphasised a religious role similar to the military one played by the active spies as

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6 Very possibly this Dunbulī sāhib ḥājj is Ḥājjī Bayg b. Ḥājjī Bayg. During the revolt of Bāyezid (966/1559–969/1562) Ṭahmāsp I appointed Ḥājjī Bayg as the governor of Abaghāy where he governed for about twenty years. See Scheref (1860, I, pp. 312, 314–315).

7 For more details on the role of the religious element in the wars between the Ottomans and Safavids, see Matthee (2014, p. 19), and the references there.

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Zaynal Bayg. It is interesting that the spying activities of the Kurdish emir are considered a religious matter.

The role that religious interests played in Kurdish espionage can even be attributed to a stronger sense of identity among the Safavids than among the Ottomans. With the rise of the Safavids and the propagation of the Shiite doctrine in Anatolia, the Ottomans were forced to be active in opposing the spread of Shiism in Anatolian districts. While there is no evidence that Kurds of a specific branch of Islam spied for the Safavids, information-gathering was a key target in the activities of Anatolian Safavid halifes, who may well have been in contact with the Alevi Kurdish communities inhabiting the area (see BOA MD 23, Nos 173, 186, 451, 452, 696, all date from 985/1577–1578).

The political engagement of Qubād Bayg of Kalhur, who controlled a vast area within Ottoman domains stretching from Dīnawar to Baghdad, can be related to religious espionage as well. It is certain that Qubād Bayg played a role in the spread of Shiism. Ottomans periodically conducted searches for kizilbaş heterodox practitioners within the frontier lands. According to the investigations of Baghdad’s governor in 985/1577, the number of “heretic Shiites” in the province was extreme. This report shows that they found their leadership in the bey of the frontier sancak of Derne, i.e. Qubād Bayg, son of Mīr ‘Umar (see BOA MD 31, khm. 141; MD 32, khm. 416, 418). He had prevented the passage of merchants between Iran and Baghdad and kept in touch with Iran via his spies. The governor of Baghdad once tried to imprison him, and encouraged the court to appoint a Sunni in his stead (see BOA MD 31, khm. 141).8

It is also important to mention ‘Umar Bayg of Kalhur, the supreme commander of the allied Kalhur and the governor of Daratañg and Darna. According to Ottoman documents, he held a position in 979/1571, especially because of the active espionage affairs in which he was involved. Because of the Kalhur’s Shiite trends, it is probable that some espionage effort of ‘Umar Bayg has possibly gone into defending the Shiite Safavid Empire as well. A much more important witness is his position as a spy for the Ottomans in 979/1571 (see BOA MD 6, 187; MD 12, khm. 806; MD 30, khm. 247; MD 31, khm. 141, 777; MD 43 khm. 495; and Turkamān 2008, Vol. II, p. 650).

C. Strategic Position and Kurdish Espionage

The Ottoman and Safavid Empires came into contact with one another in the Kurdish localities around the frontier. Their conflict was a demonstration for all, layman and expert alike, of the strategic significance and importance of every piece of land in every corner of the frontier. Who had heard of the Kurdish villages on the frontier? Who was at all interested in the tribal life of the frontier? Obscure settlements on the Ādharbāyjān border, villages and towns on the eastern shores of Lake Vān, roads in

8 Given the harsh Ottoman statements denouncing him, he may be considered one of the Kurdish spies who was more consistently allied with the Safavids. See also Turkamān (2008, Vol. II, pp. 650, 660).
Kurdish territories – suddenly these became almost daily topics in the imperial news and the people of the area learned their importance and the particular reasons for their prominence.9

Because of its strategic importance as a frontier area, the Ottoman and Safavid emperors usually refrained from direct interfering in the military and political life of Kurdistan, an inaccessible mountainous region, which remained a stronghold of semi-independent trends. All of these geopolitical benefits have resulted in the establishment of the espionage networks in which Kurds played the basic role. Their strategic importance on the frontier meant that Kurdish emirs were in a mountainous position to avoid declaring loyalty to either of the imperial authorities, and that they had an edge over spies sent from the imperial capitals.

In an effort to subdue and stabilise these frontier areas, both empires sought to establish fortresses there which were to serve as both military and regional diplomatic centres. Baghdad, Shahrizur, Vān, Erzurum, Tabrīz, and the local networks under the direction of Kurdish emirs there, were the main espionage tools of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans had adopted a more active policy of maintaining an imperial presence in the frontier areas, where the local communities often switched their allegiance from one power to the other. The Safavids similarly sought to turn Kurdish emirs and their networks into imperial assets, with the difference that the Safavid side was relatively weak.10 Nevertheless, in both cases, imperial gifts and bribes paid to the influential Kurds of the area were an essential factor (see, for example, BOA MD 38, khm. 376).

III. Ottoman and Safavid Interests in Kurdish Espionage

Kurdish spies were able to change their lords at will, as no Kurdish spy was related to any particular lord. While this was a basic phenomenon for espionage worldwide, it should be considered an especially important aspect of Kurdish spying activities. Imperial authorities exerted no direct control over Kurdish spies living in high mountains in inaccessible frontier principalities. The imperial powers gained access to the world of Kurdish spies first by luring Kurdish emirs into their service. It is interesting,

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9 The strategic position of Kurdistan and the Ottoman policies towards the Kurds have been several times discussed in the secondary literature. See Bruinessen (1988, pp. 29–44); Murphey (2003, pp. 151–170); and Özoğlu (1996, pp. 5–27). For Ottoman–Safavid relations and the Kurdish tribes with a primary focus on the Safavid policy, see Nūrī–Nūrī (2011, pp. 272–281); and especially Yamaguchi (2012, pp. 101–132).

10 By weak, we mean that the Safavids were less successful in recruiting Kurdish spies than the Ottomans. The Anatolian Shiite communities must have strong espionage service skills and a good potential for Safavid interests. While Sunnism makes Kurds the focus of Ottomans, the Anatolian Shiism apparently act as a primary focus for the Safavids. See Allouche (1980, pp. 252–253) which is based on TSMA E. 5460. A letter from Ismā’īl I to Mūsā Tūrghūd Oğlu, dated 7 Rabī’ 1 918/23 May 1512, is presented here. In this letter, Ismā’īl I requests the leader of the Tūrghūd tribe to contact the Safavid envoy to Anatolia, Aḥmad Āghā Qaramānlū, and to report in detail all important activities in the area.
however, that with the many problems that the Ottomans and Safavids had at any given time, they were consistently interested in Kurdish espionage. It appears that the reason imperial authorities tolerated a degree of fluidity in their relationship with Kurdish spies was because of their perceived value. Some samples of Ottoman–Safavid interests in Kurdish espionage may be somewhat helpful as we have very scanty evidence of involvement in such hidden activities.

First of all, we should remember that Kurdish espionage was most active during the reigns of Ṭahmāsp I (919/1515–984/1576) and Süleymân I (r. 926/1520–974/1566). What role did they play in the events that led to the division of Kurdistan between Safavid and Ottoman lands? What role did they play prior to the reign of these two Sultans? Though espionage is a very important example of a political method forming part of the rivalries between ʿUmar I (892/1487–930/1524) and Bâyezîd II (886/1481–918/1512), the same broad approach cannot be easily applied to the Kurdish emirs and their spying activities in the very early years of the century.

A. Ottoman Officials Involved in Espionage

The earliest Ottoman example known so far is the well-known Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa. After the battle of Châldirân, Selîm I entrusted the conquest of Bâyburd and Kamâkh to Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa (920/1514 and 921/1515) who played an important role in regional espionage. The regional positions that he held helped him shape an active espionage network in the Kurdish principalities of Dîyar Bakr (see TSMA E. 6102, E. 6627, E. 8283; Ebû-l-Faẓl n.d., fols 23r ff.; Rûmlû 2005, Vol. II, pp. 1097–1099; Bâcqué-Grammont 1992, pp. 703–725).

Hüsrev Paşa (d. 951/1544), the ruler of Dîyar Bakr, is another well-known Ottoman military commander who was engaged in spying activities. According to the intelligence report kept at Topkapî Palace archives, some active Kurdish spies were the employees of Hüsrev Paşa. He had explicitly ordered Kurdish emirs to dispatch trustworthy spies to Persia. At the end of an undated letter he mentions that if the spies of Kurdish emirs had returned from Persia, he would be able to send an accurate report to the court (see TSMA E. 7115).

