THE ETHNO-CULTURAL OTHERS OF TURKEY: CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS

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Edited by
Garnik S. Asatrian

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THE ETHNO-CULTURAL OTHERS OF TURKEY:
CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS

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For the ones who were convicted to oblivion.

My Lord, bless seventy-two nations first and then me.
God is constructive, not destructive.
We came to earth for happiness.
The sun has risen, o poor person, get up and worship.

Part of a Yezidi morning prayer

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PREFACE

Garnik S. Asatrian

The *RAU Yerevan Oriental Series*[1] presents the collective monograph *The Ethno-cultural Others of Turkey: Contemporary Reflection* (edited by Ahmet Kerim Gültekin and Çakır Ceyhan Suvari) written by an international group of scholars and focusing on ethnic and religious minorities in modern Turkey.

The issue of "others" in Turkey belongs to the category of problems whose very existence is either totally negated or extremely politicised on the state level. Among the minority groups themselves, the problem has certain sensitive social and even psychological connotations: some of them possess deeper historical and cultural roots in the country than the title nation, part of them being the autochthonous population of the area.

The views and opinions of the authors in this volume are their own. The special nature of the question makes the researchers of the field approach cultural, religious and other relevant issues against the backdrop of Turkey's controversial political realities.

The initiative of publishing a monograph covering such a delicate sphere demonstrates, first of all, the editors' and authors' striving to objectively elucidate, probably, one of the most esoteric aspects of Turkey's human landscape.[2]

The term "others", the editors use in the title as a designation of minorities, perfectly reflects the latter's niche in the demographic conglomeration of Turkey. It points not only to the natural diversity, but also to the alienation of various groups in this multiethnic country.

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[1] Formerly, *Yerevan Oriental Series*; its previous, 4th volume, was Mattias Weinreich's *Migration and Language: Pashto-Speaker in the High Mountains of Pakistan* (Yerevan, 2014, see https://orient.rau.am/uploads/institute/pdf/files/Matthias%20%20Weinreichzt AoeqqfPW9fVZH1613422132.pdf).

[2] A similar work was done by a group of scholars at the end of last century who produced a valuable source for the ethnic groups' list and statistics (*Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Peter Alford Andrews (ed.), Wiesbaden: "Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag", 1989).

Anyway, this scholarly product with undeniable academic virtues is a unique contribution to the field. No doubt, it will meet with wide readership all over the world, initiating scholarly discussions and stimulating further research in this fascinating and highly important area of knowledge.

The Editorial Board of *RAU Yerevan Oriental Series* has, therefore, decided to publish the *Ethno-cultural Others of Turkey: Contemporary Reflections* as volume 5 of the Series in Russian-Armenian University Press. Following our consistent policy of the open access to academic knowledge, we provide free online access for this publication on the website of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan (https://orient.rau.am/file-page/monographs).

As General Editor of the *RAU Yerevan Oriental Series*, I express my gratitude to Ahmet Kerim Gültekin and Çakır Ceyhan Suvari, the editors of this volume, for the initiation of this timely and extremely relevant project, for their erudition in preparing the materials and, last but not least, for their vigorous scholarly position.

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FOREWORD

Ahmet Kerim Gültekin
and
Çakır Ceyhan Suvari

The Ottoman Empire reigned as an imperial power for hundreds of years. Consequently, its legacy, which was comprised of a broad ethnic and religious diversity of peoples during the late 19th century, was taken over by the *Young Turks*, a daring bourgeois movement who lead the Turkish revolution. The foundation of the Turkish Republic in the early 20th century was a hundred year-long outcome of a long modernization struggle. It had first started with some reformation attempts of Ottoman caliphates regarding administrative regulations, which was a necessary counter maneuver regarding the rising economic and military power of the West in the early 19th century.[1] The process turned out to be a bourgeois movement led by a new generation of intellectuals as well as young officers of the Ottoman army, who were highly influenced by western notions. They experienced challenging long-term trouble with the Caliphate in sharing politic power while leading imperial wars, World War I, and dealing with devastating uprisings of minorities throughout the empire. However, they finally were able to put an end to Ottoman reign and establish a modern nation-state Republic in 1923.[2] However, formulating and forcibly actualizing a new national identity over what was left from a massive, heterogeneous population of a six-hundred-years old empire, who were practicing diverse customs, speaking different languages, and believing in various religions, resulted in long-lasting historical traumas, and complicated contemporary social problems.

[1] In Turkish literature this period is also called *Westerniziation*. See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: Modern History* (London – New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 57-9.
[2] For a comprehensive understanding of modernization period, from late Ottoman period to the early republican era, see Zürcher, *Turkey: Modern History*, 9-133. Also see Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (UK: Oneworld Publications, 2014).

The Ottomans were ruling a conquering Muslim state, who expected to be obeyed (in the sense of paying regular taxes and living in the restricted societal sphere) by its non-Muslim subjects. In return, the state permitted their subjects to live freely according to their religious customs using a practice called the *millet sistemi* (*millet system*).[3] Consequently, the Ottoman state defined individuals not with their *ethnic* identities but with their *religious* identities, such as Muslims, Christians (Greek-Orthodox and Armenian-Gregorian), and Jews. Nonetheless, ethnic identities (Turk, Kurd, Arab, Greek, Armenian, etc.) were in use in daily social life. However, the *millet system* depended on the idea of the brotherhood of Abrahamic faiths.[4] In this practical way, those communities (including heterogeneous Muslim groups) were also being successfully integrated into the empire.[5]

On the other hand, there was always a huge difference between those who were regarded as followers of Abrahamic religions and those who were regarded as *heretics* (in an example, some Alevi groups, Yezidis, Assyrians, Keldanis, Ehl-i Haqs, etc.). In that regard, Christian and Jewish communities had their institutions such as hospitals, schools, orphanages, etc. and also the right to choose their representatives, who had to be chartered by the Ottomans. The constitutional reforms during the late Ottoman era also provided some public rights for Christian and Jewish communities.[6] However, non-Turkish speaking ethno-religious groups (mostly the heterodox Muslims), also regarded

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[3] Zürcher, *Turkey: Modern History*, 10.

[4] *Millet sistemi*, depends on administrative experiences of earlier Islamic states, regarding their Christian and Jewish subjects. Accordingly, these communities, ruled by Muslims, were used to called *zımmi (dhimmi)*, which practically meant those under that designation had to pay taxes in order to get protected and be allowed to live as they were. Muslims were the *millet-i hâkime* (*ruling millet*) and the non-Muslims were the *millet-i mâhkume* (subject *millet to Muslims*). For more information, see Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Türkar, 2007) and Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2004).

[5] Bernard Braude and Bernard Lewıs, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1982). Also see Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population: Demographic and Social Characteristics (1830-1914)* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

[6] See Önder Kaya, *Tanzimattan Lozan'a Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2004) and Carter V. Findley, "The Acid Test of Ottomanism: The Acceptance of Non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Bureaucracy", in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude and B. Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 339-68. Regarding Kurdish and Alevi groups, also see Martin van Bruinessen, *Kürtlik, Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011).

as *heretics*, were always targeted by bloody military campaigns and faced with alienation, discrimination, oppression in public life. They were forced to consolidate the Muslim population against non-Muslims during the late Ottoman era, subsequently, to consolidate the Turkish speaking nation against non-Turkish speaking groups during the Republican era.[7]

In the 19th century, with respect to changing socio-political organizational models of Western European states, the societal sphere of the Ottoman empire started to shift. The most important social transformation was the emergence of new ethnic definitions concerning national identities, which were mostly dependent on spoken languages.[8] Accordingly, religious communities began to be defined as part of various nations, primarily in relation to their languages. The transformation from religion to nationality created a huge impact on the social formation as well as the population politics of the empire. Also, because of the fast modernization of Europe, the influence of the Russian empire in the 19th century a mass politicization effect over Christian minorities of the Ottoman Empire was created in the sense of *nationalism.* Many of the Christian minorities lived in the Balkans, and in the case of Armenians, they were located in eastern Anatolia.[9]

Eventually, the impact of nationalism broke the discourse of (Abrahamic) religious universalism, and the *millet system* gradually dissolved. Non-Muslim (especially Christian) groups got organized under nationalist movements and waged independence wars against the empire in the late 19th century while seeking political, economical, and military support from European countries and the Russian Empire.[10] In return, to crush regional uprisings as well as to prevent

[7] For a brief understanding of politics for minorities, from Ottomans to the republic, see Ahmet İçduygu, Şule Toktaş and B. Ali Soner, "The politics of population in a nation-building process: emigration of non-Muslims from Turkey", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 31, no. 2 (2007): 358-89. Regarding heterodox-Muslim non-Turkish speaking communities, as the case of Kurds, which encompasses diverse religious groups, also see Martin van Bruinessen, "Religion in Kurdistan", *Kurdish Times (New York)* vol. 4, no. 1-2 (1991): 5-27.

[8] During the early periods of the Republic, also some racist theories were put forward and adopted as official discourse of the state. See Nazan Maksudyan, *Türklüğü Ölçmek: Bilimkurgusal Antropoloji ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Çehresi 1925-1939* (Istanbul: Metis, 2007).

[9] See Suavi Aydın, *Modernleşme ve Milliyetçilik* (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1993) and *Kimlik Sorunu, Ulusallık ve "Türk Kimliği"* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınları, 1998).

[10] See Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 9-21.

the threat of further separatist liberation movements, the Ottoman state's reaction was shaped with *centralization* politics.[11]

Two main eras could evaluate the Turkish modernization processes: 1) the declaration of constitutional monarchy in 1867 (to its abolition by the authoritarian regime of *Sultan Abdulhamid II*) and 2) the grabbing the power by *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (*Association of Union and Progress*)[12] (and ends by the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923). Both eras were full of continuous wars against Western states as well as the Russian empire in order to protect the Ottoman lands. Therefore, the independence wars of minorities against the empire became a major factor that pushed Ottoman-intellectual movements to embrace nationalist views.[13] That was the main reason why Turkish elites turned towards creating a new national identity, the *Turkish-speaking (Sunni) Muslimhood*. Secondarily, the immigration of millions of Muslims (while the empire was collapsing) from different continents to

[11] According to Berkes, the mainstream intellectual movements in the late Ottoman era, which have strong influence on the cadres of the modern Republic, can be classified as follows: First, there is *Westernism*. The movement supported the idea of imitating new social organization models of the western states (for example, constitutional monarchies) as well as technical innovations, which brought economic and military superiority to the western states. By this policy, it was believed to stop the disintegration of the empire. Second, there was *Ottomanism*. The idea supported a similar approach much like Westernism, which depended on the modernization of public life as well as constitutional rule by creating a common sense of an *Ottoman identity* as a national belongingness. Third, there was *conservative Islamism*. The notion refused any kind of Western influence on public life as well as social organization model of the society. It prioritized the Islamic rule and supported to strengthen the caliphate as a centralization policy. Forth, there was *Turkism*, which would eventually lead the Republican revolution. It aimed to create a new Turkish nation, based on re-formulating a Turkish history, ethnicity, race, language and Islam. Westernism, Ottomanism and Turkism could be considered within a continuous intellectual as well as practical relation in the sense of Turkish modernization process from the late Ottoman era to the modern republic. See Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınları, 1973).

[12] For more detailed discussion about *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, the leading party of Turkish revolution, see Noemi Levy-Aksu and François Georgeon, eds., *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire: the aftermath of 1908* (London-New York: B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017).

[13] For a brief discussion about the ideas supported by several Ottoman-intellectual quarters during the late Ottoman and early Republican eras, see Sibel Özbudun Demirer, "Anthropology as a nation-building rhetoric: the shaping of Turkish anthropology (from 1850s to 1940s)", *Dialect Anthropol* vol. 35 (2001): 111-129.

Anatolia, was another factor.[14] Formulating a new national identity depended on a major socio-cultural and historical denominator of the population to claim sovereignty of territories. Consequently, the backbone of the new national identity emerged: *Turkified Islam*.[15] In sum, the new *Turkish national identity* was based on these two main aspects, which shared mutual strong symbolic connotations as well as the sociology of the population *being Muslim* or *non-Muslim* and *speaking Turkish* or a *non-Turkish* language.[16]

Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the idea of a *Turkish-nation-state* became the new state's official ideology. Accordingly, *non-Muslims* and *non-Turkish-speaking* communities of the empire had to be either eliminated or forcibly *Turkified* and *Islamized*.[17] At this juncture, it is important to emphasize the continuum of state policies, from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. Even though the Caliphate and administrative formation of the Ottoman state were abolished during the Republican era, the continuity of an ideological and administrative approach can clearly be seen regarding the politics for *minorities*.[18]

As mentioned above, during the Ottoman era, non-Muslim subjects of the empire were defined as *millet*, on condition that they belong to one of the Abrahamic religions. Other ethno-religious groups (regardless of their spoken language), such as some Alevi communities, Yezidis, Keldanis, Nasturis, Ehli Haq's, etc., were defined as *heretics* or were not taken into consideration.[19]

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[14] See Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 163-5. The socio-cultural transformation of the population of Anatolia, increasing the Muslim population while the non-Muslims massively decreasing, was also a fact that shaped the new Turkish nation mostly concerning religious identity.

[15] For a comprehensive understanding of Turkish nationalism see Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Türklüğe İhtida - 1870-1939 İsviçre'sinde Yeni Türkiye'nin Öncüleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008). Also see Salahi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993).