B. Mamlûk and Safavid Governors Involved in Espionage

An interesting example is that of a Mamlûk case. Mâmây Bayg, the Mamlûk governor of Malatya, was spying for the Ottomans. On 3 Ramaḍân 918/21 November 1512, Mâmây Bayg had sent two spies to Persia in order to gather new information on Ismāʿīl I, particularly his military condition. The spies that Mâmây Bayg sent to central Persia could travel from Mamlûk territory to Persia only because they were accompanied by a Persian çavuş. It seems that the possibility of enemy agents’ penetration to their lands agitated Safavids and convinced them to check their Mamlûk
Safavid governors would sometimes exert a greater influence on the issue if they were considered in a special way. For instance, Amīr Khān Turkamān, the amīr al-umārā of Ādharbāyjān, played a significant role in matters of espionage. In the Sharaf-nāma, there is no clear reference to the role he played, but the extant evidence may still be helpful in determining his role in the Kurdish principalities of Salmās, Khuy, and Urmīya. What is given in the Turkish registers, on the other hand, may very easily direct us to his espionage services on behalf of the Ottomans. He was jailed and put to death by Shah Muḥammad Khudābanda in 992/1584, perhaps another sign of his unclear loyalties (see BOA MD 32, khm. 389, 507; MD 36, khm. 310; Selânikî 1999, Vol. I, pp. 118–120; Scheref 1860, Vol. I, pp. 112, 314, 332–333; Vol. II, p. 273).

IV. Circumspect Forefathers: Another Look

In the heartlands of Kurdistan there lived, aside from the aristocracy and the peasant population of different origins and status, a “higher class” consisting of people whose special knowledge, skill and services could not easily be dispensed with in the imperial states. These were artists and historians and other “personnel” whose spying activities were somewhat unclear. The most important of these figures are Idrīs Bidlīsī and Sharaf Khān.

Both spent several years of their lives in Tabrīz, Qazwīn, and Istanbul. They also both penned Ottoman and Persian histories. They interacted with local as well as regional powers, and were thoroughly bilingual or even trilingual. Due to their family and religious backgrounds, Kurdish emirs and intellectuals typically spoke of them with great respect. Their visits to the Sultan or Shah and the access they had to the influential officials were sources of acceptance in the Kurdish community.

No explicit espionage enterprise is referenced in the lives and works of the Kurdish forefathers. It is possible that as intellectual elites, they chose to exclude mention of prevailing political trends in their historical studies. Any open declaration of one’s espionage confessions would likely have proved dangerous in the context of a changing political and religious society. Perhaps they wisely preferred to remain anonymous, concealing their spying activities behind other roles.

A. Idrīs Bidlīsī

Idrīs is undoubtedly one of the most important intellectual figures in the 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman–Safavid world. It is certain that he established an espionage network to get information from the Safavids and their allies. In 920/1514, he accompanied the Ottoman Sultan on the Chāldirān campaign. According to the Sharaf-nāma, some twenty Kurdish emirs had already sent declarations of their submission to Selim I before his campaign against the Safavids. According to Sharaf Khān, Idrīs
was responsible for obtaining these declarations (see Scheref 1860, Vol. I, pp. 132, 342–343, 415–416)

Idrīs did not leave Tabrīz in the autumn of 1514. As a privileged deputy of the Sultan, he stayed in Tabrīz. From Tabrīz he went to Urmīya where he tried to get local Kurdish emirs who had suffered violence at the hands of the Shah, to switch their allegiance from the Safavids to the Ottoman Sultan (see Genç 2015, pp. 43–75). Following the conquest of Āmid, the Ottoman Sultan, in a remarkable demonstration of his trust in Idrīs, sent him farmāns of investiture with the spaces left blank for him to fill in the names of the Kurdish recipients (see Ebū-l-Faẓl(n.d., passim, esp. fols 24r–24v; TSMA E. 3165, 5675, 6627; 8333; Hoca Se'dü-ddîn 1862, pp. 308–309; Hammer 1827–1835, Vol. I, p. 749; Vol. II, pp. 432–434).

Having no military or administrative rank within the Ottoman administration, nevertheless, Idrīs continued to bring more Kurds into the Ottoman fold until Rabī’ I 922/April 1516. This voluntary mission included the crucial task of delivering Safavid intelligence to Selîm I. It is clear that the Persian reports that he forwarded to the Sultan a number of strategic accounts that responded to the queries of Selîm I. Prior to the conquest of Dīyār Bakr, for instance, one of his spies reported that the Safavid army was very weak at the time, having only fifteen equipped camels that they moved from Tabrīz to Ūjān. In the same report, the spy indicated that troop numbers were around 7000 men who had no military equipment (see TSMA E. 1019).

After the conquest of Dīyār Bakr, Idrīs continued his spying activities. A Kurdish spy, who was the employee of Idrīs in Tabrīz, Urmīya and Brādōst, reported that Ismā’īl I was at the Eşkenber-Kelember summer pasture. According to this espionage report, the Shah had decided to march to Dīyār Bakr. For this purpose, he had dispatched one of his well-known commanders, named Dīv ‘Ali, to Chuqūr-i Sa’d. Idrīs’s spy also mentioned that if the Sultan had reached that area, the Shah would evacuate all tribes from Chuqūr-i Sa’d to Qarabāgh, Ganja and Barda’ in order to prevent the Ottoman army from being able to stay until the spring (see TSMA E. 8333/1; TSMA E. 6610; TSMA E. 8333/2; TSMA E. 1019). It should also be noted that Idrīs sometimes delivered informative letters to the Ottoman court via his attendants Mevlana Mehmed Türkistanî and Yusuf Ağa (see TSMA E. 8333/3; TSMA E. 1019).

B. Sharaf Khān

Under Ṭahmāsp I, Ismā’īl II, and Khudābanda, Sharaf Khān was engaged in several Safavid political affairs in Gīlān, Shīrwān and Nakhchiwān. The Ottomans succeeded in bringing him into their fold. After a meeting with the Ottoman general Hürev Paşa in 986/1578, Murād III installed Sharaf Khān as ruler of Bidlīs which his ancestors had previously ruled (see KK 262, 181; MD 32, khm. 543, dated 27 Dhū al-Qa’da 986/3 February 1579).

Sharaf Khān’s changing political allegiances merit attention. His biography resembles that of Idrīs, as both were born in Iran, had contacts with contemporary Safavid rulers, and acquired a detailed knowledge of both the Iranian and the Kurdish
tribes of the Safavid Empire. Sharaf Khān’s broad and varied knowledge of the Safa-
id government was one of the primary reasons that the Ottomans sought his ser-
- vices. We do not know, however, to what degree Sharaf Khān was sympathetic to
either the Safavids or the Ottomans.

The Ottoman archive includes some correspondence with the provinces and
 statesmen on matters concerning Sharaf Khān and the Ŗōzhiki tribe. Of note is the
favourable attitude of the Ottomans towards Sharaf Khān’s tribe. The correspondence
also reveals the Ottomans’ intention to make Sharaf Khān and his obedient followers
available to the Ottomans (see BOA A.DVN.MHM 32, No. 168, dated Muḥarram
986/April 1578; A.DVN.MHM 32, No. 556, dated 6 Dhī al-Ḥijja 986/12 February
1579; and A.DVN.MHM 38, No. 195, dated 23 Ṣafar 987/30 April 1579). In order to
maintain Sharaf Khān’s loyalty, the Ottomans established contacts with his friends,
and installed him as governor of Bīdlīs, where he would have influence over these
friends. These friends provided general information on the political situation in Per-
sian Kurdistan, the diplomats in Vān and Tabrīz, and many Ŗōzhikī officials and spies
interested in the glory of the Ottomans.

Espionage had a past in Sharaf Khān’s family. An interesting piece of evidence,
for example, is a letter of Sharaf Khān, the grandfather of Sharaf-nāma’s author, to
Bıyıqlı Mehmed Paşa in which he has provided detailed information on Ismā’īl I’s
campaign to Shīrwān and Nakhchīwān (see Bacqué-Grammont 1992, p. 709, based
on TSMA E. 5858). The spy of Bīdlīs’s Kurdish emir was interestingly among the
very close companions of Ismā’īl I. The main point here, however, is that it was his
ancestors’ participation in espionage that made such affairs familiar to Sharaf Khān.

There is evidence that reflects the familiarity of Sharaf Khān with Kurdish
espionage, though he himself, according to those same documents, was sufficiently
aware of the riskiness of such activities (see BOA MAD, 17951, dated 20 Dhī al-
Ḥijja 988/4 February 1581). Upon the death of Amīr Shams al-Dīn, his father, Sharaf
Khān found himself master of a tribal community that included many agents along
both sides of the contested Ottoman–Safavid boundary. Very possibly there was no
extensive personal spying activity; the body of roles played by the cautious Sharaf
Khān should be related to a large network of Ŗōzhikī spies whose responsibility was
to gather information for him. From the style and phrases used in BOA MD 48,
No. 311 (written on 15 Ramaḍān 990/3 October 1582), it is clear that Sharaf Khān
himself had close espionage relations with representatives of the Ottoman Empire.
If Sharaf Khān was responsible for advising the governor of Vān in his spying activi-
ties, then it is likely that he also lead a Kurdish network of spies, which were beyond
the access of persons like Vān’s governor.

The Sultan ordered the governor of Vān to use his spies and to write letters to
other possible pro-Ottoman Kurdish officials in order to include them as part of the
Ottoman side. What is mainly reflected is the idea that the Kurdish emirs (as Sharaf
Khān) played a great role in information-gathering for Ottoman representatives in the
area who themselves had no access to the local persons and equipment. Here the
invocation is neither directly to the Turkish spies nor to the Kurdish spies, but to the
Kurdish emirs as consultants. It is interesting that Sharaf Khān is named between
Zaynal Bayg of Ḥakkārī and Hasan Bayg of Maḥmūdī whose role in the Kurdish spying activities is certain.

V. Forthright Emirs: Making Friends by Having Enemies

Idrīs and Sharaf Khān were unique in many respects. Savvy thinking may explain why it is difficult to determine the extent to which they participated in spying activities. Due to the secret nature of spying activities, it is difficult to describe them with certainty, although certain Kurdish spies of somewhat lower classes might be mentioned. Several emirs can be seen as contributors to espionage, some of which held no dynastic label. For example, one may take the mention of the Kurdish emir Şevket Bayg (whose name is not mentioned in the Sharaf-nāma). On 10 Muḥarram 942/20 July 1535, Süleymān I executed him and his retinue during his second visit to Tabrīz for spying for the Safavids (see Ferīdūn Beg 1858, Vol. I, p. 595).

There are some completely unknown Kurdish spies who were experienced agents not only in the Ottoman–Safavid frontiers, but also in other districts of both empires. For example, the Kurds also played a very active role in Safavid spying activities at the northeastern frontiers of Iran. In 991/1583, some Kurds were dispatched to regions around Tāybād (near the Afghanistan border) in order to make zabāngūrī (see Qumī 1980, Vol. II, p. 737).

Closer frontier areas for Ottoman–Safavid relations were more important, as espionage by these principalities were much safer than by much internal regions. Ḍīyāʾ al-Dīn Bayg of Bīdīs, a son of Sharaf Khān, is a good sample of a Kurdish spy who heightened such a role of Kurdish principalities (see MD 78, khm. 1227, dated 1018/1609–1610). There was a limited distance over which Kurdish peasants were willing to transport livestock and grain by road to the other side of the frontier, and this created a common structure in which each Kurdish district was a local centre for making possibilities to gather information. Some Ottoman documents contain instructions about transporting livestock and grain to Iran. The fact that such frontier communications gave rise to Safavid spying activities indicates that the influence of frontier Kurds was far beyond the area of their habitation (see MD 44, khm. 298; Koca Nişancı 1981, p. 451a).

There are also a considerable number of written letters to the unnamed Kurdish emirs of Erciş, Namran, Müküs, and Gargar, requesting that they spy on Safavid territories. The formula bir sureti 'a copy’ normally indicates those documents which have been sent to a group of Kurdish emirs especially including the secondary frontier emirs (see, for example, MD 32, khm. 67; MD 38, khm. 376).

Exceptions to these unidentified and less known Kurdish spies are emirs mentioned in the Sharaf-nāma. A very interesting example is given in the Ḥakkārī chapter. Accordingly, two brothers from the principality were involved in espionage, one for the Ottomans, and the other for the Safavids (see Scheref 1860, Vol. I, pp. 101–102). Although Bāyindir Bayg of Ḥakkārī sought asylum at the court of Ṭahmāsp I, the latter entertained no friendly relationship with him as an official Kurdish emir. From

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the following paragraphs in which this name is mentioned one may conclude that Tahmāsp I wished to use him in his frontiers rather than at the court. When Zaynal Bayg, as an Ottoman agent, was dispatched to the Safavid borders in order to gather information, his brother Bāyındir Bayg was involved in the Shah’s corresponding espionage mission. This is a very important example which indicates that the secret knowledge the Kurds possessed was very useful; it was highly strategic for Kurds themselves and made them able to improve their regional position by having their enemies as their friends.

A. Espionage for the Sultan

Several other Kurds, whose spying activity as self-governing Kurdish spies is a clear and related matter, should also be mentioned. The events related to Chāldirān where the Ottoman campaign was launched by Selîm I against Ismā’īl I, on the 23 Muḥarram 920/20 March 1514, should be regarded as a basic point for those Kurds who played a significant role in the espionage for Ottomans.

Early 16th Century

As a first step in the study of early 16th-century Kurdish spies who served Ottoman emperors, the name of Rustam Bayg of Mukrī or Rustam b. Bābā ʿUmar should be mentioned. Apart from the ambiguous and very short account of him presented by Sharaf Khān (see Scheref 1860, Vol. I, p. 290), there is mention of him in the Ottoman münişe ‘ât, where clear references are made to his spying activities.

The language of the letter makes it clear that Shiite movements were making progress in Ottoman lands and that Kurds gathered strategic intelligence for the Ottomans regarding the religious climate of the area. In a letter dated Rabī’ II 908/October 1502, which Rustam Bayg wrote in response to Bâyezîd II’s inquiry about the Āq-Quyūnlū, he indicates that the Safavids were preparing military equipment to be used against the Āq-Quyūnlū. The Safavids were expected to sign a peace treaty with the Charkas in Egypt, referring also to the massacre of Purnâks in Baghdad. The evidence indicates that Mukrīs also took a fierce polemical stand against early Safavid religious proclamations (see Ferîdûn Beg 1858, Vol. I, pp. 353–354; Thābitīyān 1964, p. 82; Nawâ’ī 1977, pp. 710–711).

As the second important early Kurdish spy who was the ally of the Ottomans, one may note Mīr Sayyidī of Sōrān. He was an outstanding frontier agent for Selim I, running a great network of spies in Safavid territories. According to a letter written by Mīr Sayyidī (dated c. 920/1514–1515), his spies had positions within the army of Ismā’īl I, especially during the Safavid campaign at Mount Lāchîn. It is interesting that many detailed facts are provided on the Safavid military situation and what happened during that particular battle. A unique theme introduced here is the captivity of Mīr Sayyidī’s spies who had presented themselves as Dhu al-Qadr’s spies. Should this professed allegiance to Dhu al-Qadr rather than the Safavid Shah be understood
as a reaction to Ismā‘īl I’s harsh treatment of the Kurds, or as a strategic response to their interrogators who may have shown tolerance towards the Dhulqadrs? (See Fekete 1977, p. 320.)

Mention should also be made of Shāh-‘Alī Bayg of Ja‘zīra. He shows a very dynamic regional policy in which not only military Ja‘zīran expeditions against the Safavids, but also spying activity become noticeable. From the letter he addressed to Qāsim Bayg11 (dated 924/1518–1519), it is clear that he provided very detailed reports regarding Safavid troops (see Fekete 1977, p. 324).

Late 16th Century

The late 16th century often has a stronger sense of espionage identity among the Kurds. In the sources written after the middle of the century, there are more abundant references that connect Kurds with espionage for the sultan.

Among the late Kurdish spies relating to the Ottoman side was Hasan Bayg of Maḥmūdī. The details provided by Ottoman sources on the districts belonging to Hasan Bayg, far from his own hereditary principality (Dizyān, Pirgut, Misāfir, Mikon, Temil, Dingalan, Köpeklu and many other districts at Rabat, in Qulp), show a very extensive Kurdish area under the control of the Maḥmūdī emir. He was also capable of controlling or at least having influence over key parts of Persian Kurdistan.12 He was linked, for instance, with tribal chieftains on both the western and the eastern sides of the boundary, which helped him become a major representative of pro-Ottoman Kurdish espionage. The espionage role played by Hasan Bayg, mentioned in MD 21, khm. 660, would have to be interpreted rather uniquely. While there is no characteristic of Hasan Bayg to be found in this document, there is a clear stress on this Maḥmūdī emir as an Ottoman agent involved in espionage issues against the Safavids.

Jamshīd Bayg of Pālu is also mentioned as a pro-Ottoman Kurdish spy. Whereas Sharaf Khān typically devoted little attention to intelligence issues, in his description of Jamshīd Bayg there are some allusions to these activities. Jamshīd Bayg was consulted several times by Sultan Süleymān I and his commanders throughout the course of the Ottoman campaigns against Persia. Ottoman officials must have been highly impressed with Jamshīd Bayg’s spying activities, as he was one of the main advisers to Süleymān I during the eastern campaigns (cf. Scheref 1860, Vol. I, pp. 184–185).13 It is interesting that Jamshīd Bayg’s family inherited a great deal of Pālu espionage heritage. According to MD 38, khm. 376 (dated 7 Jumādā II 987/10
August 1579), the Ottomans ordered Yusuf Bayg, a grandson of Jamshid Bayg, to gather intelligence from the Safavid territories.