[16] See Erik J. Zurcher, *The Young Turk legacy and Nation Building*, (London - New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010); İbrahim Bahadır, *Ümmetten Millete Türk Ulusunun İnşası 1860-1945*, (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2001) and "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists", in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed. Kemal Karpat (Boston: Brill, 2000); Tanıl Bora, "Türkiye'de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar", *Birikim* 71, no 2, (1995), 34-49.

[17] Sibel Yardımcı and Şükrü Aslan, "1930'ların Biyopolitik Paradigması: Dil, Etnisite, İskan ve Ulusun İnşası", *Doğu Batı* vol. 44 (2008): 131-53.

[18] See: Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

[19] Such ethno-religious groups were reported under the titles *unknown* or *other* during censuses. See Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımında Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları,

After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the term *minority* was defined within almost the same perspective as the one Ottomans used for non-Muslims.[20] Accordingly, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews were granted official recognition as well as socio-religious rights, and international conventions guaranteed those terms.[21] However, during the late 19th century, and especially in the course of World War I, non-Muslim (especially Christian) populations had already fallen substantially with the Armenian Genocide in 1915, committed by İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti. The reason projected for the legitimization of the Genocide was the military collaboration of several Armenian separatist parties with the Triple Entente and organizing uprisings behind the frontlines against the empire during World War I.[22]

The lack of confidence in non-Muslim subjects of the empire had started to grow systematically during pre-World War I due to the independence struggles, which were supported by Western states as well as the Russian empire, especially in the Balkans. The Armenian Genocide and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) against *non-Muslim invaders* fed the hostility to non-Muslim communities, regarded as *minorities*, in Anatolia, too.[23] These historical memories were effectively used by Republican elites, who were mostly former members of İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, in order to build a new nation-state. Therefore, during the early republican era and afterward, the Christian and Jewish population of the Republic kept decreasing. The significant population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923, the 1942 wealth tax, and the Istanbul pogrom of 6-7 September 1955 were the major

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2000), 62-4. Also see Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983).

[20] See Eric Jan Zürcher, "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalist: Identity Politics", in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2000), 150-80 and Mehmet Ö. Alkan, "Resmi İdeolojinin Doğuşu ve Evrimi Üzerine Bir Deneme", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, eds., Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 377-407.

[21] Rıfat N. Bali, "Resmi İdeoloji ve Gayri Müslim Yurttaşlar", *Birikim* vol. 105-106 (1998): 170-6.

[22] See Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007) and Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[23] See: Baskın Oran, Atatürk Milliyetçiliği – Resmi İdeoloji Dışı Bir İnceleme, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1997).

cornerstones of this state policy, which went along with the history of the Turkish Republic.[24]

The Lausanne Treaty defined minorities of the Republic with the criteria of being non-Muslim, which was the same as the Ottoman religious constitution. However, the *ethno-cultural others* of Turkey, who managed to survive until the 20th century at the margins of Anatolia, kept the same ambiguous position. Furthermore, they were subjected to forced–Turkification and Sunnification processes in order to prevent foreigners to interfere in the internal affairs of the young Republic, as they once did during the World War I and before. Therefore, Turkish speaking non-Muslims (such as some Alevi groups and Christians) were regarded as Muslims or exchanged with non-Turkish speaking Muslims. Additionally, non-Turkish speaking ethno-religious groups (such as Kurdish Alevis) were also regarded as Turks and forced into systematic Turkification.[25]

At the dawn of the 21st century, both formal-recognized minorities and ethno-cultural groups of the Republic of Turkey were started to be mentioned again during the negotiations between the European Union (EU) and Turkey. In the context of democratization criteria, which the EU put forward as a precondition of membership for Turkey, the scope of the term minority has started to be extended. Not only the Christians and Jews but this time, the ethno-cultural others of Turkey, such as Kurds, Alevis, Assyrians, etc. were also regarded as *sub-national groups*. The EU reports argued for official recognition for those groups. Accordingly, the ethno-cultural groups have become more visible and started to get organized for more cultural rights.[26]

When Turkey's neoliberal Islamist AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party) government came to power in 2002, one of its attention-grabbing policies was to encourage a public discussion on the Republic's policies regarding minorities and ethno-religious groups. The terms *ethnic identity* and *multiculturalism* started to be discussed widely both in the social sciences and in Turkey's intellectual quarters. Discussions about multiculturalism, criticism about the republican regime highly tolerated by AKP. Not only the officially recognized minorities but also the ethno-cultural

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[24] See: M. Çağatay Okutan, *Tek Parti Döneminde Azınlık Politikaları* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2009).

[25] For the case Kurdish Alevi communutes, see Erdal Gezik and Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, eds, *Kurdish Alevis and the Case of Dersim: Historical and Contemporary Insights* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), xv-1.

[26] Ahmet İçduygu, Şule Toktaş and B. Ali Soner, "The politics of population in a nation-building process", 377.

groups, who have been organizing since the end of the 1990s, evaluated the situation as a chance to get legal rights. However, that mood of optimism became worse. In practice, Turkey's ethno-cultural others continue to face discrimination as AKP has maintained the discourse of the former Kemalist regime. The government's political discourse of multiculturalism has not been put into practice but instead has been used as a discursive tool to cover up the oppression and alienation of the ethno-cultural others. While the government has maintained its official multiculturalist discourse, Turkey has again become devoid of ethno-cultural diversity. For example, currently, Mardin and Antakya are rare examples of provinces where multiple cultural identities co-exist except Turkish-Muslim domination. There are also a few regions, such as Tunceli (Dersim), where ethno-cultural others (such as Kurdish Alevis) continue to be the majority of the local population, despite their identities' public invisibility. With this in mind, the AKP's mottos, *Islam is a religion of tolerance,* and *Turkey is a country of tolerance*, are ironic reflections of current social policy in contemporary Turkey. References to *tolerance* are a clear expression of political suppression as part of Turkey's new Islamist sovereignty discourse. It makes clear that one ethnic group is a priority, and other ethnic groups are subordinated. The term *tolerance* symbolically suggests: *You'll know your place and must work to gain my tolerance*. Furthermore, Syrians and other groups who are forced to take refuge in Turkey have begun to experience this very same expression of 'tolerance'. Using refugees as an excuse, Turkey has employed institutional and attitudinal discrimination policies against all refugees. To this end, there is a crucial need for analysis of Turkey's discriminatory and alienating public policies and its historical background, particularly from the late Ottoman era up to AKP's *political-Islam*. In addition to understand the political Islamist AKP era, from its liberal-conservative beginnings to the current authoritarian regime (namely *the New Turkey*), one must understand the historical and socio-political circumstances in which AKP was born. *The Ethno-Cultural Others of Turkey* aims to provide insights into continuous discriminatory policies against ethnic groups, especially the ones who are most subordinated. In this way, it creates an understanding of the contemporary situation in Turkey.

The Ethno-Cultural Others of Turkey aims to shed light on barely known subordinated ethno-religious groups of Turkey by not only sharing historical, anthropological, and sociological information but by evaluating contemporary developments. This edited volume is prepared for English readers. It approaches ethno-cultural identities as socio-political reflections of the current international

affairs policies of Turkey, a phenomenon that possesses dynamic, variable characteristics. This book also draws attention to the continuity of discriminatory and alienation politics against ethno-cultural others in Turkey, which is rooted in the late Ottoman period and continues until today. It considers where similar policy approaches have been maintained and where changes have been made. Moreover, the book aims to provide an overview of political turmoil and socio-cultural transformation in contemporary Turkey by evaluating the ethnopolitical survival strategies of ethno-cultural others. By the term *ethno-cultural others*, the book refers to both those minorities recognized by national and international laws, and those that are not officially recognized.

Both the (officially recognized) minorities and the ethnic diversity (in the sense of ethno-religious enclosed groups and the ones who speak different languages) of Turkey have aroused interest since the 19th century. The Christian and Jewish population of Turkey (former subjects of the Ottoman empire) were often evaluated either from the perspective of population politics, statistics, or international affairs.[27] However, the ethno-cultural others of Turkey have not been analyzed enough, despite a relatively new promising interest that has emerged just after the millennium among both Turkish and international academic quarters. Those works can be classified roughly into two groups. First, the ones were written by western intellectuals or scholars, mainly depending on data of censuses conducted during the late Ottoman era and the Republican period.[28] Second, the ones were written mostly by Turkish academics around 2010, when the AKP regime carried out an open policy

[27] For some prominent published works, see (for English readers) Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire*; Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population: Demographic and Social Characteristics (1830-1914)*. See for other (in Turkish) publications Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar*; Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*: Önder Kaya, *Tanzimattan Lozan'a Azınlıklar*; Fuat, Dündar, *Türkiye'de Nüfus Sayımında Azınlıklar*; Pinelophi Statis (ed.) vol. 19. *Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Gayri Müslimler* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2001); Fikret Babuş, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Göç ve İskan*, (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2006); Cem Behar, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ve Türkiye'nin Nüfusu*, (Ankara: DİE, 1996); Ülkü Bilgin, *Azınlık Hakları ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınları, 2008); Necati Bozkurt, *Denizi Kurutmak: Dünden Bugüne Zorunlu Göç ve İskan Politikası* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2000); Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayri Müslim Tebaanın Yönetimi* (İstanbul: Risale Yayınları, 1990); Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Turan Yayıncılık, 1997); Mehmet Merdan Hekimoğlu, *Azınlık Hakları ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: Detay Yayınları, 2007) and Ramazan Tosun, *Cumhuriyet ve Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Berikan Yayınları, 2009).

[28] Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden, 1989).

(namely, *openings*) about both minorities and ethno-cultural others.[29] Those studies have been published share a similar historical and descriptive perspective about ethno-cultural groups, concerning linguistic and religious differences in comparison to *Turkish (Sunni) national identity*. Therefore, it was essential to elaborate on the ethno-religious group's current political situation while sharing anthropological, sociological, and historical features under the light of related latest works. By the scope of ethno-political strategies and acts of these groups, this work helps provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Turkey and its politics regarding national identities. Given that identity discourses define Turkey's public and political spheres, this book is a valuable reference for those who want to understand the contemporary sociology of Turkey.

There are many ethno-cultural sub-national groups apart from officially recognized minorities (non-Muslims) living in Turkey. Regrettably, only a small part of them, especially those who were able to take the chance to raise their voices and those who were studied by academics and intellectuals in recent decades are represented. *The Ethno-Cultural Others of Turkey* gives priority to lesser known cases rather than much-discussed ones, such as Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, etc. No doubt, there is much work to be done to share the ethnic diversity of Turkey, regardless of the situation, which becomes harder than ever. There are ten chapters in the book. This collection of works deals with ethnic and religious groups of Turkey that are still present or had been able to live in Turkey until the 20th century.

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[29] For a prior work, see İbrahim Yasa, *Türkiye'nin Demografik ve Etnolojik Yapısı ve Bazı Sosyal Meseleler*, (Ankara: TODAİE, 1958). For some academic reports, thesis and monographs see Baskın Oran, *Etnik ve Dinsel Azınlıklar: Tarih, Teori, Hukuk, Türkiye* (İstanbul: Literatür, 2018); Şükrü Aslan, Murat Arpacı, Öykü Gürpınar and Sibel Yardımcı, *Türkiye'nin Etnik Coğrafyası*, (İstanbul: Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi – Bilimsel Araştırma Projeleri, 2013); Berna Yüksel Çak and Ahmet Buran, *Türkiye'de Diller ve Etnik Gruplar*, (Ankara: Akçağ, 2012); Orhan Sakin, *Osmanlı'da Etnik Yapı* (İstanbul: Ekim Yayınları, 2010); Suavi Aydın, "Türkiye'de Etnik Yapı", *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt vol. 12 (1996): 496-514; Cemal Şener, *Türkiye'de Yaşayan Etnik ve Dinsel Gruplar* (İstanbul: Etik Yayınları, 2006) and Çakır Ceyhan Süvari and Ayşe Yıldırım, eds, *Artakalanlar: Anadolu'dan Etnik Manzaralar* (İstanbul: E Yayınları, 2006). There are also some works focusing on particular ethnic groups, see Haşim Albayrak, *Karadeniz'de Etnik Yapılanmalar ve Pontus*, (İstanbul: Babıali Yayınları, 2010); Hanefi Bostan, *Karadeniz'de Nüfus Hareketleri ve Nüfusun Etnik Yapısı* (İstanbul: Nöbetçi Yayınları, 2012); İhsan Çetin, *Midyat'ta Etnik Gruplar* (İstanbul: Yaba Yayınları, 2007) and Hans Lukas Keiser, Der verpasste Friede, Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938 (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2000).

Ahmet Kerim Gültekin writes the first chapter under the title of *Kurdish Alevis*. Gültekin's aim in this article is to provide a framework analysis of contemporary Kurdish Alevism. Gültekin says that a discourse of Dersim Alevism has developed among Kurdish Alevis in recent years. This approach is defined as *Dersim ethnicism* by Gültekin. Gültekin claims that those who have this idea see Kurdish Alevism as a unique cultural system because of its religious, linguistic, historical, sociological, and anthropological dimensions. Dersim ethnicism has gained wide symbolic popularity among the Kurdish Alevi population of the sacred places. The author sees the symbolic importance of sacred places as one of the causes and results of Dersim ethnicism. The article points out that the Kurdish Alevis living in Western Europe are also crucial in the emergence of the Dersim ethnicism discourse. It is claimed that Kurdish Alevis started to create new religious-political institutions, theological discourses, and even rituals with some modern concepts and ideas.