A single archival document provides us some information on Murad Bayg of Suwaydi, his military responsibilities, and the role he played in the espionage for the sultan. On 15 Shawwal 973/14 May 1566, Suleyman I managed to secure the tribal and boundary affairs via Murad Bayg and gave him reinforcement. It is clear that he had utilised Turkish military groups with the assistance of Kurdish irregulars, amongst which were unnamed Suwaydi officials. Although it can be interpreted mainly as an Ottoman attempt to unite the regional tribes against the Safavids, yet the Sultan had also ordered him to care for the Ottoman border lines with Iran. His duty was to monitor the treatment of Kurdish tribes working for the Safavids who were involved in various frontier struggles with Kurdish tribes working for the Ottoman side (see BOA A.DVN.MHM 5, khm. 1563).

Another important late 16th-century Kurdish spy, often in the service of the Ottoman sultan, is Saru Khân Bayg of Hazzo. To be sure, the espionage phase of his political career was rather significant. There is no clear evidence that the Sultan relied on Saru Khân Bayg, but he was one of the Kurdish emirs in contact with the governor of Van (see MD 32, khm. 67, dated 20 Sha‘ban 985/11 November 1577). An account of Saru Khân Bayg’s mission is also found in MD 38, khm. 376 (dated 7 Jumâdâ II 987/10 August 1579). Because of Hazzo’s strategic importance as a frontier district, the Ottoman Sultan ordered Saru Khân Bayg, as the emir of Hazzo, to gather information on the Safavids. This figure appears to be the same Saru Khân Bayg (described as Hazzo hâkimine) for whom the imperial scribes produced a standard copy (bir sureti) of espionage orders.

However, the leading Kurdish spy of the late 16th century is Zaynal Bayg of Hakkârî. As stated above, when Zaynal Bayg, as an Ottoman agent, was dispatched to the Safavid borders, his brother Bâyındir Bayg was in the Shah’s service and precisely on a similar espionage mission. This first intelligence mission played an essential role in the promotion of Zaynal Bayg. After a fierce battle (c. 959/1552), Zaynal Bayg killed his brother and imprisoned his companions. The reward of this proof of loyalty to the Ottomans was Zaynal Bayg’s appointment over Hakkârî (see Scheref 1860, Vol. I, pp. 101–102).

There is some evidence that Zaynal Bayg continued to work in information-gathering very possibly till the end of his rule. The extensive border regions of Hakkârî were characterised by a concentration of settlements around Safavid checkpoints and fortresses. The descriptions by the spies of Zaynal Bayg in the lowlands surrounded by the Safavid villages were very helpful in forming successful Ottoman military expeditions. As Zaynal Bayg (d. 993/1585 or 994/1586)\(^{14}\) was the most influential Kurdish spy, it is appropriate to quote here a few sentences crucially relevant to the final stages of this essay.

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\(^{14}\) For these dates, see Scheref (1860, Vol. I, pp. 102–103) and Qumî (1980, Vol. II, p. 778), respectively.

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A significant knowledge of Zaynal Bayg’s spying activity is to be gained from the MD 14, khm. 756 (dated 28 Jumādā II 978/27 November 1570). The following may serve as the key sentence of this order:

‘…Yukaru Canib’den gelen casusuşu haberisini hususu sühhat üzre malum olmak için Zeynel dame azezhu’ya mektup gönderip ol dahi Ağahan nam âdemin ol canibe gönderip cem’i ahval ve etvarları vâkî olup…’ …in order to measure the accuracy of information reported by a spy who recently came back from Iran, a letter has been sent to Zaynal Bayg, may his glory endure, who also sent his own spy named Ağâh Khân to Iran; the latter gathered accurate information on their affairs and happenings…’

Due to the order of Vân governor, Zaynal Bayg sent Ağâh Khân to Iran who successfully gathered Safavid information and came back to Ḥakkârî. It seems that when some pieces of information were suspect, especially when being spread for disinformation purposes, the Ottomans turned directly to Zaynal Bayg’s mastery of espionage for confirmation, without trusting their own Turkish spies.

The document MD 29, khm. 81 (dated Shawwāl 984/December 1576) summarises what the Ottoman spies gathered from Iran regarding the Safavid Shah who was preparing for a new campaign against Baghdad. In his letter to the governors of Erzurum, Baghdad, Shahrazur, Dıyâr Bakr, Vân, and Hasan Bayg of Mahmûdî, the Sultan made them aware of the Safavid threats. It is here ordered to Zaynal Bayg to be prepared for immediate military response to the Safavids and especially to use his experienced men in the Safavid Empire in order to obtain information.

Some very interesting details about the spying activities of Zaynal Bayg are provided in MD 33 khm. 438 (dated 8 Dhu al-Qa’dâ 985/20 January 1578). Here the Sultan ordered all Ottoman kâdis along the long way from Ḥakkârî to Istanbul to support Zaynal Bayg. He emphasises that since the reign of Süleyman I and by order of that great emperor an imperial permission was granted to Zaynal Bayg in order to pass information on the Safavids to the Porte. “Then, the Sultan, continues, it is necessary for you to give permission to the men of Zaynal Bayg, open all the ways for them, and change their horses so that they be able to reach Istanbul easily.” It is clear that this order was addressed to the Ottoman kâdis after Zaynal Bayg had complained against them. According to BOA KK 210, 145 (dated 20 Jumâdâ I 960/4 May 1553), Istanbul even began to be used for Zaynal Bayg’s espionage communication from a much earlier period, while the majority of other Kurdish emirs explicitly provided

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15 This espionage tactics is occasionally mentioned in the available Ottoman–Safavid resources. Traces of the disinformation tactics, for example, are included in Muḥammad ‘Ārif b. Muḥammad Sharīf Ispanaqchîpâshâzâda (2000, pp. 162–163).

16 It is easy to understand the reason for kâdis’ concern. A method of Ottoman counter-intelligence was to close the borders with a state with which the Ottomans were in war. Any easy access to the capital was very dangerous. Travellers had to prove their identity as enemy spies tried to conceal their identities by travelling in disguise (see Gürkan 2012a, pp. 5–6). It should be mentioned that the counter-intelligence was a very old method used by Muslim countries and not a 16th-century development (see Kâtib 1954, p. 193).
their espionage reports for the Ottoman regional representatives, especially those in Baghdad, Vān and Erzurum.

Fully aware of the previous significant espionage services of Zaynal Bayg, the Ottoman Sultan has put emphasis on encouraging Zaynal Bayg so as to provide all the necessary intelligence on the Safavids (see MD 38, khm. 376, dated 7 Jumādā II 987/1 August 1579). The Sultan ordered Zaynal Bayg to consult the Ottoman neighbouring governor and placed more emphasis on the imperial gifts which would be distributed to him. From another order addressed by the Sultan to Zaynal Bayg (see MD 46 khm. 276, dated 13 Ramaḍān 989/11 October 1581), it is evident that the powerful Ḥakkārī emir had allied his capable espionage network with the Ottomans. As a result of his good espionage services, the Sultan has used gifts as means of promoting his situation. There is a single last sentence which alludes to the Ottoman continual encouragement to keep continual espionage on Iran; this can be thought to be the main goal of the Sultan’s letter.

**B. Espionage for the Shah**

In comparison to Kurdish spies acted as Ottoman agents, the Safavids were somewhat unable to turn more number of Kurdish spies into Persian assets. As stated above, the Kurdish Sunnism was the main reason which normally made more Kurds the focus of Ottomans. This does not necessarily mean that the Safavids had no access to any Kurdish spies. In addition to those mentioned in the previous pages, especially the Kurdish emir Şevket Bayg who was killed by Süleymān I for spying for the Safavids, there are some other important ones, too.

The first one is Ḥājjī Rustam Bayg of Chamishgazak. It is clear that Ḥājjī Rustam had a long-standing desire of an alliance with the Safavids, as evidenced by his fighting alongside the Safavids in the battle of Chāldirān. The conversion of a Chamishgazak prince to Shiite Islam is unsurprising when considering the pro-Alevi feelings of the Kurdish population of Chamishgazak.

Despite the fact that Ḥājjī Rustam Bayg paid homage to the Ottomans after the Safavids were defeated at Chāldirān, Selim I had him executed. He was certainly not a proponent of peaceful coexistence with the Ottomans, although he was obliged to recognise their impactful victory over Safavids. What was Selim I’s objective in murdering him? It appears that Ḥājjī Rustam Bayg understood the Ottomans’ superiority to all other regional powers at the time, but the disgust of Selim I for him was inspired firstly by his spying activities. It is clear from the archival documents that the Ottomans were aware that Ḥājjī Rustam Bayg was two-faced, serving both the Ottomans and the Safavids simultaneously. It is certain that he had intensified his secret contacts with the Safavids of which there was awareness on the part of Ottoman counter-intelligence (see TSMA E. 6672; E. 11839). This may have been one of the key reasons why Selim I killed him on 2 Rajab 920/1 September 1514 (see Bacqué-Grammont 1987, pp. 174–175; 1992, p. 714, note 29).
The scarcely known father and son pair, Sayyid Muḥammad and Yaʾqūb Bayg of Ḥakkārī, are also the pro-Safavid Kurdish spies. They temporarily adopted the Safavid superiority, perhaps to differentiate themselves from the more prevalent Ottoman trends in the principality, and also possibly to avoid a secondary role in the political scene of the area. Both father and son were of crucial importance to the espionage service. There is a letter from Ṭahmāsp I (dated Rajab 957/July–August 1550) addressed to Sayyid Muḥammad in which the Shah persuaded Sayyid Muḥammad to be a Safavid emir and to spy on the Ottomans. Ṭahmāsp I emphasised that Sayyid Muḥammad had previously dispatched his representative to Ḍawārīn and paid homage to the Shah (see Fekete 1977, p. 402, based on TSMA E. 8352).

A feature of the interaction between the Safavids and the Ḥakkārī Kurds is revealed in a second letter (dated Rajab 957/July–August 1550) addressed to the son of Sayyid Muḥammad from the Shah. Here it is recounted what happened between him and his father, and then he is greatly encouraged to gather any important information on the Ottoman territories and to deliver it in detail to the Safavid Shah (see Fekete 1977, p. 406, based on TSMA E. 8930).

C. Double Agents

It is true that several Kurdish agents penetrated into the Ottoman or Safavid Empires and sent reports to their employers. The best example of this is the networks that the Kurdish spies established in frontier areas from the 1520s onwards. Yet, the efficiency of these networks is sometimes a matter of debate. Both the Ottomans and the Safavids were partly aware of the activities of these networks and may have intended to use them as double agents. For instance, it is clear that Safavids tried to employ some Kurdish agents as the middlemen between the Safavids and the Kurdish espionage networks. In one case, there is an interesting allusion to one of the attendants of Zaynal Bayg. Whatever the case, the Ottoman spy, named Āghā, provided a detailed report in which, among other things, it is indicated that a certain man of Zaynal Bayg, named Ḥusayn, was trying to bring Kurdish emirs and the Safavid Shah together. From the author’s language, it seems wise to accept also Safavid counter-intelligence policy and their collaboration with those Ḥakkārī Kurds who were close to Zaynal Bayg (see MD 32 khm. 67, dated 20 Shaʿbān 985/2 November 1577).

The most famous Kurdish double agent is Amīr Dāʾūd of Khīzān. Amīr Dāʾūd had a network of Kurdish spies operating in the Ottoman–Safavid border lands. He and his coterie worked for both the Ottoman and the Safavid authorities. It is possible to categorise Amīr Dāʾūd as a Kurdish emir who was himself involved in espionage. He personally engaged in espionage and also directed and supervised the activities of his network of Kurdish spies (see TSMA E. 6627/1; E. 8283; E. 8333).

Amīr Dāʾūd was not entirely faithful to the Ottomans. Unlike Sharaf Khān, who concealed details of the political contacts of the Kurds with Ismāʿīl I, perhaps in order to put a stop to the Ottomans’ severe policies against the Kurds at a time when he was trying to lead Kurdish chiefs to the Ottoman side, Biyıklı Mehmed Paşa was...
perfectly frank with the Sultan. According to him, while Amīr Dā‘ūd declared loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan, he was secretly in contact with Ismā‘īl I and reported Ottoman military plans to the Safavids. We also know that he was one of those Kurdish emirs who spied for the Ottomans as well. When Ismā‘īl I moved to the Alādāgh summer pastures (north of Chāldirān), Amīr Dā‘ūd dispatched his experienced spy, Mevlena Mehmed, to Tabrīz where he stayed for twenty-five days. When Amīr Dā‘ūd’s spy became aware of the Uzbek invasion to Khurāsān, he decided to go to the new encampment of the Shah at the Üjān summer pastures (southeast of Tabrīz) in order to confirm the accuracy of the information. He managed to get close access to the Shah, from whom he obtained particularly accurate and reliable information. Mevlena Mehmed spent five days in the encampment of the Shah, and then he left Üjān for Khīzān where he gave his report to Amīr Dā‘ūd (see Ebû-l-Faẓl n.d., fols 30r–30v; TSMA E. 6627/1; Hoca Se‘dü-ddîn 1862, Vol. I, pp. 307, 309, 317, 320).

Hasan Bayg of ‘Amādīyya was also a spy for both the Ottomans and the Safavids. After the Āq-Quyūnlū decline, Hasan Bayg paid homage to the Safavids. As a commander in the battle against Amīr Bayg Mawṣillū, he is also reported to have maintained good relations with the Ottomans (see TSMA E. 8333/1–2; Hoca Se‘dü-ddîn 1862, p. 300). These interpretations can be simply based on the Kurdish frontier policy which was interested in both the Safavids and the Ottomans. But a reasonable explanation may also put Hasan Bayg in the circle of the double agents.

On 2 Sha‘bān 922/9 September 1516 Hasan Bayg addressed a letter to Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa, providing detailed information on the Safavid situation and the movements of the Shah. Two Kurdish spies in his service, Bayrâm and Şâhsüvâr, were tasked with providing strategic information on the Safavids (see TSMA E. 6627/1; E. 8318; Bacqué-Grammont – Adle 1982, pp. 29–37; Bacqué-Grammont 1991, p. 244). According to Kanuni Sultan Süleymān Döneminde Ait İnamat Defteri, KK 1764, 78, Hasan Bayg received a bonus from the Ottoman Sultan in Rabī‘ I 938/November 1531 while he was still the mīr of ‘Amādīyya.

Finally, mention should be made of Pîr Ḥusayn Bayg of Chamishgazak. According to the reports of Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa, Pîr Ḥusayn Bayg had maintained his contacts with Ismā‘īl I despite having declared loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan. It is certain that Pîr Ḥusayn Bayg was a very active spy and provided the details of the Ottoman military operations to the Shah. It should be mentioned that a great deal of information came from operatives in the province of Chamishgazak. The Ottomans had to develop counter-intelligence practices for coping with such principalities, which shared Shiite trends with their Safavid enemies. Pîr Ḥusayn Bayg had struggled against the Safavids and played an essential role in the defeat of Qara Khān, but Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa was correct in claiming that he was a double agent (see TSMA E. 3296; E. 4256; E. 6627; E. 8283; TD 64, 852; Ebû-l-Faẓl n.d., fols 25r–25v, 30r–30v; Ünal 1999, pp. 2, 36–37).
VI. Appendix

In the following pages three unpublished documents are presented. The Ottoman orders dealing with espionage have a standard formula. The documents presented here try to reflect various kinds of material, not exclusively the ‘orders’ provided by Mühimme Defters.

A. Post-regional Spy

The first document (TSMA D. 00749) includes a brief list of Ottoman Kurdish spies who played their espionage role in Egypt and the Levant. The document reproduced here indicates that the employment of Kurdish spies was a well-organised Ottoman policy. As stated above, this was almost precisely the method to help also the Safavids in spying the north-eastern districts of Iran.

Because of the archaic and less standardised form of Āmid (Kara Hamid), it is possible to assign early 16th century to the document. Besides the typological evidences, we have also a mention of the Ottoman general and administrator Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa (d. 24 Muḥarram 928/24 December 1521) as the beylerbeyi of Dīyār Bakr (esp. fol. 5v). This reflects a dating from Rabī’ II 922/May 1516 to Muḥarram 928/24 December 1521.

Text

Figure 1. TSMA D. 00749

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Be hıdmet-i casûsi ferestâde

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musa Kürd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Misr’dan gitti</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>İki ’ulûfe hizânedede bâkî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murad Kürd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Misr’dan gitti</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>İki ’ulûfe hizânedede bâkî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebubekir Kürd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bali Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urðı</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammed Han Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hacı Kara Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yekûn yedi nefer

Zikr olan dört nefer Şâm’dan ırsâl olundu; ’ulûfeleri Kara Hamid mukataasından havâle olundı.

Translation

[Those who were] sent to the espionage service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musa the Kurd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dispatched from Egypt</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>His two ulufes remained in the imperial treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murad the Kurd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dispatched from Egypt</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>His two ulufes remained in the imperial treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebubekir the Kurd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bali Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urðı</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammed Han Ahmed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hacı Kara Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 7 individuals

Four of above-mentioned individuals have been dispatched from Syria; their ulufes were assigned from the muqāṭa’a of Kara Hamid.