Hakan Mertcan discusses the situation of Arab Alawis in the second chapter. In his study, Mertcan prefers the notion of *Alawi* instead of *Alevi* to distinguish this group from the Alevis in Anatolia. According to Mertcan, the state sees Arab Alawis as a threat to national unity. It is stated in the article that the Alawi identity, which is seen as a threat to the Turkish national identity, is also not officially recognized. For this reason, it is claimed that the state has made special efforts to assimilate the Arab Alawis. Mertcan says that despite the assimilationist attitude, the Alawis, who were tired of the pressure and discriminatory policies in the Ottoman period, supported the Republic in the hope of a new political order. It is states that at a time when the Kemalists' assimilationist policy was being opposed, the Alawis started to defend the Republic values again due to their anxiety about the AKP.

Victoria Arakelova writes on the Yezidis in the third chapter, *The Yezidis in Turkey – A Stigmatised Identity*. The relationship between the Yezidi and Kurdish identities is among the problems of discussion. According to Arakelova, the religion of the Yezidis is a unique product of the Near Eastern non-dogmatic milieu. It is rooted in mystical Islam, but having dissociated itself from the Muslim milieu and become a basis for the crystallization of a principally new ethno-religious identity, its eccentricity is manifested in numerous non-dogmatic peculiarities, which brought the Yezidis the disrepute of being called heretics and even devil-worshippers, and doomed the community to constant persecution in the Muslim environment.

The fourth chapter of the book is *The Zaza People – A Dispersed Ethnicity*. According to the author, Eberhard Werner, the Zaza people are in the middle of

political tensions. Of course, this tension arises from being caught between the Kurdish political movement and the state. The author notes that Zaza- and Kurmanji-speaking communities have some common features, but they are diverse and do not understand each other. According to the author, in history, the Zaza people of Eastern Anatolia went through times of struggle and oppression as a small-scale society under varying national powers. The author notes that since the 1960s, a considerable migration wave to the western cities of Turkey and Europe, mainly Germany, Sweden, and France, took place. The author claims that the diaspora in the West is part of the structure of the social life of the Zaza culture.

The fifth chapter is *Laz: The Good Citizens of Multicultural Turkey.* According to Nilüfer Taşkın, the author, it is necessary to insist on peace for the recognition of ethnic identity in today's Turkey. However, the demand of the recognition of the Laz ethnic identity, in general, has never been clearly articulated. For this reason, although the Laz are seen as the others of the others, they have also been approached as acceptable citizens. Taşkın believes that social peace in Turkey could be constructed only when there are no hierarchical scales between ethnic groups. So, just like Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Armenians, etc. the Laz should be able to foster their culture without fear of being stigmatized.

The Greeks, one of the ancient cultures of Anatolia, are also included in the book in chapter six, *The Rums – or Greek-Orthodox Christians – in Turkey.* Aylin de Tapia focuses on Greek-Orthodox Christians also called *Rum* in the Ottoman and Turkish context, namely the Orthodox Christians affiliated to the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. She describes the current situation of the Greeks by taking into consideration two main historical periods. The first includes the Ottoman period from its foundation to the Republic, while the second-deals with the timeline from the foundation of the Republic to now. She also elaborates on sociological and anthropological data of the Greek community in contemporary Turkey.

Chapter seven of the book, *The Circassians*, is written by Erdoğan Boz. Boz follows a chronological path. He discusses the situation within a historical timeline that starts from Circassia occupied by Russia in the second half of the 19th century to their exile into the Ottoman lands. Moreover, he adds a new timeline from the Turkish Republican era to the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014. The author draws attention to the transformations in Circassian identity during these historical periods. According to Boz, Circassians are now an important part of the urban setting of Turkey with a relatively high population

with their cultural and political organizations, including associations, foundations, business unions, journals, and monthly newspapers, and even a new political party.

The eighth chapter is *Molokans in Kars: From Soviet Spying to Our Beautiful Old Neighbours*. Çakır Ceyhan Suvari, the author of the chapter, argues that the Molokanism emerged as a peasant movement, and it has become an ethno-religious identity in the historical process. Then, the deportation of the Molokans to Kars and the conflictual relationship with the other local groups as well as the state in the region are mentioned. In the process, varying perceptions of Molokans in Turkey are noted, in particular how the Molokans are perceived and explained in academic studies.

In their chapter *Tragic Memories Encountering Ethno-Religious Revival in Contemporary South-Eastern Turkey: The Case of the Assyrian Church of the East*, the Italian scholars Benedetta Panchetti and Marcello Mollica, write about the Assyrian Church of the East. The authors state that these Christians were divided into various groups due to political, geographical, and social reasons, and later became known under different names. In their work, Panchetti and Mollica consulted archival documents as well as interviews with community leaders and worshipers of the Eastern Assyrian Church.

The last chapter, *The Forgotten Armenians*, is written by Philip O Hopkins. Hopkins begins by providing a brief synopsis of the complicated history of Armenians in Turkey. He then discusses the Genocide and its aftermath. From the time of the forced migration to Armenians currently in Turkey, Hopkins demonstrates that Armenians still play a role in society, albeit a muted one. Armenian centers in places like Van and İstanbul are addressed and recent killings are mentioned. Hopkins shows that the governmental discrimination of Armenians has a long and storied history.

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This volume is a humble contribution to the limited study of Turkey's ethno-cultural others, who are still being suppressed, discriminated against, alienated, and sentenced to oblivion. Moreover, many authors of the book, including the editors, have shared the same fate with the book's subjects during recent years. Due to their scholarly work focusing on persecuted ethnic groups as well as the petition of "Academics for Peace" that they signed, they were criminalized, dismissed from the academy, and forced to exile. Thus, this volume should also be regarded as a persistent voice of Turkey's intellectuals who are struggling with totalitarianism. Therefore, we would gladly like to thank the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian-Armenian University, for providing this most welcomed opportunity for the publication of this volume in its Oriental Series and, particularly, to Victoria Arakelova, who coordinated the arrangements. We also would like to thank all the authors for being part of this effort. Lastly, we are honored to have the preface written by Martin van Bruinessen, who has been working on ethnic minorities of the Middle East for decades.

Ahmet Kerim Gültekin and Çakır Ceyhan Suvari

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PROLOGUE

Coming to Terms with Ethnic and Religious Difference in Modern Turkey

Martin van Bruinessen

Modern Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, was an assemblage of many different peoples, speaking a wide variety of languages, adhering to various dominations and sects of the three major religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism, besides local cults that reflected traces of older religions, and embedded in various types of social structures such as tribes, religious congregations (cemaat, tarikat), peasant villages and urban neighbourhoods (mahalle).

The Balkan Wars, the First World War, and Turkey's War of Independence resulted in the loss of territories with a Christian population majority and the Arabic-speaking parts of the Empire, the mass murder of Armenians, followed by the expulsion of most of the remaining Armenians and Greeks (as well as many Syriac Christians) from the territory of modern Turkey, large-scale forced migrations of other groups (notably Kurds), and the beginnings of a policy of assimilation of the country's non-Turkish Muslim inhabitants. By 1923, Anatolia had become more homogeneous than it had been in the first years of the century, especially due to the virtual disappearance of the Christians. Many of the latter had been killed, and numerous others expelled in the course of the war or the post-war population exchange between Turkey and Greece, while many others yet had been converted to Islam. The internal variety of the overwhelmingly Muslim population, on the other hand, had been increased by the arrival of numerous Muslim refugees from Greece and the Balkan: speakers of Albanian, Greek and various Slavic languages. The young Republic embarked on an ambitious project of nation-building, aiming to turn all these different people into Turks and wipe out their different cultures and histories.

Concerns about Kurdish separatism, which were further heightened by the Sheikh Said uprising of 1925, constituted the main rationale behind the increasingly coercive measures of Turkification. The Kurds were by far the

largest of the non-Turkish populations, and most of them were concentrated in the Eastern provinces, where they constituted the majority of the population and neighboured the considerable Kurdish regions of Iran and Iraq. But they were not the only ones that caused concern. A secret intelligence report from 1932 on "minorities" (*ekalliyetler*) that has recently come to light deals extensively with the political claims and activities of Kurds, Armenians, Circassians, Laz, the Arabs of Adana and Mersin, Jews and Greeks.[1] In public discourse, however, the only minorities existing in the country were those protected by the Treaty of Lausanne, i.e. the non-Muslims; all others were proclaimed to be Turks and were soon the be made into the descendants of Turkish invaders from Central Asia.

The various communities lumped together under the label of Alevis constituted a different type of minority, not mentioned in the above report because they were not perceived as a security risk (except for the Kurdish or Zaza-speaking Alevis, who were suspect because of their Kurdish, not their Alevi identity; in 1932 there were as yet few Arab Alevis in Turkey, for the province of Iskenderun/Hatay, where most of them live, was still part of Syria and only became Turkish in 1938). There were as yet no Alevi political claims and no Alevi identity politics. Moreover, many Turkish nationalists perceived the Alevis as perhaps the most authentic Turks and their religious traditions as the depository of Turkic pre-Islamic and early Muslim Sufi traditions. Unlike other religious traditions, the rich repertory of Alevi religious poetry and song, which was almost exclusively in Turkish, was never seriously repressed in Republican times: it was not considered as religious but as Turkish folk culture.

The Kemalist policy of nation-building through mass education, universal conscription, state-controlled radio and later television, and the suppression of non-Turkish languages and cultures appeared relatively successful until at least the 1960s. Most people by then were speaking, and probably also thinking, of themselves as Turks even when they were aware that there was also some additional ethnic colouring in the family. Having a Circassian grandmother or an Arab grandfather was a colourful detail of one's biography but did not detract from one's Turkishness, and the same appeared true of family histories connecting people with the Balkans, the Northern Caucasus or the Kurdish mountains. This all changed with the onset of a new Kurdish movement in the late 1960s.

[1] Hüsnü Gürbey & Mahsuni Gül, "1930'lı yıllarda devletin Türk olmayanlara bakışı: Milli Emniyet Hizmeti'nin ekalliyetler raporu," *Kürt Tarihi* 39 (2020): 4-13.

Initially this movement focused much on issues of regional inequality and underdevelopment. *Doğu*, 'the East', was the common euphemism for the Kurdish-inhabited provinces. Soon, however, Kurdish political activists began speaking of the Kurds as a distinct people with a culture of their own that was not Turkish. In spite of the official ban, a modest revival of writing in the Kurdish language began in the late 1970s and continued in the European diaspora during the 1980s. In 1991, under pressure from the Council of Europe, the law proscribing publication in other languages than Turkish was lifted, allowing the flowering of publishing in Kurdish and on Kurdish culture and history, as well as a huge production of audio recordings of Kurdish music and song. In the wake of this Kurdish cultural revival, other groups also began reasserting their distinctive cultural traditions. Sound recordings in Zaza, Lazi, Armenian, Greek, Circassian and Slavic languages came on the market and found eager buyers. Ethnic or cultural identity became a matter of great personal interest to many. This was also reflected in the Alevi cultural revival that started around the same time. Whereas in the 1970s there had been an Alevi youth activism that was highly political and aligned with the radical left against the religious right, the activism since the 1990s has been more focused on community, culture and the reinvention of ritual. People also rediscovered the numerous cultural differences that had lain hidden behind the overarching label of Alevi.[2]

The Academic Study of Cultural Difference

The academic study of ethnic communities and cultures was inevitably responsive to Turkey's official suppression of ethnicity and the gradual liberalisation. Anthropological village studies before the 1990s tended to ignore or downplay the ethnic factor. The pioneer of village studies in Turkey, Paul Stirling, unwittingly set the tone by the title of his first book, *Turkish Village*, which for longer than a generation was considered representative of most of Turkey.[3] The peasant studies school, which was influential in some of Turkey's best universities, emphasised political economy over ethnicity.[4] Only few

[2] Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurds, Turks, and the Alevi revival in Turkey," *Middle East Report* 200 (1996): 7-10; Suavi Aydin, "The emergence of Alevism as an ethno-religious identity," *National Identities* vol. 20, no.1 (2018): 9-29.

[3] Paul Stirling, *Turkish village* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965).

[4] Thus in a study of two Zaza-speaking villages in East Anatolia, the author does not mention ethnicity at all, except to state that it is irrelevant: Zülküf Aydin, *Underdevelopment and rural structures in Southeastern Turkey: the household economy in Gisgis and Kalhana* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986).

studies explicitly dealt with communities that were not Turkish, such as Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth's study of Kurdish nomads and mountain villagers, Paul Magnarella's study of a Georgian community in Western Turkey, Peter Bumke's study of Kurdish Alevi villagers in Dersim, Helga Anschütz's study of Syriac communities in Mardin province, and of course Ismail Beşikçi's early studies of the Kurds, his dissertation on the nomadic Alikan tribe and his overview of the political economy and social history of East Anatolia.[5]

The publication of Peter Andrews' remarkable compilation, *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey*, in 1989, marked the turning point towards the gradual acceptance of cultural heterogeneity.[6] The book itself did not make much of an impact among the general public in Turkey and remains virtually unknown there. In spite of the Andrews' caution in presenting his work, many responses were hostile, as nationalists accused him of anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim biases. A partial translation of the book was banned by the authorities.[7] However, Andrews' pioneering book inspired further research along similar lines. Its impact on later debates in Turkey has mostly been indirect.

The book is an amazingly rich and detailed overview of the ethnic complexity of Turkey, based on the author's own extensive travels, correspondence with other well-travelled researchers, and a perusal of a vast corpus of travelogues, local histories, scholarly articles in numerous languages, official reports and unpublished dissertations. It originated as the companion to

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[5] Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, "Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im mittleren kurdischen Taurus" (Ph.D. thesis, Universität Marburg, 1959); Paul J. Magnarella, *Tradition and change in a Turkish town* (New York & London: John Wiley & Sons, 1974); idem, "The assimilation of Georgians in Turkey: a case study," *The Muslim World* 66 (1976): 319-333; Peter Bumke, "Kızılbaş-Kurden in Dersim (Tunceli, Türkei). Marginalität und Häresie," *Anthropos* 74 (1979): 530-548; Helga Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur `Abdin* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1984); İsmail Beşikçi, "Doğu'da değişim ve yapısal sorunlar (göçebe Alikan aşireti)" (Ph.D. thesis, Ankara Universitesi, 1969); idem, *Doğu Anadolu'nun düzeni. Sosyo-ekonomik ve etnik temeller* (Istanbul: e yayınları, 1969).

[6] Peter Alford Andrews with Rüdiger Benninghaus, eds, *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1989). Partially (and unsatisfactorily) translated into Turkish as *Türkiye'de etnik gruplar* (Istanbul: Ant / Tümzamanlar, 1992). Important additional material and a reappraisal were later published as a companion volume: Peter Alford Andrews with Rüdiger Benninghaus, eds, *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey. Supplement and index* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 2002).

[7] The book has dedications in Turkish and in English. The latter speaks of "the mutual affection of the peoples of Turkey" but the Turkish one more cautiously avoids the term "peoples" and dedicates the book "to the mutual affection in the society of Turkey" (*Türkiye toplumunun birbirine olan sevgisine*).

an ethnic map of Turkey prepared by Peter Andrews, for which he had to compile, from the most diverse sources, lists of villages inhabited by the various ethnic groups, on the pattern previously established for ethnic maps of Afghanistan and Iran published in the same series. There is an obvious danger in this approach: maps almost inevitably impose an essentialist view of ethnicity, suggesting unambiguous and hard boundaries between clearly distinct ethnic groups clustering in geographical space in a way compatible with the mosaic metaphor. Maps are less apt to show the fluidity of identity in conditions of urbanisation, intermarriage, conversion and assimilation.

Combining insiders' and outsiders' ascriptions of identity, Andrews enumerated 47 ethnic groups, based on a combination of the attributes religion, language, and social (or tribal) structure. Thus, the Kurds are not conceived as a single ethnic group but five different ones: Andrews lists Sunni and Alevi Kurmanci speakers, Sunni and Alevi speakers of Zaza, and Yezidi Kurmanci speakers. Among the Turkish-speaking Alevis he distinguishes, besides a general Turkish Alevi population, Alevi Yörük and Alevi Turkmen (with a number of sub-categories), which have tribal organisation that sets them apart from each other. The Aramaic-speaking East Syrian and Syrian Orthodox Christians are treated as two distinct ethnic groups, without further subdivision by denominations. The entities identified in this study are more properly described as ethnic categories rather than ethnic groups. The degree to which they constitute groups in any real sense, their "groupness," varies considerably from one to the other.[8] And the two ethnic and ethno-religious groups that have presented themselves through corporate action in the public sphere during the past decades, the Kurds and the Alevis, claim to incorporate several of Andrews' ethnic categories each.[9]

Inspired by Andrews' book, the journalist Hâle Soysü wrote in 1991 a series of reports on major ethnic groups (*kavim*) in the weekly journal *İkibin'e Doğru*, which in the following year were published as a book.[10] Quite unlike the

[8] On the various degrees to which people sharing a certain ethnic identity may or may not constitute groups in the sociological sense, see Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[9] Andrews was very much aware of this, and he invited me to contribute an essay on Kurdish ethnic identity to the book, in which I attempted to provide a more dynamic treatment of identity processes. Peter Bumke and Lale Yalçın contributed essays on Alevi Kurds and the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari, respectively.

[10] Hâle Soysü, *Kavimler kapısı – 1. Lazlar, Yahudiler, Sudanlılar, Asurlar, Ermeniler, Hemşinliler, Çeçen-İnguşlar, Pomaklar, Gagauzlar, Karamanlılar* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 1992).

paranoid nationalist style that later came to characterise the Aydınlık group that published this journal, Soysü's writing – based on a considerable amount of her own research besides Andrews' book – was a celebration of diversity and brotherhood between the various peoples. The reports in this book do not cover the Kurds or Alevis but focus on smaller groups that had a strong sense of group identity. *İkibin'e Doğru* had, however, since its foundation in 1987 regularly paid attention to the Kurdish and Alevi questions and been critical of government policies. Soysü was in fact charged with *bölücülük* (sowing division in the national body) for the article introducing her series of reports, in which she discussed and reproduced a simplified ethnic map of Turkey. The State Security Court, in a surprise ruling, acquitted her.[11] Ethnicity seemed to be becoming an acceptable subject for public discourse.

In 1995, both the socialist intellectual journal *Birikim* and the more conservative nationalist monthly *Türkiye Günlüğü* published special issues on the ethnic question, with thought-provoking contributions by leading intellectuals.[12] For the latter journal, the ethnic question appeared to consist mainly of the threat to social cohesion and national identity posed by the Kurdish movement and the increasing tensions between Sunnis and Alevis. Many of the contributors were concerned with the question of how the danger of disintegration could be contained while recognising diversity (Turkish-Kurdish, Sunni-Alevi) within the body politic. Some reiterated the old Turkish nationalist mantras, and one (Ahmet İçduygu) held up the Spanish arrangement of multiculturality / multiculturalism as a possible model. Kurdish as well as Alevi voices were absent from this special issue.

The *Birikim* issue was more interesting. Guest editor Yelda had asked members of various ethnic and religious communities living in Istanbul to reflect on their situation, their memories, and their hopes and expectations of life in Turkey. She had found no Kurds or Zazas willing to participate, nor Istanbul Greeks, but with articles by Georgian, Circassian, Laz, Hemshin, Jewish, Dönme, Armenian and Syriac contributors this was perhaps the first significant effort to let the voices of multiple ethnic groups and communities speak and bring them to bear on public debate in Turkey. This issue marked the growing recognition of at least the existence of numerous other ethnic groups

[11] Soysü, *Kavimler kapısı*: 10.

[12] *Etnik kimlik ve azınlıklar*, special issue of *Birikim*, no. 71-72 (March-April 1995); *Kimlik tartışmaları ve etnik mesele: Birlik, barış ve çözüm nerede?*, special issue of *Türkiye Günlüğü*, no. 33 (March-April 1995).

besides the Kurds and the well-known non-Muslim minorities, but also documented the rapid weakening of especially the non-Muslim communities.

The following year, Yelda published a book based on her own observations on the dwindling of these minorities.[13] Her publisher, Belge Yayınları, run by Ayşe and Ragip Zarakolu, went on to publish numerous other important books on the various ethnic and religious minorities, their surviving cultures and their traumatic memories. Various other publishers brought out some relevant books, including a growing number of serious academic studies, but Belge Yayınları deserves praise for the courage and consistency with which they brought the lived experience of minorities to public attention. Other publishing houses that developed a special focus on history and culture of religious and ethnic minorities include İletişim, Tümzamanlar, Çiviyazıları, Yurt and Dipnot. Besides these, there were growing numbers of specifically Kurdish, Zaza, Alevi and Armenian publishers bringing out books and journals of historical, sociological and cultural interest.

The prestigious progressive publishing house İletişim published numerous critical studies of Turkish history and society, many of them originally doctoral dissertations, and quite a few of them dealing with Kurds, Alevis, or the treatment of the non-Muslim minorities. Among the latter, the books by Rıfat Bali on the experiences of the Jewish communities in Republican times deserve special mention.[14] Another relevant series of publications concerned the social history of major cities that, unlike similar books before the 1990s, pay explicit attention to their multi-ethnic composition and inter-ethnic conflict.[15]

This upsurge in intellectual production concerning the non-Turkish and non-Sunni communities and cultures that began in Turkey in the 1990s was followed with some delay by international publishers – at least in part due to the presence of a large diaspora in the West. Because of the widespread interest in the Kurdish and Alevi movements and debates on the Armenian genocide, books

[13] Yelda, *İstanbul'da, Diyarbakır'da azalırken* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1996). See also Yelda, *Hele bir gitsinler, diyalog sonra* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2003).

[14] Rıfat N. Bali, *Bir Türkleştirme serüveni: Cumhuriyet yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri [1923-1945]* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999); idem, *Musa'nın evlatları Cumhuriyet'in yurttaşları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001); idem, *Cumhuriyet yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri. Aliya: bir toplu göçün öyküsü [1946-1949]* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003).

[15] Zeki Coşkun, *Aleviler, Sünniler ve ... öteki Sivas* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1995); Fulya Doğruel, *"Insaniyetleri benzer...": Hatay'da çoketnikli ortak yaşam kültürü* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005); Güven Bakırezer and Yücel Demirer, eds, *Trabzon'u anlamak* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2009); Mehmet Nuri Gültekin, ed., *"Ta ezelden taşkındır...": Antep* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2011); Taylan Esin and Zeliha Etöz, *1916 Ankara yangını: felaketin mantığı* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015).

and journal articles about these political issues, brought out by a wide range of publishers, heavily predominate. Besides these, there have also been studies of 'smaller' minority communities and cultures, such as the Circassians, Zazas, Hemshin, and the crypto-Armenians of East Anatolia.[16]

Types of Ethno-cultural Minorities

As suggested above, the 47 "ethnic groups" that Andrews identified on the basis of language, religion and tribal organisation differ greatly in kind and many of them are not groups in any meaningful sense. They are dispersed among the population in general and do not systematically maintain boundaries separating insiders from outsiders. There may still exist cohesive village communities, but in most cases forms of social organisation transcending the village level do not exist and the effect of the massive rural exodus has been to dilute most ethnic groups' distinctiveness. In the case of the Kurds and the Alevis (and of the most remarkable subgroup among both, the Dersimis), the awareness of group identity was awakened and mobilised by political activists and community leaders, producing collective memory of iconic historical events and cultural symbols. Small numbers of Laz and Circassian activists have attempted to follow this example but remained largely unsuccessful. Some tribal groups, such as the various Turkmen tribes (Terekeme, Siraç, Tahtacı, etc.), retain strong internal cohesion, maintain endogamy and have a strong sense of identity but none of the modern forms of identity politics that distinguish Kurds and Alevis.

Sometimes a distinction is made between "minorities" (in the sense of the Treaty of Lausanne, i.e. Armenians, Greeks and Jews), "indigenous peoples" (*yerli halk*) and immigrant communities (*muhacir*). The first are defined by their different legal status and (a degree of) international protection.[17] They have formal and officially recognised institutions, including community leadership. The Assyrian and Syriac Christians of Southeast Anatolia were in Ottoman times formally part of the Greek and Armenian *millet* and do not have the same degree of formal recognition but have nonetheless their own internal

[16] Caner Yelbaşı, *The Circassians of Turkey: war, violence and nationalism from the Ottomans to Atatürk* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2019); Mehmed S. Kaya, *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: a Middle Eastern minority in a globalised society* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011); Hovann H. Simonian, ed., *The Hemshin: history, society and identity in the highlands of Northeast Turkey* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007); Avedis Hadjian, ed., *Secret nation: the hidden Armenians of Turkey* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2018).

[17] Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de azınlıklar: Lozan, iç mevzuat, içtihat, uygulama* (Istanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 2004).

organisation and leadership. In all these communities there have been splits due to conversion to Catholicism or Protestantism (Catholic Armenians are quite separate from the Orthodox, for instance). Furthermore there are in various places small communities of recent converts to Evangelical Christianity.

Muhacir communities are typically widely dispersed and do not have a territory or district that they can call theirs, which distinguishes them from the "indigenous" groups. There are exceptions, however. The so-called Giritli ("Cretans"), Muslims who arrived from the Greek islands in the 1923 population exchange between Turkey and Greece, are concentrated in towns in the Aegean region. Notably the pleasant coastal town of Ayvalık is known as a "Giritli" town.[18] Circassians and Chechens, who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century from the Northern Caucasus, are also strongly concentrated in certain regions where the natural environment was reminiscent of their homelands: the Central Anatolian highlands and districts to the South and East of the Sea of Marmara. Düzce is perhaps the most typical Circassian district, where they constitute a high proportion of the population. The other Muhacir groups are much more dispersed, but there are social networks connecting them over long distances.[19]

The "indigenous" ethnic groups and communities are typically strongly attached to specific regional settings, although they usually share these localities with other groups or communities. The Kurds and to a much lesser extent the Laz and Hemshin are the only ones who occupy a contiguous region where they constitute the majority of the population. The territories of the last-named two partially overlap, and they do not appear to insist on an ethnic identity distinguishing them from self-defined Turks in the same region.[20] Turkey's

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[18] Ahmet Yorulmaz, *Savaşın çocukları: Girit'ten sonra Ayvalık* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997); idem, *Kuşaklar ya da Ayvalık yaşantısı* (Ayvalık: Geylan Kitabevi, 1999).