17 This term indicates the wages of the soldiers, or the wage of a soldier in by-gone days.
18 This indicates a branch of the public revenue.
B. When Spy Meets Spy

Sometimes Kurds themselves were subjects of the espionage, especially when they hold a frontier or political position in the rival empire. The manuscript of the Persian collection of Jāmī (n.d.), *Ash’at al-Luma’t* (No. 10557/4, fols 77r–78r), contains a Turkish letter. It is reasonable that this letter, which includes references to both Sultan Husayn Bayg and Ḥājī Bayg of Dunbulī, the contemporaries of Süleyman I, dates from the period prior to 974/1566 or much earlier (i.e. 939/1533), when the Ottoman Empire was still in the process of establishing a great campaign against Iran.

Although the preserved linguistic differences ascribed to a spy from the eastern (or Safavid) Turkish communities may not be problem to doubt that the spy was an employee of Süleyman I and he was used as a local spy, the context raises the possibility of there having been some relations between the spy and Dunbulī Kurds, a family of the Kurdish Imāmī Shī’a who were instrumental in the propagation of Shiism in Ādharbāyjān, especially around Sögman-Ābād, the hereditary fief of Dunbulī in the north-west of Khūy.19 There are intimations in the name of ‘Ālī of a possible Shī’a origin of the spy. The name implies a religious connection with Ḥājī Bayg, a symbol of Safavid power in some parts of Ādharbāyjān where the purport of the community was some linguistic and especially religious differences with the western Ottoman regions. Moreover, there are panegyrical phrases in which our unknown spy praises the powerful troops of Ṭahmāsp I, his wealth, his good behaviour, and the military power which no Sultan was able to challenge. Regarding the Safavid soldiers, it is interesting that the spy in question emphasises their pledge of faith in Islam, religious law, prayer, and fast. In his view, the well-known sayings about the Qizilbāsh are merely accusations.

It is possible that the Safavids themselves did in fact provide such a kind of espionage account as ‘disinformation’, repenting Süleyman I to take a military expedition against Iran. It is impossible to accept all political propaganda and panegyrical statements mentioned in the text. That our spy characterised Ṭahmāsp I as an open-handed or generous spirit, for example, is completely baseless because his character was indeed marked by miserliness and grasping meanness (see Qumī 1980, Vol. I, pp. 610–614; Scheref 1862, Vol. II, pp. 251–252).

Text

[77r] Sevād-ı Mektûbi ki Câsûs-ı Hundgâr-ı Rûm be Efendi-yi Rûm Kalemi Nimûde dar Sâli ki ‘Ālî-câh Hacı Beg Dunbulî be Ka’be-yi Mu’azzama Refte Bude

Sa’adetli ve ’izzetli ve müreffehli, şecâ’atlü, ifâdatlu, ifâzatlu efendimiz Hüseyin Hân Beg voyvoda-i müeyyed *zide kadruhu* hisselerine dürer-i da’vât-i váfiyát ve gurer-i teslimât-i zâkiyát iblâğ ve krîl olundukdañ sonra ma’lûm-ı háttr-ı deryâ-

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19 They were converted from Yezidism to Shiism many years before the rule of Ḥājī Bayg (see Scheref 1860, Vol. I, pp. 310, 312).
mekâtır ve mezkûr-ı zamîr-i münîr-i mihr-tenvîr olundu ki eğer taraf-ı ihlâs-ı 
benefîmiz de sorulsa lillahilhamd vücûd-ı nâbûdumuz ecyâller si lkinde mevcûd ve 
eskâm-ı kedûrât-ı cismânindeñ Allah tebârek ve teâlanıñ hısn-ı hırâsetinde mev‘ûd. 
Ümîdimiz Allah Teâlâ cenâbından oldur ki vücûd-ı bâ-cûd-ı mürüv vet-mevdûduñuz 
daima âfitâb-ı ‘alem-tâbnıñ devlet semâsında münevver ve sihhat-i meclisinde 
musadder ola. Âmin ya Rabûl-l-‘Alemîn.

Benim efendim mektûb-ı meveddet-üsûb-ı şerîfiñiz ahsen ezmine ve evkâtte 
şeref-i vusûl bulub mezâmîn-i lutf-ayînindeñ ma'lım olundı ki hätîr-ı 'âtirîniz Rûm’da 
vâk‘i olan bu sene ahvâllerinin istimâ’ olunmağına ve ittlâ’ bulunmağına râğıbdur. 
Lihezâ ’arzuâl târikiyle musaddi’ olunur ki bundan akdem mezkûr olanının ihbârât 
budur ki:

Sa’âdetli ve devletli Hundgâr hazretleri Beyaz Efendi tahrîki ile ‘âzîm-i gazâ-
\(\text{hâlledallahu mülkuhhu ebeden}\) takrîr ve tahrîr kılınca ëz-i ahvâl-ı Kızılbaş bu sene-i mübâre
ekde Allah lütfü ile ve Imam Ali aleyhisselâm i’câzı ile kendüsiniñ imam olan Abdullah 
\(\text{halledallahu mülkuhhu ebeden}\) Cezyûri bir hoşça mekteb me tecbirine tahrîf kilub ve kesret-i sipâh-ı hadem ü hasmem sa’âdetli  ‘Acem şahi 
\(\text{halledallahu mülkuhhu ebeden}\) takrîr ve tahrîr kılınca ëz-i ahvâl-ı Kızılbaş bu sene-i mümârkin 
\(\text{halledallahu mülkuhhu ebeden}\) ve belki bu şöylediginden peşîmân ve belki bu şöhretinden be-gayet hırsan ve mezkûr 
onunun mekteb-ı bedâyî-‘îbârata muhtevî ve garîyib elsîne ve efvâhda 
\(\text{halledallahu mülkuhhu ebeden}\) sâir ve ekser beyâz ve sefaînde münderic. Lihezâ lâzım görüldü ki hidmet-i şerîfiñize 
tahirî ve mersül oluna. 

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20 Text spells dürli. It was emended to dürli. 
21 Qur’an 21/69.
naîm kılb ve cemi’an köleleri ve ’asâkiri heb meş’erler22 gıyinnış, meş’aller takınmış ve meş’aller kaynaymış. Hakka ki bincek zamanda ’asâkiriiniñ yankusundañ hayret gözi hire ve sehâ ve keremlerindeñ akl tire olur. Ve bir edna kölesi ve çakleri altunci akçe şebih ihsân ider ve hân-i nevale yeyiçek zamanda cemi’i hüccâbı ve çaşışlar hüdmetlerindeñ kenara kılb havâss ve a’vâm, belki kâfe-i enâma salât-ı hakk ale’tezyid erdirdirler ve aye-i kerime mazmûnuna sâdik “bi fâkîhettek ve lahim tayr mimma yeştehun”23 ve şöyle ki ’Acem şairi söyler “her çi endişe der goman averd, matbahe poht ve der miyan24 averd”25.

Sofralar, ara çekilir ve yüz türlü ’acâyib ve garâyib tatlu ve tazlü şeyler kıştihâ-yı tabbâhi zabtına ve tabhına aciz ve bâdiye ’Arabları ki hergiz sencekdeñ26 gayri bir şey görmemişler işte şeker ile yapulmuş et’ime-i elvâ n ve sürme ile tokunmuş kafadan ya çek ve kullanacak zamanda bir dürli şenlik ve şa’a’f iderler ki âb u ’alafdañ gümrâh olanıñ ta’bire müyessere olmaya. 

Ve ben kulun seyr-i ’azmîne serâ-perde-i temkîn tarafına gûzâr kılb așhâne ve silâhâhâne vesârïr büyüttatına seyr ederken cenâbına ukrasib ve ben kuluna manzûr-i nazar-ı ikisir-esiñ kılb kendü hazretine tâleb kılb ve şef-rêf selâm ’ala İbrâhim müsüreñ defaultañ sonra kim olduğumu suâl edib kendü kim oluduçmu söylemedim. Müsliîman suhtesi söyledim ve hân-i nevale ve ihsânanın kaçaça altun ve haftan [kaftan] ve tür tùrlü şeyler merhamet ve mekremet bulub ve efendime zâhir ola ki elsine ve efvâhda mezîr olanîñ ve firâk-ı Kizîlbaş’a isnað virilen fêvâhiç i’mal ve kabâb ef’alinden hakka ki bu cemi’i ara zahir olmaz ve salah ve semâydedâ trâyi bu ’asker ara bir nesne bulunmas ve cemi’ü ümemdeñ aslah ve ekser firâkdañ a’buddurlar. Eğleb evkâtleri ‘bâdete masrûñ ve ekser saatleri tesbihe ve tehlîle mevsûf. Hakka ki i’tikâlere râşib ve ’azmîleri musâlaha üzre cezm ve eğer şöyle hasr u ’asker ile ve bûjyle direm ve kerem ile ne ’azm kilıçlar makîdîr ve karşu mukavemetlerine İslam ’askeri ma’zûr ve cemi’i ’Arab itatına ve fermâmına muti’ ve münkâd ve belki ekser ehl-i Rûm ihsânanın mu’tâd. Cenâbınza mahfi kalmaya ki köleleri şöyle olan sâhin kendüsi ne denli ola gerek ve böyle sipahîyla cidal ne münâsbib ve şöyle ’asker ile niz’a ne läyik ve kesret-i isti’dâd-ı ’asâkiriñ ta’dad ve kerem ve sehâsinin vasf olunsa mücellât-ı taññîf itmeğe läyik ve hakkâ ki cemi’i merâtiib ta’rifine fâlîk. Însellahı’l-‘aziz hidmet-i şerefe irice zamanda mürûr-ı eyyañ ve duhûr-ı şuhur ile ta’rîf ve ta’vsîf oluna. Recâ oluñur ki cen ab-ı rif’atıñiz Allahü Teâlâ emânında ola. Efendim27 bu evsâfa olan kiminiñ ismin ve resmin ve kim