[19] Alexandre Toumarkine, "Balkan and Caucasian immigrant associations: community and politics," in *Civil society in the grip of nationalism*, ed. Stefanos Yerasimos, Günter Seufert and Karin Vorhoff (Istanbul: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft & Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes, 2000): 403-432.

[20] Chris Hann, "History and ethnicity in Anatolia" (Working paper, Max Planck institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, 2003). Hann claims that in the region of Rize, where there are Laz, Hemshin, Georgians and what he calls "unmarked" Turks, ethnic identity is not much emphasised and ethnic boundaries are not rigid. See also Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Chris Hann, *Turkish region: state, market & social identities on the East Black Sea Coast* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, "Hemshinli-Lazi relations in northeast Turkey," in *The Hemshin: history, society and identity in the highlands of Northeast Turkey*, ed. Hovann H. Simonian (Oxon: Routledge, 2007): 338-352.

Arabs consist of a number of isolated localised clusters that have little or no relation with one another and speak quite different dialects, reflecting different histories.[21]

The various Alevi communities obviously also are "indigenous" in the sense of having strong ties to a specific territory, and there has in the past even been speculative talk of efforts to establish an "Alevistan" in the zone between the Sunni Kurdish region and the western half of the country.[22] Alevi communities live dispersed over a large region, however, and are united by little more than the name Alevi. The Turkish-speaking Alevis of the Kızılırmak basin, the Arabic-speaking Alevis of the Antakya-Adana region and the Kurdish or Zaza-speaking Alevis of the upper and middle Euphrates basin have different cultural traditions, religious practices and forms of socio-religious organisation.[23] Within each group there is considerable variety, the Zaza-speaking Alevis of Dersim being the most distinctive subgroup of all.[24] Dersim (corresponding more or less with the province of Tunceli) is moreover the only Alevi-majority region of Turkey.

A category of communities that do not fit any of the discussed types is that of the peripatetic or itinerant peoples, often lumped together under the

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[21] Otto Jastrow, the leading expert, distinguishes the Arabic spoken in the Antakya-Adana region, that of southern Urfa, and four clusters of Anatolian Arabic dialect groups: those of Mardin, Siirt, Diyarbakır and the Sason-Muş region. Otto Jastrow, "Anatolian Arabic," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1570-6699_eall_EALL_COM_0015>.

[22] In the 1970s and 1980s the daily *Hürriyet*, which often acted as a mouthpiece for the intelligence services, repeatedly reported on Maoist groups allegedly planning to break up Turkey into three parts, Kurdistan in the East, a communist Alevi state, Alevistan, in eastern Central Anatolia, and a Turkish rump state in the western half of Anatolia. This was widely believed to be a fabrication, since none of the known left and Alevi movements contemplated such a project. However, in the course of her research among the Alevi diaspora in Berlin in the mid-1980s, the anthropologist Ruth Mandel came across a small group, *Kızıl Yol*, that actually subscribed to the ideal of a socialist Alevistan. See Ruth Mandel, *Cosmpolitan anxieties: Turkish challenges to citizenship and belonging in Germany* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008): 272-4.

[23] Some of the variety is highlighted in these edited volumes: Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and Anke Otter-Beaujean, eds, *Syncretistic religious communities in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere, eds, *Alevi identity: cultural, religious and social perspectives* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1998); Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden, eds, *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[24] Erdal Gezik and Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, eds, *Kurdish Alevis and the Case of Dersim: Historical and Contemporary Insights* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019).

stigmatising label of "Gypsies" (Çingene).[25] Such peoples are found throughout Turkey as well as neighbouring countries and they are quite heterogeneous, with different specialisations (e.g., sieve making, repairing pots and kettles, blacksmithing, music and other entertainment). Not all groups are peripatetic anymore, and the term is therefore a misnomer (like most other names given to these groups). Many have settled in cities and some of the settled communities, such as that in Istanbul, have existed for centuries.[26] Most of these communities appear to belong to the broader ethnic category of Roma but there are also others, e.g. the Tahtacı and the Abdal who claim to be Turkmen.[27] In the East, as in neighbouring Iran, it is common to distinguish three major subgroups, Dom, Lom and Rom, and there are yet other peripatetic groups.[28]

Marginalisation and Disappearance?

Throughout the history of Republican Turkey the non-Turkish and especially the non-Muslim communities have dwindled as a result of discrimination, oppression and assimilation policies. Many of the remaining Christians and Jews in the main cities left the country in the wake of the discriminatory wealth tax imposed on them during the Second World War and the anti-Greek riots in Istanbul on 6 and 7 September 1955.[29] A large proportion of the Syriac community of Mardin province has since the 1960s migrated to Lebanon, Western Europe or North America, at least in part due to oppression by their Muslim neighbours. Earlier, large numbers had resettled south of the Syrian

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[25] Ingvar Svanberg, "Marginal groups and itinerants," in *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey*, ed. Peter A. Andrews (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1989): 602-612; Nazim Alpman, *Başka dünyanın insanları: Çingeneler* (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 1993); Ali Rafet Özkan, *Türkiye Çingeneleri* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000).

[26] Interesting observations on settled communities of Poşa or Lom in Ankara, Çankırı and other cities are presented by Tülin Bozkurt, "Poşalar örneğinde etnisite ve toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkisi," in *Artakalanlar: Anadolu'dan etnik manzaralar*, ed. Ç. Ceyhan Suvari, et al. (Istanbul: e yayınları, 2006): 283-355.

[27] Jean-Paul Roux, "The Tahtaci of Anatolia," in *The other nomads: Peripatetic minorities in cross-cultural perspective*, ed. Aparna Rao (Köln: Bohlau, 1987): 229-243; Fuat Köprülü, "Abdal," in *Anadolu Aleviliği'nde yol ayırımı*, ed. Nejat Birdoğan (Istanbul: Mozaik Yayınları, 1995): 23-487.

[28] For the most recent attempt at classification, see Egemen Yılgür, "Introduction: Roma-Gypsy-Peripatetic," *MSGSÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* vol. 2, no.18 (2018): 219-232 (introducing a special issue on Gypsies).

[29] Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' politikaları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000); Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet dönemi azınlık politikaları bağlamında 6-7 Eylül olayları* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005).

border. The Yezidis, who were the weakest of the non-Muslim communities because they lacked a recognised status, have almost completely disappeared from Turkey.

Emigration has been only one of the responses, however. It is difficult and costly, and has been probably unaffordable for most people. Many individuals have therefore attempted to make themselves invisible, hiding their background after moving to another town or neighbourhood, attempting to pass as Muslims and Turks. Entire communities of Greeks and Armenians converted to Islam, a process that had already begun well before the Republic. Many Yezidis adopted Christianity, especially in the Mardin region, or Islam. Similarly, many Kurds attempted to pass as Turks and Alevis as Sunnis. Many parents chose not to inform their children of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. Memories and certain practices persisted in some communities but were kept hidden from outsiders. Greek remained the language spoken at home by many Muslim families in the Eastern Black Sea region as well as parts of the Aegean Region and some members of the converted communities, especially older women, secretly continued rudimentary Christian rituals.[30]

The Hemshin of Northeast Anatolia constitute an interesting case of early converts to Islam who have retained a distinct group identity. Part of the Hemshin are Armenian-speaking, others only speak Turkish but have nonetheless not merged into the general Turkish population. They have also remained distinct from Armenian communities of East and Southeast Anatolia that converted to Islam in later years, during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire or in the days of the genocide and Turkey's War of Independence. The numbers of these Islamised Armenians, who long passed as Turks or Kurds, appear to be much larger than had been assumed. Only very recently have younger members of these communities begun to reclaim their Armenian background.[31]

Another convert community that has long remained almost invisible and undistinguishable from the Sunni Turkish population at large but has recently come into the limelight is that of the (descendants of) followers of the 17th-

[30] On life and culture of the Turkicised Greek communities, see Ertuğrul Aladağ, *Sekene: Türkleşmiş Rumlar / Dönmeler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997); on converts in the Black Sea region who long remained crypto-Christians, see Yorgo Andreadis, *Gizli din taşıyanlar* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997).

[31] Altuğ Yılmaz, Bürkem Cevher and Duygu Coşkuntuna, eds, *Müslümanlas(tırıl)mış Ermeniler* (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Vakfı, 2013); Avedis Hadjian, ed., *Secret nation: the hidden Armenians of Turkey* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2018).

century Jewish messianic leader Sabbatai Zevi, who together with his followers converted to Islam in order to escape execution by the Ottoman authorities. For centuries, the Dönme ("Converts") or Sabataycı, as this community was called, practised Islam but remained distinct and were suspected to have remained crypto-Jews. They were closely associated with the city of Salonika, where the largest community resided and where they were influential as the most modernised segment of the population of what was the Empire's most modern city. In the population exchange of 1923, all of them resettled in Western Turkey. Many of them were strong supporters of the Kemalist reforms and played prominent roles in the early Republic, happily adopting Turkish identity and merging in the metropolitan middle class of Istanbul and other major cities.[32] The veil over the Dönme was lifted when a member of the community published articles and a book on its history and religious beliefs that were widely read.[33] The author insisted on the lasting influence of Jewish mysticism even while Dönme also had prominent roles in several Muslim Sufi orders. His "revelations" were welcomed by the Islamist and nationalist press, which found food in them for anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and gave rise to polemics in Jewish and Dönme circles. Concerns among the community about such publicity appeared justified when two well-known investigative journalists from the secular left brought out a series of books that purported to show that many prominent members of Turkey's political, economic and cultural elites were in fact Dönme who had successfully hidden that identity.[34] It appears that many Dönme families had for several generations hidden that minority background so well that their younger members were not aware of it. To many of those who, under the influence of these publications, were persuaded to investigate their family history it came as a shock to discover hitherto unsuspected ancestral connections.

It was not only Dönme backgrounds that were being rediscovered. The renewed interest in ethnic identity in the early 2000s brought more surprises. A book that made a great impact was *My Grandmother* by the well-known lawyer and human rights activist Fethiye Çetin, in which she related her discovery, late

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[32] Marc David Baer, *The Dönme: Jewish converts, Muslim revolutionaries, and secular Turks* (Stanford University Press, 2009).

[33] Ilgaz Zorlu, "Gizli bir etnik cemaat: Türkiye Sabataycıları," *Birikim* 71-72 (1995): 168-172; idem, *Evet, ben Selanikliyim: Türkiye Sabetaycılığı* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1998). The book was a bestseller and was reprinted numerous times.

[34] Soner Yalçın, *Efendi: Beyaz Müslümanların büyük sırrı*, 2 vols (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004, 2006); Yalçın Küçük, *Şebeke - "Network"* (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2005); idem, *Tekeliyet - 1* (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2005).

in life, that her maternal grandmother had been born an Armenian Christian and as a small child had been saved from the genocide and raised in a Turkish family.[35] The book triggered a wave of similar discoveries: many more Armenian grandmothers were discovered (or acknowledged) in Turkish families, as well as forgotten or hidden ancestors of Kurdish or other embarrassing ethnicity. This gave an indication of how effective early Republican policies of nation-building by erasing non-Turkish identity had been.

The unveiling of hidden ethnic identities in individual families or entire communities is a double-edged sword. It has destroyed the myth of Turkish homogeneity and forced people to acknowledge that the country has always been a richly varied multicultural mosaic. But there is also the very real possibility that the new visibility puts certain groups and individuals – Armenians and Jews, perhaps also Kurds and Alevis – at risk. The most threatened communities continue decreasing through emigration and are thereby further weakened.

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[35] Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem. Anlatı* (Istanbul: Metis, 2004).

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CHAPTER I

KURDISH ALEVIS: A PECULIAR CULTURAL IDENTITY AT THE CROSSROAD OF MULTIPLE ETHNO-POLITICS

Ahmet Kerim Gültekin

Introduction

The oppressive state policies regarding ethno-cultural minority groups in contemporary Turkey have accelerated with the AKP's authoritarian practices due to an expansionist understanding of political Islam in recent decades. Due to the current perception of Turkish national identity, which is strictly related to a (Sunni) Islamic understanding, being a "Muslim" or "non-Muslim" is still the main argument of defining a minority group. This approach is politicly inherited and improved by the cadres of the young Turkish republic in the early 20th century, strictly bounded with the late Ottoman era's troubles in the 19th century.[1] Apart from some Christian and Jewish groups, whose constitutional rights were guaranteed and protected by international law, constituted by Lausanne Treaty in 1923, others (Kurds, Alevis, Ezidis, Assyrians, Lazs etc.) in Turkey who spoke diverse languages and practice various religions continue to be forcefully subjected to Turkish national identity.

Regarding Kurds and Alevis, the current problems of identity politics are mostly rooted in the bloody events of a century ago, which bidirectionally affected the fragile position of Kurdish Alevi communities in Turkey. After the foundation of the republic, the weak alliance between Ankara and the Kurds was broken after a series of Kurdish uprisings in the east, mostly because the young republic's founders had adopted the ideology of Turkishness and forced secularism. Thus, Kurds had to encounter Turkification politics.[2] However, Kurdish Alevis have had to face overladen discrimination and forced

[1] See: J. Zürcher, *TURKEY A Modern History* (London – New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (UK: Oneworld Publications, 2014).

[2] For a brief overview of Kurdish struggle in Turkey during Republican era see Martin van Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States - Collected Articles* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2000), 237-49.

assimilation processes. They not only ignored the Kurds and obliged them to speak Turkish instead of Kırmancki or Kurmanci, but also forbid them to practice their belief system (Raa Haqi), which they performed under secrecy throughout the Ottoman period. Because Alevism was perceived as a heretical belief by Ottoman clerics, Alevi communities were subjected to mass violence. Although (Sunni Muslim) Kurdish feudal lordships had an autonomous status until the late Ottoman era while Alevis had always faced massacres, both groups continuously suffered various forms of suppression and violence, especially throughout the 20th century, which politically shaped today's identity conceptions. That was probably why the first Kurdish uprising against Ankara was prompted by Kurdish Alevi tribes, named "Koçgiri Rebellion", in western Dersim (Sivas) in 1921. In a dramatic irony of the fate, Kurdish Alevis would also be the subject of the last Kurdish revolt in 1937 and a genocidal massacre in 1938 which tens of thousands were brutally exterminated in Dersim.[3]

Even though Alevism and Kurdishness are still not officially recognized as religious or ethnic identities in contemporary Turkey, several ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey during the early 1990s have unexpectedly and radically broken the long-standing silence for many groups.[4] Although demands for a constitutional revision on behalf of minority groups has been continuously ignored by the AKP, mainly Kurds and Alevis became visible both in daily politics and international levels. However, this *de-facto* status and the ongoing negotiations with the Turkish state have gone along with a too high price; the ongoing Alevi massacres are one such example.[5]

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[3] For a brief history of Kurdish Alevis in the 20th century, see Erdal Gezik and Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, ed., *Kurdish Alevis and the Case of Dersim - Historical and Contemporary Insights* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), xx-xxiii.

[4] The politicization of modern Alevi and Kurdish identities can be evaluated regarding the foundation of Turkish republic as well as modern Turkish nation. On the other hand, the 1960s would be a better historical starting point to think about the effects of identity-based politics on contemporary reflections of Alevism and Kurdishness in Turkey. In this regard, concerning Kurdish Alevis, see Sabır Güler, *Ötekinin Ötekisi: Etno-Dinsel Bir Kimlik Olarak Alevi Kürtlüğün İnşası* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 209-259 and "The Relationship of Alevi Kurds with Election and Politics from the 1950s to Today as an Ethno-Religious and Class Identity", in *Kurdish Alevis and the Case of Dersim - Historical and Contemporary Insights* ed. Erdal Gezik and Ahmet Kerim Gültekin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 15-43.

[5] Mehmet Ertan argues the politic effects of the Alevi massacres in relation to re-production of Alevi ethnic identity. See Mehmet Ertan, "Alevism in Politics: Possibilities and Limits of Alevi Identity Politics" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2016), 123-66.

On the other hand, the Kurds and Alevis' overlapping struggles for official recognition during the last decades have intriguingly caused an intersected cultural and political boundary between the ethno-politic terms "Alevism" and "Kurdishness" among many intellectuals, academics, and politicians. At this point, the Kurdish Alevis of Dersim have appeared to be an intensely debated community due to the debates regarding their ethnic definition. People have categorized them as Turks, Kurds, and Zazas. Additionally, during recent decades, an essentialist definition has also emerged that asserts they are a unique ethnic group. In that regard, during the 1990s, the rapidly rising Kurdish nationalism and the resurrection of Alevism[6] must be again noted, which brought out a new consciousness (or an interpretation) of modern Kurdish Alevi ethnic identity. However, contrary to Kurdish nationalism and the Alevi movement's political expectations, the Kurdish Alevis seem eager to secure their own way for their subordinated identity.

This chapter aims to provide a broader perspective and a comprehensive understanding of the modern Kurdish Alevi ethnic identity in contemporary Turkey by evaluating ethnographical and historical data. The social transformation dynamics of the community is also crucial to understand the current developments. Therefore, the chapter will first assess some prominent ethnic notions related to some important political and academic quarrels about Kurdish Alevis. Second, some Kurdish Alevi cultural features, especially their religious belief system, will be analyzed to understand the in-group social transformation actors better. Then, the role of violence that effectively formed the modern Kurdish Alevi identity will be discussed. Concerning this violent history, classification attempts of ethnic identity will be evaluated. Finally, the chapter concludes with short notes about current in-group dynamics that maintain the socio-cultural existence within the changing social and political contexts.

[6] For more information about Alevi movement in Turkey, see Joost Jongerden, "Violation of Human Rights and the Alevis in Turkey", in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comphrehensive Overview*, eds. Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003): 71-93; Özlem Göner, "Alevi-State Relations in Turkey: Recognition and Remarginalisation", in *Alevis in Europe: Voices of Migration, Culture and Identity*, ed. Tözün Issa (London: New York: Routledge, 2017), 115-129 and Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "The AKP, Sectarianism, and the Alevis' Struggle for Equal Rights in Turkey", in *Alevism as an Ethno-Religious Identity – Contested Boundaries*, ed. Celia Jenkis, Suavi Aydın and Umit Cetin (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2018), 53-69.

Alevism and the Kurdish Alevis of Dersim

Alevism is a highly controversial belief system in Turkey and the European diaspora, where millions were migrated over the last few decades and currently reside.[7] Traditionally, Alevi communities mainly lived in a wide geographical area that reached from the Balkans to the Middle East. Consequently, they speak different languages, practice different religious customs, have diverse historical backgrounds, belong to various ethnic identities, support several politicians, and have various citizenship. Nevertheless, most scholars agree that Alevism can be defined as a unique religious system or a form of Islamic heterodoxy. Here, the debate surrounding Alevism seems to focus on the "five pillars of Islam" at a practical level, especially when defining a Muslim. Alevis do not follow the five pillars, although they have maintained certain discourses and practices associated with the household of the prophet of Islam for centuries – particularly Ali (the prophet's paternal cousin and son in law) and his descendants – to define their religious identity.[8] However, Kurdish Alevis emphasize semi-deific beings and pre-Islamic mythological narratives rather than Islamic historical characters or a Quranic understanding of the world.

Today, the majority of Alevi communities live in Turkey. Historically, they were concentrated in rural areas, mostly mountainous regions, and were the main political actors of today's multiple-Alevisms at the international level.[9]

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[7] For a comprehensive understanding of the term Alevism see Markus Dressler, "Alevīs," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol. 3, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 93-121. "Alevism" should be understood as a conceptualizing term, which covers diversely named ethno-religious groups such as *Bektashis*, *Abdals*, *Tahtacıs*, *Çepnis*, *Nalcıs*, *Nusayris*, *Terekemes* etc. in Turkey. Also see Ali Yaman & Aykan Erdemir, *Alevism – Bektashism: A Brief Introduction* (İstanbul: Barış Matbaacılık, 2006).

[8] For more detailed recent discussion on Turkey's Alevis, also see Celia Jenkins, Suavi Aydin, and Umit Cetin, *Alevism as an Ethno-Religious Identity: Contested Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 2018); Benjamin Weineck and Johannes Zimmermann, *Alevism - Between Standardisation and Plurality: Negotiating Texts, Sources and Cultural Heritage* (Frankfurt am Main: PL Publishers, 2018); Suavi Aydin, "The Emergence of Alevism as an Ethno-Religious Identity," *National Identities* 20, no.1 (2018): 9-29; Tözün Issa, *Alevis in Europe: Voices of Migration, Culture and Identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017); Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga, and Catharina Raudvere, *Alevi Identity-Cultural, Religious, Social Perspectives* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2005).

[9] I use the term multiple-Alevisms to include political and religious differences among Alevi communities. For a brief understanding of various political orientations among Alevi associations, see Tahire Erman and Emrah Gaker, "Alevi Politics in Contemporary Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 4. (2000): 99-118.

Alevis in Turkey are still struggling to gain official recognition, despite being granted formal status as an Islamic sect or an independent religion by some European countries.[10] Kurdish Alevis, on the other hand, live in central and eastern mountainous parts of Anatolia. Economic reasons have also resulted in continuous migrations to western Turkey and western Europe since the 1950s for the Kurdish Alevis like other Alevi communities.[11]

Tunceli province, located in the eastern Anatolia region, is the only (mainly Kirmancki-, Kurmanci- and a very few Turkish-speaking) Alevi-majority province in Turkey.[12] It is bordered by high mountain ranges from its western, northern, and eastern borders and a vast, dammed lake in the south. The mountains and the lake create a psycho-geographical boundary for Kurdish Alevis. This relative geographical isolation separates the community from the Sunni-Muslim-dominated sphere of Turkey. After all, the community perceive the territory as a hidden sacred land.[13] That is also why the region is also named "inner-Dersim" to emphasize that this is the core of the cultural geography (so-called Dersim) of the Kurdish Alevi identity, constituting its historical and religious center.[14] Tunceli city is now comprised of inner-Dersim, and it is still a central reference point for Kurdish Alevi cosmology and annual ritual practices like pilgrimage. In this regard, inner-Dersim's other names are *Jaru Diyar* (the Sacred Land) or *Herdu Dewres* (the Land of Saints) in the Kırmancki language. These terms refer to a cultural belonging to a specific region, which stems from ancestral ties and traditional religious knowledge.[15]

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[10] Due to this contradictory position, they have become a much-discussed topic between Brussels (EU) and Ankara (Turkey), especially given that Turkey is pursuing EU membership. For more information, see Elise Massicard, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe, Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

[11] Gezik and Gültekin, *Kurdish Alevism*, xix. Also see Keles, Janroj, "The Politics of Religious and Ethnic Identity among Kurdish Alevis in the Homeland and Diaspora," in *Religious Minorities in Kurdistan: Beyond Mainstream*, edited by Khanna Omarkhali (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 189.

[12] For a detailed work about the Alevi majority, as well as Sunni minority, of Tunceli province see Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, *Tunceli'de Sünni Olmak* (İstanbul: Berfin Yayınları, 2010), 49-173. For further information also see Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, "Kurdish Alevism: Creating New Ways of Practicing the Religion," *Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities,"* 18. Leipzig University, 2019: 10.

[13] See for an illustration of the region, Gültekin, "Kurdish Alevism" 10.

[14] Gültekin, *Tunceli'de Sunni Olmak*, 30.

[15] While such terms like *Kirmanciye Beleke* (emphasizing a multi-cultured social sphere), *Hardu Dewres* (the Land of Saints) and *Jaru Diyar* (Sacred Land) are used to identify the cultural geography of *Dersim*, *Raa Haqi* (the Path of God/Truth), *Ewlade*

The region's history includes crucial details regarding Kurdish Alevis' dedication and passion to Dersim as sacred land. From the 16th to the mid-19th century, Dersim was used to identify a group of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes located in a particular region. In 1849, during the administrative reforms of the late Ottoman period, Dersim formally established a *sanjak,* a subdivision of an Ottoman province.[16] Dersim always had a reputation that was mentioned with irrepressible Kurdish Alevi tribes. Following the Ottoman-Safavid wars in the 16th century, the Çemişgezek principality (the south-western district of Tunceli province today) was granted autonomy as were many other Kurdish feudal chiefdoms.[17] This administration also created a relative sovereign place for Kurdish Alevi tribes, which were mostly based in immensely mountainous (inner-Dersim) areas of Dersim. Until the 19th century, those tribes expanded their power and population to neighboring mountainous regions, mostly through their famous plunder economy.[18] In contrast with their rising hegemony, the Ottoman administrative reforms that started in the early 19th century gradually restricted those tribes to inner-Dersim and cut their relations with other regions. Nevertheless, they managed to establish wide, complicated networks of socio-religious institutions.[19]

Due to the ongoing skirmishes between the state and tribes throughout the 19th and the early 20th centuries, Dersim was defined by the Ottoman and later the Turkish bureaucracy as a place to "discipline, conquer, colonize, and forcibly Sunnify."[20] That was a hundred-year-long process, which culminated in

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Haq (the Children of God/Truth), *Ewlade Raye* (the Children of the Path) are used for self-identification in Kırmancki. There is a clear perception in between the geography, as a living being, and socio-religious structure of the community.

[16] Mehmet Yıldırım, "Desimlu Aşiretinden Dersim Sancağına" *Tunceli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1, no 1. (212), 23-37.

[17] Erdal Gezik, *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler* (İstanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2014), 67.

[18] For more information, see Dilsa Deniz, "Dersim'in Ekonomi Politiği İçinde Talanın Yeri: Antropolojik Bir Yaklaşım", in *Dört Dağa Sığmayan Kent-Dersim Üzerine Ekonomi-Politik Yazılar*, eds. Gürçağ Tuna & Gözde Orhan (İstanbul: Patika Kitap, 2013), 71-113.

[19] Gezik, *Alevi Kürtler*, 63-73.