22 Reading is doubtful.
23 Qur’ân 52/22, 56/21.
24 Text spells zaman.
25 The basic version of this poem will be found on nishastan-i Bahram rûz-i Shanba dar gunbad-i süyûd (Niţâmî Ganjawi 2001, p. 163); here it runs as follows: har chi andîsha dar gumân âward • matbakhî raft u dar miyan âward.
26 The reading sencek is doubtful. It is certainly a kind of food. Occasionally, sincik is used in Kurdish dialects of Eastern Anatolia to mean a kind of pastry.
27 There is a little confusion here. By drawing a line through, the scribe canceled “kitabû bu mubah iseñ iðesiz ümmûdki hâkk zemânettinde”. It is superfluous.
olduğuğun tahkik buyurub i’lâm idesiz ve mir’atü’l-cemâle ma’rûf săib kitâbetin bu muhlise ırsâl idesiz. Ümîddir ki Hakk zemânetinde mahfûz kalasız. Sahh.28

Translation

A Copy of the Letter written by Khundgâr-i Rûm’s Spy to the Rûm’s Efendi when the High Official Ḥâjjî Bayg of Dunbulî went to the Great Mecca.

After declaring and dispatching the pearls of abundant invocations and the gleams of pure greetings to the share of my prosperous, honourable, generous, brave, profittaker, and effusive master Ḥusayn Khân Bayg, the corroborative Voivode29, may his value increase, it became clear for his mind, as a drop in the sea, and it was remembered by his shining and love-enlightener heart that if our sincerity would be questioned, our mortal existence, praise be to God, is present within the range of generations and promises of good protections by God, may He be blessed and exalted, against various bodily turbidities. We expect from His Excellency the God, exalted be He, that your generous and manliness-lovely existence permanently would be bright like a world-illuminating sun in the heavens of your government and would be sitting in front of [royal] assembly. Amen, Lord of the worlds.

Your Majesty, your cordial and honourable letter has been received at the best time and leisure. From its graceful contents it became clear that your fragrant mind is interested in hearing of and being informed about the events of Rûm in the present year. Therefore, the report, which is putting trouble to you, indicates that previous gathered information and runs as:

With the incitement of Beyaz Efendi, His Majesty Khundgâr, the prosperous and fortunate, is dispatched for the holy war against Iran. [In order to draw attention to the holy war in Iran and accelerate it], the foregoing master had written a report on the weakness of Qizilbâsh. But in this holy year with the grace of God and miracle of Imam ‘Alî, upon whom be peace, his imâm ‘Abd Allâh Jazâyîrî30 frightened him well through a correspondence. Apparently he was regretted what he said when the great quantity of army of prosperous Persian Shah, may God make perpetual his sovereignty, 

28 This is the abbreviated form of sahih/sahi, meaning ‘it is finished, without any mistake’.
29 This is a Slavic title, meaning literally ‘military governor’, or ‘warlord’. Under the Ottomans, voivode was the title borne by the ruler of a province, whose power included security and administration. Gradually voivode used to indicate the governor of a province.
30 The title imâm and Jazâyîrî remind us of ‘Alî b. Hilâl al-Jazâ’îrî, the ‘Âmilî imâmi Shiite scholar. It is interesting that Jazâ’îrî was a master of Muḥaqqiq al-Karâkî who was a close imâmî scholar to Ismâ’il I, especially from 910/1504–1505 onwards. During the reign of Ṭahmâsp I, he was still influential and helpful in defending early Safavid Shiism. For a variety of reasons and the text which here is in a clear script, it remains impossible to show whether the author provided a distortion: ‘Ābd Allâh instead of ‘Alî. Or did the author only refer to another member of the same family? The name also reminds one of ‘Abd Allâh, father of the well-known Shiite scholar Sayyid Nî’mat Allâh Jazâ’îrî (b. 1050/1640–1641). For details, see Rahmaî (2012, pp. 44, 65, 92); Afandî Işlâmî (1981, Vol. I, p. 190; Vol. III, pp. 17, 148; Vol. V, pp. 108, 253–256).
was confirmed, and even he was extremely afraid because of this reputation. The pre-
sent letter which is composed of new phrases and strange words involves the afore-
mentioned events, being notorious in the mouths and normally is mentioned in the 
papers and note-books. Therefore, it was necessary to write and deliver it to your hon-
ourable presence.

After greetings to my prosperous and fortunate master, that is, the diver of the 
seas of sciences, meaning of the words of learning, occupier of the throne in the as-
sembly of education, traveller in the realm of effusion, leader of investigators, head 
of the disciples, owner of piety and certitude, and follower of the paths of Righteous 
Caliphs, may his reign of guidance and right way endure, [your servant] reports that: 
if your sun-alike mind is interested in hearing of the circumstances of pilgrims and 
the events occurred, it should be clear for your honourable [presence] that Persian 
pilgrims headed to the circumambulation of the garden of the Sacred House of God 
and to visit tomb of the Prophet Muḥammad, lord of the mankind, may God, the 
Owner and the King, send greetings to him, in this blessed year. Here is the account:

with a huge crowd like doomsday crowd in his service, which neither seen in the Ot-
toman Empire nor even had seen in previous periods and cycles, the Persian mon-
arch’s servant and bondman, known as Majesty Ḥājjī Bayg of Dunbugli, having a 
great hauteur, power, pomp and glory, came to the side of His Excellency the Chief 
of Pilgrims where he was disappeared among his servants; and [here] Ḥājjī Bayg, the 
mortal sharīf of Mecca, disappeared among his guards. When they ride on and get 
off, they are playing a pearly instrument with a strange voice and unfamiliar tone, re-
sembling trumpet of Israfil. With the dining table of victuals and tablecloth of gen-
erosity, the Valley of Kaaba, in fact, became like an address to the fire of Nemrud, 
“we (Allāh) said: O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibrāhīm!” and even make the gardens of heaven. All of his servants and soldiers were clothed in meş’er.31

In fact, everyone’s eyes are amazed because of his soldier’s echo at the riding time 
and the wisdom disappears in the darkness because of their munificence and generos-
ity. One of his lowest slaves and servants beneficently confers gold as akçe, keeping 
all doorkeepers and sergeants, the elites and the laymen, away from their services at 
the time of victuals eating; even all of the people increasingly deliver God’s prayer, 
according to the content of the verse of Qur’ān: “we shall provide them with fruit and 
meat of fowls as they desire”; the Persian poet says: “whatever the thought brought 
into assumption • the cook baked it and presented it”.

They open tablecloths, including hundred kinds of wonderful and strange sweet 
and salty foods, for which the cook cannot control his appetite and remains incapable 
of cooking. The Bedouin Arabs who have seen nothing except sencek, have fun when 
they taste these colourful foods made of sugar. It is impossible to explain but at the 
time of eating they behave like animals, which get lost among the water and fodder, 
when they dress the mail made of silver thread.