[20] See Hüseyin Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan – Telgraflar, Dilekçeler, Mektuplar, Fotoğraflar*, (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2009). During the late Ottoman period, Kurdish Alevis of Dersim were classified as *ahali-i gayr-i mutia* (disobedient people), while their neighbors mostly referred as *ahali-i mutia* (obedient people, namely the Turkish- or Kurmanci-speaking Sunnis) in formal reports. For such reports, see Faik Bulut, *Dersim Raporları*, (İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2013).

the last rebellion in 1937 and the 1938 genocidal massacre.[21] Tunceli is the province's formal name, as part of mass Turkification of regional names, given just before the state's last military campaign. Tunceli means "bronze hand" (*Tunç eli*, in Turkish) and symbolizes the modern Turkish republic's ultimate victory over feudal tribes.[22] However, the name Dersim came to the forefront again in the 1990s as a symbol of "resistance" with the rising hegemony of the Kurdish armed struggle and the growing impact of the Alevi movement. Later, the term, both sociologically and spatially, became a characteristic symbol of the Kurdish Alevis of Tunceli and a vast area inhabited by Kurmanci- and Kirmancki-speaking Alevis.[23]

The *Raa Haqi*[24] (the Path of Truth) is the traditional name for the belief system of (Kurmanci- and Kırmancki-speaking) Kurdish Alevis, and today it is deeply connoted with Dersim symbolism. The belief system is also called Kurdish Alevism, a relatively new term focusing on the ethno-religious identity. The coherence of beliefs of nature and hereditary kinship relations are the unique features of Raa Haqi. In this system, the central role is held by sacred lineages (*ocaks*). The obligatory religious relations between the sacred

[21] The 1938 massacre was the main breaking point for the traditional social structure of Kurdish Alevis, and a foretaste of forced integration policies in the modem era. It had decisive consequences for today's ethnic identity politics of Kurdish Alevism. See Özlem Göner, "Histories of 1938 in Turkey Memory, Consciousness, and Identity of Outsiderness," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 9, no. 2 (2016): 228-60; Hayal Hanoglu, "Formation of Genocide Consciousness in Dersim Society," (MA Thesis, University of London, 2015); Hans-Lukas Kieser, "Dersim Massacre, 1937-1938," *Violence de masse et Resistance - Reseau de recherche*, Published: 27 July 2011, https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr; Martin van Bruniessen, "The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937–38)," in *Genocide in Kurdistan? The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937–38) and the Chemical War Against the Iraqi Kurds (1988)*, ed. George J. Andreopoulos, 141-70 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

[22] "Ünlü tarihçi değerlendirdi: Dersim mi Tunceli mi?", accessed 25.02.2021, https://www.rudaw.net/turkish/interview/01062019.

[23] It is also worth noting that, until 1915, Dersim was home to a large number of Armenians. As a result of the Armenian Genocide, the population in the region decreased dramatically. See Raymond Kevorkian, The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011). See also Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 106-112.

[24] For a brief overview see Dilsa Deniz, "Kurdish Alevi Belief System, Reya Heqi/Raa Haqi: Structure, Networking, Ritual and Function," in *Kurdish Alevis and the Case of Dersim: Historical and Contemporary Insights*, eds. Erdal Gezik and Ahmet Kerim Gültekin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 45-75.

lineages,[25] who are themselves organized as tribes, and follower (*talip*) tribes, structure the social, political, economic and religious spheres of Kurdish Alevism. The second major axis defining the peculiarity of Raa Haqi is the beliefs and practices shaped around sacred places, namely *jiare* in Kırmancki.

Similarly, the rituals of Kurdish-Alevi beliefs also have two main dimensions. One is related to relations between *ocaks* and *talips*. Here *cem ceremonies*[26] and visiting *ocaks* are the main characteristics of the socio-religious aspect. The second major axis is worshipping nature-based *jiares* such as trees, mountains, rocks, caves, rivers, lakes, fountains, the sun and the moon. Each *jiare* is connected with a particular semi-deific being. They may be either male or female and may have a benevolent or evil character. Some of them also possess kinship relations with some sacred lineages or *talips*.

The socio-religious formation of Kurdish Alevism can be likened to a caste system. Starting at the bottom and working upwards, first, there are *talips*. They are the followers of *ocaks*. *Talips* mostly speak Kirmancki, but there are also Kurmanci and Turkish-speaking *talips* in Dersim. To better understand the current sociology of the Kurdish Alevi identity, it is crucial to understand the social roles and the flexible characteristics of relations between *talips* and *pirs* (representatives of *ocaks*). *Talips* hold the majority of the community. They live

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[25] Sacred lineages are a common phenomenon among Muslim societies as well as Alevis. Descendants of prophet Muhammad are called *Sharif* or *Seyyid* in some Muslim societies. For more information, see Kazuo Morimoto, *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet* (London: Routledge, 2012); Sarah Bowen Savant and Helena de Felipe, *Genealogy and Knowledge in Muslim Societies: Understanding the Past* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 2014). Kurdish Alevis use the term *Seyyid* too. Kurdish Alevi tribes that claim lineage from Muhammad, as well as his cousin Ali and his descent, are usually known as hews in Kırmancki (meaning *hearth* [*ocak* in Turkish]). See Martin van Bruinessen, "Religion in Kurdistan," *Kurdish Times* 4, no. 1-2 (1991): 5-27 and "Between Dersim and Dâlahû: Reflections on Kurdish Alevism and the Ahl-i Haqq Religion", in *Islamic Alternatives: Non-Mainstream Religion in Persianate Societies* [Göttinger Orientforschungen, III. Reihe: Iranica, N.F. 16], ed. Shahrokh Raei (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 65-93.

[26] *Cem* ceremonies are the fundamental social and religious practices of Kurdish Alevi communities, which follow a particular procedure, though there may be some differences between *cem* ceremonies of different Alevi communities. They are performed according to a religious calendar or on special occasions. Each village community participate in the ceremony, and it must be conducted under the strict religious and social authority of the *pir* (this title may also be called *baba*, *dede* or *seyit*). During these gatherings, ritual practices are performed, and socio-political matters are discussed to make communal decisions. There may be punishment, yet violence (in the sense of killing) is strictly forbidden. The utmost punishment is ex-communication. See Deniz, "Kurdish Alevi Belief System", 45-75.

in tribal organizations and have sacred bonds to *ocaks*, which they gain through birth (and which are unalterable). Deniz[27] defines this relational system through the notion of receiving as well as providing a religious service. She emphasizes that while *talips* receive the religious service, *raybers*, *pirs* and *mürşids* (positions in *ocaks*) both receive (among themselves) and provide. *Pir-talip* relations could create a non-spatial element, which can be reproduced anywhere and at any time. Kurdish Alevis have already been reproduced in the metropoles of Turkey and Europe in recent decades.[28] Second, there are *raybers* who can be considered local, practical guides, and consultants on religious issues. If the symbolism of Raa Haqi is considered a path to follow, guides are needed. A *rayber* must arrange meetings of *pirs* and *talips*. Third, there are *pirs* who are the spiritual guides of their followers and the embodiment of respective *ocaks*. They are believed to perform miracles and possess magical, mystic healing powers, as did their mythological forefathers. They are also the keepers of particular sacred objects[29] that mostly belong to the mythological ancestors of *ocaks*. They visit their *talips* annually, and these journeys are sacred, too. It is a true reflection of following the path for both *pirs* and *talips*. Finally, there are *mürşids* (or the *piré piran* in Kirmancki, "pir of the pirs"), who hold a superior position with judicial authority among sacred lineages. *Ocaks* also have similar obligatory relations with one another, as is the case between *talips* and *pirs*.[30]

The four positions (*talip*s, *rayber*s, *pir*s and *mürşid*s) symbolize "four doors and forty levels,"[31] which should ideally be passed during a lifetime. This path

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[27] Deniz, "Kurdish Alevi Belief System," 55. The religious service, traditionally, was carried out annually by *pirs*, who travelled (on foot) from village to village to visit their *talips* in different regions. At every stop, a *cem* ceremony was held under the *pir's* leadership. These meetings are still essential for practicing the religion, and for maintaining social relations between *talips* and *pirs*.

[28] See Annika Törne, "Dedes in Dersim: Narratives of Violence and Persecution," *Iran and the Caucasus* 16, no. 1 (2012): 71-95; Annika Törne, "On the Grounds Where They Will Walk in a Hundred Years of Time: Struggling with the Heritage of the Past in post-Genocidal Tunceli," *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 20 (2015): 1-32; Tina Hamrin-Dahl, "The Alevi and Questions of Identity, Including Violence and Insider/Outsider Perspectives," *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* no. 19 (2006): 108-25.

[29] For more information, see Erdal Gezik and Hüseyin Çakmak, *Raa Haqi - Riya Haqi/Dersim Aleviliği İnanç Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2010), 193.

[30] See Gezik and Gültekin, *Kurdish Alevism*, xv-xxvii; Gezik, Erdal Gezik, "Rayberler, Pirler ve Mürşidler," in Alevi Ocakları ve Örgütlenmeleri, eds. Erdal Gezik and Mesut Özcan (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2013), 11-78.

[31] *Dört Kapı Kırk Makam* (Four Doors Forty Levels) is a metaphor for the spiritual path. It refers to the four specific stages of the divine path, and ten separate sub-stages for

can only be followed with the help of a member (*pir*) of an *ocak* for both *talips* and *pirs*. Therefore, practically every member of this system is a *talip* and should have a *rayber-pir-mürşid* network to follow the path. That point is where the *ikrar* (sacred loyalty or sacred contract)[32] arrive. It creates crucial religious and social bonds between individuals and *ocaks* as well as tribes. Some religious institutions, such as *kirvelik*[33] and *musahiplik,*[34] also represent the social and religious aspects of *ikrar*.

To summarize, the Raa Haqi belief system depends on religious, spatial and socio-politically enclosed complicated networks of both individuals and tribes. These relations emerge through real and fictional kinship patterns. This complicated social network is also profoundly connected to geography, which is regarded as a living nonhuman entity in the name of Dersim. The Raa Haqi belief system can be examined within two main dimensions: *ikrar*-based obligatory religious relations and the worship of sacred places. The first aspect establishes social relations between *pirs* and *talips* and provides obligatory relations between *ocaks* as well. The worship of sacred places provides more space for individual piety, given that worshipping nature-based entities does not require any religious guidance (such as representatives of *ocaks*) or authority. In daily life, religious needs are usually supplied through sacred places based on worship practices. While the *ikrar*-based religious relations cover the social ritual sphere -such as *cem* ceremonies- the sacred place cults give more

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each one, which must be passed under guidance of a *pir*. For more information, see: Gezik, *Alevi Kürtler*, 38-41 and "Rayberler, Pirler ve Mürşidler," 19.

[32] Deniz, "Kurdish Alevi Belief System," 45-75.

[33] *Kirvelik* is a crucial fictional kinship among Kurdish Alevis and a common tradition within other Kurdish-speaking communities. It may be considered as a godfather relationship between two families. It is also a vital institution for social solidarity in the region. See Gültekin, *Tunceli 'de Sünni Olmak*, 173-95. *Kirvelik* is also a way of establishing social, economic and even political alliances among different religious (Sunnis, Alevis, Christians, etc.) communities throughout the Middle East, especially among Kurmanci- and Kırmancki-speaking Kurdish communities. See Martin Strohmeier and Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, *Kürtler: Tarih, Siyaset, Kültür* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2013); Ayse Kudat, *Kirvelik: Sanal Akrabalığın Dünü Bugünü* (Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi, 2004).

[34] In Raa Haqi, the institution of *musahiplik* has a central importance. It is a fictional kinship, similar to *kirvelik*, and the most important way of establishing *ikrar*. One can only be *musahip* to another Kurdish Alevi individual. Choosing a *musahip* from outside of the community is forbidden. It is an obligatory ritual brotherhood for all Kurdish Alevis. Every *talip*, *rayber, pir,* and *mürşid* must have a *musahip* to follow the divine path. See Deniz, "Kurdish Alevi Belief System," 45-75; Gezik and Çakmak, *Raa Haqi - Riya Haqi*, 123-28.

independency to individuality. That intriguingly creates a considerable space for interpretation of new political discourses related to ethnic identity and its socio-religious features. As Dersim is considered sacred land, the current ethno-politics easily conceptualize it as a living symbol of a new nature-based religion.

Victimization as a Determinant Aspect of the Modern Kurdish Alevi Identity

In the 20th century, Kurdish Alevis faced two major incidents that had catastrophic impacts on their socio-cultural world. The first was the 1938 genocidal massacre. Almost all sacred lineages were severely affected: most were murdered, and the survivors were exiled. That was the main breaking point for the traditional socio-religious institutions and rural tribal life of Kurdish Alevism. Until the 1990s, Kurdish Alevis could reorganize the religious order, even though it was not the same before 1938. Despite heavy criticism of maintaining feudal relations from the new generations, who were intensely involved in armed socialist struggles during the 1970s, the *pirs* and the majority of *talips* remained in contact. However, in 1994, after clashes between armed guerrilla groups and the Turkish state intensified, almost the entire area (Dersim) occupied by Kurdish Alevis was forcibly evacuated.[35] The century's final tragedy seemed to have had a detrimental impact on traditional *pir* and *talip* relations. After 1994, Kurdish Alevis have become a transnational community due to both mass migration to western Europe as political asylum seekers and the reorganization of the community to be politically active. Shortly after the turn of the century, Dersim became a powerful instrument for reinventing the Kurdish Alevi's cultural identity. This time, *talips* – who have always practiced rituals at sacred places despite military restrictions and without connection to their *pirs* – in Dersim – have taken a significant role in sustaining

[35] Regarding forced evacuations and environmental destruction see Martin van Bruniessen, *Forced Evacuations and Destruction of Villages in Dersim (Tunceli) and Western Bingol, Turkish Kurdistan September-November 1994* (Utrecht: Utrecht University Repository, 1995); Joost Jongerden, "Resettlement and Reconstruction of Identity: The Case of the Kurds in Turkey," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1, no. 1 (2001): 80-86; Etten, Jacob van, Joost Jongerden, Hugo J. de Vos, Annemarie Klaasse and Esther C. E. van Hoeve, "Environmental Destruction as a Counterinsurgency Strategy in the Kurdistan Region of Turkey," *Geoforum* 39, no. 5 (2008): 1786–97; Joost Jongerden, "Village Evacuation and Reconstruction in Kurdistan (1993-2002)," *Etudes Rurales* 2, no. 186 (2010): 77-100.

the socio-religious sphere and managing cultural identity politics with a more sounded discourse of victimization.

Thus, it is essential to think more about the relationship between being continuously exposed to violence and the reproduction of the social structure and the ethnic identity of Kurdish Alevis within considerably changing social as well as spatial environments. There are almost two century-long periods of a violent history of Dersim, which starts from abolishing autonomous Kurdish feudal chiefdoms in 1832 to the military operations that still take places on the mountains of Dersim in the present day. For example, a considerable part of Tunceli province is still under military control and strictly forbidden to civilians. Except from a short stop between the mid-1940s, when the last outlaws and survivors of the 1938 genocidal massacre laid down their arms, and the late 1960s when first socialist guerilla groups started armed actions in Dersim, Kurdish Alevis have consistently faced a range of unsuccessful uprisings, devastating military campaigns, environmental destructions, forced evacuations and massacres.

Regarding pre republican period, the Tanzimat (Reordering) Reform period from 1839 to 1876 aimed to establish a new social and administrative order in eastern Anatolia, which took shape with the extermination of non-Muslim communities. Campaigns of the Ottoman military forces and local militia formed with mostly Sunni Kurds attacked Armenians and Syriac Christians. The Hamidian Massacres (1894-1896) were the peak of the period that also targeted Christians and other ethno-religious groups such as Kurdish Alevis, Yezidis, etc. Apart from unceasing minor skirmishes between Kurdish Alevi tribes and with their neighbors or with the state, the Armenian genocide in 1915, the Russian invasion of northern Dersim during the First World War and the 1916 uprising in the south should be marked as significant clashes and violent incidents which are deeply engraved in Kurdish Alevi collective memory.[36]

The Turkish republic's foundation period (1919-1923) and the following radical reforms ended the religion-based Ottoman state. That was an ultimate victory of the almost half-century-long struggle of the Turkish modernist movement, led by Young Turks. The establishment of a constitutional republic was a triumph. The new state was constructed by imitating secular Western constitutions. Accordingly, the caliphate was demolished, and all formal

[36] Annika Törne, "Inscriptions of Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Memory Narrations from Dersim," in *Collective & State Violence in Turkey*, ed. Stephan Astourian & Raymond Kévorkian (New York: Berghan Books, 2020), 372-400.

religious intuitions, including *Bektashi Tekkes*,[37] were banned. However, the republic's actions, which are against the Sunni Caliphate, were gladly welcomed by almost all Alevi communities because only in this way they were able to gain official citizenship status and constitutional rights to take a role in public life. On the other hand, the new Turkish ideology and forced secularism hit Kurdish Alevis twice. The Turkish modernization period started a rough time for non-Turkish-speaking ethnic groups and non-Muslim ethno-religious groups, for also the ones who were not Sunni-Muslims. Thus, Kurdish Alevis faced many bloody skirmishes and massacres during two major unsuccessful uprisings, both in 1921 and 1937, which ended with a genocidal massacre in 1938.[38]

After the Second World War, the single-party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi [CHP], Republican People's Party) regime changed in Turkey; it had been in power since the republic's foundation. That created a relatively bourgeois libertarian space for multiple political factions and some religious (pro-Caliphate) groups under strict suppression of the state ruled by CHP. So, some Alevi communities (mostly those who are subordinated to *Bektaşi Tekke*'s successors in Nevşehir) sought political status for their religious leaders, or at least for their representatives as MPs of CHP. Since then, Alevis have always been accused of being supporters of communism and followers of secular elitism by right-wing politicians due to the Alevis' traditional alliances with left-wing parties, especially with the CHP. After the 1950s, when right-wing politics came to Turkey's fore, Alevis came under deadly violent attacks. The 1966 Mugla-Ortaca, 1968 Malatya-Hekimhan, 1969 Tunceli,[39] and 1971 Hatay-

[37] As a defining term, Alevism also covers the terms Bektashi and Kizilbash which refer to several Alevi groups in Turkey. The term also refers to different historical, politic, and social formations of Alevi communities. For example, it politically refers to a formally recognized religious status of some Alevi groups who are based in Middle-Anatolia from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Bektashism was allowed and used to control other (especially rural, Kizilbash) Alevi communities by Ottoman caliphate. Kurdish Alevis, on the other hand, are usually related with Kizilbash groups. For more information, see Thierry Zarcone, "Bektasiyye", Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE, (Brill Reference Online. Web. 1 Mar. 2019).

[38] See, Gezik and Gültekin, *Kurdish Alevis*, xv-xxvii.

[39] After an interdict of a theatre play about Pir Sultan Abdal's (a famous Alevi religious historical character and a symbol of uprising) struggle against Ottomans, clashes took place between protestors and police in Tunceli city center. Two were killed, several others got injured and some others were taken into custody. See, "Hep Kavgaydi Yaşamim", last seen 08.11.2019, http://www.serxwebun.org/index.php?sys=naverok&id=232.

Kırıkhan massacres were typical examples of deadly systematic violations the 1960s that right-wing politicians and law enforcement officers directly led. The 1978 Sivas, 1978 Malatya, and 1980 Çorum massacres were the peaks of brutal armed attacks against Alevis in the 1970s that took hundreds of lives.[40] Some were more like skirmishes, which is also called a *civil war* between self-defense forces of socialist organizations supported by Alevis and the extremist (Sunni) right-wing Islamist groups and (Turkish) nationalist fractions.[41] The 1993 Sivas and the 1995 Istanbul-Gazi and Istanbul-Ümraniye massacres were the last ones in the suburban sphere. The distinctiveness of these two massacres is the fact that they became a trigger point of the intense politicization of Alevis in Turkey. Almost all massacres throughout the republican era were more or less related to Kurdish Alevis. Significantly, the forced evacuations and environmental destruction of Tunceli in 1994[42] were regarded as "the second 1938 Dersim massacre" by all Alevis.

After the millennium, the Dersim massacre was unexpectedly mentioned by Recep Tayyip Erdogan to oppress his prominent opponent, CHP. He even insouciantly apologized for the Turkish Armed Forces' crimes against Kurdish Alevi civilians in the state's name.[43] However, the AKP intended to turn the Dersim massacre into a lever to revise the constitutional rule on behalf of a new Islamist regime. AKP accused the early republican era of imposing forced secularism, modernism and committing such massacres to not only non-Muslim minorities but also to some Islamist organizations and clerics. To do so, the AKP started a series of negotiations with the Alevis and Kurds, which was called *Açılımlar Süreci* (*opening process*). However, these politics ended up with new waves of horrendous violence after the 2010s, which have taken

[40] For detailed evaluations about Alevi massacres during the 1960s and the 1970s see Ertan, "*Alevism in Politics*", 123-66.

[41] See Mehmet Ertan, "The Latent Politicization of Alevism: The Affiliation Between Alevis and Leftist Politics (1960–1980)", *Middle Eastern Studies* 55, no 6 (2019): 932-44.

[42] Armed clashes between various guerrilla groups and the Turkish state became intense in the early 90s. Especially in the summer of 1994, Kurdish Alevis in Tunceli forced to evacuate their lands within a few days. During these chaotic weeks many villagers, including families, were disappeared (!), most likely murdered. See Joost Jongerden, "Violation of Human Rights and the Alevis in Turkey", 71-93.

[43] See Bilgin Ayata ye Serra Hakyemez. "The AKP's Engagement with Turkey's Past Crimes: An Analysis of PM Erdogan's 'Dersim Apology'", *Dialectical Anthropology* 37 (2013): 131-143. Also see İbrahim Efe & Bernhard Forchtner, "Saying sorry in Turkey: The Dersim Massacre of the 1930s in 2011", *Journal of Language and Politics* 14, Issue 2 (2015): 233-57

thousands of lives so far. In that regard, *the Gezi Protests* in Turkey (2013) should also be considered concerning the Alevism's victimization. All the victims, who were shot or clubbed to death during the uprising, were the young Alevis. Although the uprising had no religious motivations, Alevis in Turkey fully supported the uprising and heartily were involved in street clashes. One of the main motivations of protesters concerned a mass rejection of the growing religious authoritarianism of AKP and the *Gülen Cemaat*.[44]

The history of all these catastrophic, traumatizing, violent experiences has had a noticeable effect on the collective consciousness regarding the modern Kurdish Alevi identity. They accelerated the politicization of Alevi communities in general and gave an identical feature to Kurdish Alevism, which is being used systematically and effectively to gain a political status or negotiate with states on behalf of formal recognition at international levels. Thus, it could be asserted that the continuity of victimization turned out to be a maintaining point of the Kurdish Alevi identity within the 21st century. Since Kurdish Alevi intellectuals, political actors, and religious leaders can legitimize their political stance quite flexibly by referring to the narratives of traumas to re-establish their socio-religious networks within changing socio-politic grounds.[45] For example, Dersim Kulturgemeinde Berlin (Dersim Cultural Community Berlin), a prominent and highly politically active diaspora organization of Kurdish Alevis in Germany, has long been lobbying to erect a statue in remembrance of victims of the "1937-1938 Dersim Genocide" in Berlin. Recently, according to the affirmative votes of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Greens and the Left Party, it was decided to erect the statue (which was named *Nisange Tertele `38i*, in Kirmancki) in a park close to the Berlin Dersim Cultural Community by Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg municipality.[46] Despite the fierce resistance of the Turkish Embassy and the counter-lobbying work of the ministry of foreign affairs of Turkey with the German counterparts, the success of the Kurdish Alevi diaspora reveals the political influence level of Kurdish Alevis within European politics. Erecting the statue regarding the 1938

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[44] See "Gezi'yi Alevileştirmek", SiyasiHaber, accessed March 10, 2020, http://siyasihaber4.org/geziyi-alevilestirmek-ayfer-karakaya as a critical evaluation for some approaches that associates the uprising and the Alevi identity.

[45] See Ali Aslan Yıldız and Maykel Verkuyten, "Inclusive Victimhood: Social Identity and the Politicization of Collective Trauma Among Turkey's Alevis in Western Europe", *Peace and Conflict* 17 (2011): 243-69.

[46] "Nişangé Tertelé '38i, Dersim 1937-1938 Soykırım Anıtı Berlin'de Dikilecek!", accessed 11.11.19, https://www.alevihaberagi.com/2547-berlinde-tertele-38i-soykirimi-aniti-hakkinda-bir-asama-degerlendirmesi.html.

genocidal massacre will undoubtedly create troubling new consequences for Turkey's international relations, along with the Armenian Genocide, which Turkey has been facing for decades.

Kurdish Alevis as a Subject to Ethno-Politics

Even though Kurdish Alevis share many cultural similarities with other Alevi communities in Turkey, they also have peculiar socio-religious organizational patterns that resemble a caste system and differ from others. Moreover, they practice intriguing sacred place rituals and narrate remarkable mythological discourses that reach far beyond an Islamic understanding. In that regard, they furthermore share many intriguing similarities with their Christian and non-Muslim communities, such as Yezidis and Ehli Haqs of the Middle East. Their cultural heritage also gives rise to many differences compared to other Kurdish communities, and the majority speak a different language (Kırmancki) than what is commonly known as Kurdish (Kurmanci) today. Consequently, the case of Kurdish Alevis has long attracted the interest of various actors. Many noticeable monographs, essays, field reports, and academic theses have published since the mid-19th century.[47] Although those works aim to focus on exploring and defining Kurdish Alevism, they conclude precisely in different ways of understanding, in the sense of the political and religious argumentation of identification. Thus, Kurdish Alevism can also be seen as a subject of never-ending debates regarding defining the ethnic identity.

The keyword *Dersim,* which connotes *Kurdish Alevism*, also seems to appear as a historical, geographical, and socio-religious spatial term. The general scope seems to ambitiously focus on one particular question: enlightening origins and exploring features of Kurdish Alevi identity, which encompasses a deep interest in historical, linguistic, theological, geographical as well as sociological aspects of Kurdish Alevis. From the time when Kurdish Alevis were excitedly noticed by several western missionaries, intellectuals, travelers, and rapporteurs in the early 19th century, up to the resurrection of ethnic and religious identities in Turkey during the 1990s, Kurdish Alevis have always aroused curious interest

[47] Regarding the Kurdish Alevi case, for some latest academic works, see Gültekin, "Kurdish Alevism"; Gezik and Gültekin, *Kurdish Alevis*; Martin van Bruinessen, "Between Dersim and Dâlahû", 65-93; Güler. *Ötekinin Ötekisi*; Erdal Gezik, *Alevi