31 The translation is doubtful. meş’erler possibly comes from meş’er, ‘the sacred place of 
sacrifice in the hajj ceremonies’. Both reading and translation will be strengthened with the verb ‘to 
clothe’ (giyinmiş). The author means a kind of vestment with a distinct style.
In order to continue his observation, this servant went to the side of imperial tent. He encountered His Excellency when he was observing the soup kitchen, armory and other premises. He looked at me with his elixirful look and requested me to come into his presence. After having been honoured with the honour of greetings to Ibrāhīm, he asked me who am I? I did not tell him who I am. I introduced myself to him as a Muslim suhte\textsuperscript{32}. By way of favour and greatness, I was granted a few golden coins, mails and some kinds of things from his tablecloth of victuals and beneficence. It should be clear for my master that the spoken and oral mentions, regarding the shameful acts and obscene deeds ascribed to the sect of Qizilbāsh, are really not visible within the community. They do not have anything but righteousness and straight direction; they are the most pious [nation] of all nations and best worshipers of many number of sects. They mostly devote their times to worship and spend most of their hours with singing the praises of God and pronouncing the profession of God’s unity. In fact, their creed is stable and their decision tenaciously established on peace. With such a population, army, wealth, and generosity, they have access to whatever they like. The Muslim army would be incapable to resist them. All Arabs are under his obedience and obey and follow his decree; and even most of the people of Rūm are accustomed to his beneficence. It should not be hidden from you that if the slaves of the Shah are like that, how would be the Shah himself? It is not convenient to fight against his army; and it is not suitable to quarrel against such an army. It would be worthy to write several volumes if I mention various abilities and the number of his army, his greatness, and generosity. It should be indeed described as superior to all [military] ranks. If God the Mighty wills, it will be described and depicted day by day and month by month when I reach to your honourable service. I hope that your eminent majesty may be under the protection of God, exalted be He. My master! You may quest and indicate name, reputation, and identity of those who carry these characteristics and send to this sincere servant your right correspondance, known as the mirror of beauty. I hope that you may be protected by God’s security. It is correct.

C. Spy Disguised as Emir

The last document (BOA MD 48, No. 311) is a letter addressed to the beylerbey of Vān. It is written on 15 Ramadān 990/3 October 1582. Here the Safavid commander Maqṣūd Bayg is mentioned as a person who swore an oath of loyalty to the Ottoman monarch. The beylerbey of Vān is asked to speak to the court whether Maqṣūd Bayg and other Persian officials were loyal to the Sultan.\textsuperscript{33}
Hasan Çavuş’a verilmiştir. Yazıldı.

Van beglerbegine hüküm ki bundan akdem eliciliğin süüde-i sa’adetime gelen Maksûd, dâme izzuhu, hâlâ oğlu ile 'atabe-i ulyama gelüb kemâl-i ihlâs ve sadakât ile kendü ve oğulları ve sair tevâbî ve levâhîki izhâr-ı ihtisâs-ı 'ubudiyyet idûb päye-ı serîr-i hüserevâne rûy-mâl şerefyle müşerref oldukda envâ’i ‘inâyet-i şâhâneme Şerif-i vakî olub ve Yûkra Cânib’in ahvâline ve Emîr Han’in vesâir efrâd-ı ‘ayânın itaatlerine ve Tebriz’in fethine müteallik bazi husûsî i’lâm itmeğin senin ve Hakkâri hâkimi Zeynel Beg ve Bitlis hâkimi Şeref Hân ve Mahmûd Hasan dâme ‘ulunvûhum marifetleriyle ’amel olunmak için her birine ahlâm-i şeřif ile müşârunileyh senin cânibine gönderilerek ve Tebriz’in fethine müteallik bazı husûsî i’lâm itmeğin senin ve Hakkâri hâkimi Zeynel Beg ve Bitlis hâkimi Şeref Hân ve Mahmûd Hasan dâme ‘ulunvûhum marifetleriyle ’amel olunmak için her birine ahlâm-i şeřif ile müşârunileyh senin cânibine gönderilerek ve Tebriz’in fethine müteallik bazı husûsî i’lâm itmeğin senin ve Hakkâri hâkimi Zeynel Beg ve Bitlis hâkimi Şeref Hân ve Mahmûd Hasan dâme ‘ulunvûhum marifetleriyle ’amel olunmak için her birine ahlâm-i şeřif ile müşârunileyh senin cânibine gönderilerek ve Tebriz’in fethine müteallik bazı husûsî i’lâm itmeğin senin ve Hakkâri hâkimi Zeynel Beg ve Bitlis hâkimi Şeref Hân ve Mahmûd Hasan dâme ‘ulunvûhum marifetleriyle ’amel olunmak için her birine ahlâm-i şeřif ile müşârunileyh senin cânibine gönderilerek ve Tebriz’in fethine müteallik bazı husûsî i’lâm itmeğin senin ve Hakkâri hâkimi Zeynel Beg ve Bitlis hâkimi Şeref Hân ve Mahmûd Hasan dâme ‘ulunvûhum marifetleriyle ’amel olunmak için her birine ahlâm-i şeřif ile müşârunileyh senin cânibine gönderilerek ve Tebriz’in fethine müteallik bazı husûsî i’lâm itmeğin

Translation

It has been delivered to Hasan Çavuş. It has been written36.

It is my order to the governor of Vân that Maqṣūd, may his glory endure, who had previously come to My Threshold of Felicity through your embassy, has now come to My sublime [court], submitted his obedience, and paid homage [to me] with his

34 It was impossible to complete the reading. Here we probably have an alternative reading of musta’ib.
35 The word is incomplete. Though the document preserves a bila, it is impossible to give any meaning of these defective words.
36 yazıldı ‘it has been written’ indicates that a finished copy based on the draft was indeed sent.
sons, siblings, and retinue with most loyalty and sincerity. When his face touched the base of My Imperial Throne and honoured with that, all kinds of My Imperial favours were bestowed upon him. He informed me of some matters including the circumstances of Iran, the obedience of Amīr Khān and his noble retinue, and the conquest of Tabrīz. The foregoing [Maqṣūd] is about to be dispatched to your side with My Honourable Imperial Orders to you and to the governor of Hakkārī, Zaynal Bayg, governor of Bidlīs, Sharaf Khān, and Hasan of Maḥmūdī, may their elevation endure. These Imperial Orders must be implemented by you and others. Be you careful of this subject and communicate with the foregoing governors. Moreover, it is necessary to inform us of what resulted. My command is that when My Noble Order arrives, do respect this subject properly and counsel with the foregoing governors, other governors and their allies, consisting of administrators, frontier governors and well-informed individuals. Do spy on Amīr Khān, Qizilbāsh governors, notables, and briefly their tribes and clans. Do Qizilbāsh governors and notables have in fact any inclination and trend to return and obey My Sublime Imperial Porte as asserted by the foregoing Maqṣūd, may his glory endure? How is their circumstance? Which way makes the confiscation and the conquest of Tabrīz possible? What kind of precaution and supplies do we need? If the conquest of Tabrīz, with the favour of God, exalted be He, is the case, how it can be retained? How is it possible to keep it permanently fascinated and protected? Primarily the information should be gathered. When the latter arrives it is unnecessary to delay; details of the provisions of that side (i.e. Iran), the kind and circumstance of the information gathered, and in order to take timely precaution, your detailed and comprehensive opinions on these issues should be promptly submitted to My Threshold of Felicity. Consider the necessary things in this regard; abstain from doing, God forbid, something against the excellence of the honour of the sultanate, leaving no shortcoming … in any matters; report the events with bare fact; write and inform us about the results … with the favour of God.

VII. Conclusion

While there are no extensive Turkish and Persian sources concerned exclusively with Kurdish spies, the field can be explored with the help of a number of unpublished Ottoman documents; there are only some very scanty related episodes in the chronicles of the time. The Kurds were able to use local potentials, and sometimes they were able to combine both Ottoman and Safavid interests.

It is somewhat hard to get a clear picture of Kurdish espionage activities in the political context of the area. But there can be little doubt that certain tactics were used by Kurdish emirs. Also it seems clear that secondary Kurdish spies (i.e. military and administrative officials, merchants, soldiers, pilgrims, tribal members, villagers, hawkers, etc.) were not more successful in carrying out this programme than were Kurdish emirs. The role played by Kurdish emirs was essentially a leadership role in Kurdish espionage networks extending along a vast Ottoman–Safavid frontier area.
A more general conclusion can also be drawn from the above. Unlike the Ottoman Empire’s success in using many Kurdish spies abroad, Safavid Iran had probably few Kurdish spies on Ottoman territory. There are a number of Turkish and Persian sources providing details of Safavid spying activities, but there is a considerable silence on the Kurdish spies as Safavid agents. It does not mean, however, that Safavid intelligence did not have Kurdish spies in the Ottoman Empire. Much of the 16th-century Kurdish principalities were under the control of the Ottomans. Compared to the Ottomans, the Safavids had a weaker presence in parts of the Kurdish lands; thus a fewer number of potential Kurdish spies were available to them. The Safavids, of course, were likely to use a different sort of spies: people who were religiously motivated and found protection in heterodox communities still existing all over Anatolia.

Abbreviations
A.DVN.MHM – Bâb-ı Asafi, Divân-ı Hümâyûn Mühimme Kalemi
BOA – Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
khm. – hükûm
KK – Kâmil Kepeci Tesnifi
MAD – Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler
MD – Mühimme Defteri
TD – Tahrir (Defter-i Hâkânî) Dفترleri
TSMA – Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi

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Acta Orient. Hung. 71, 2018


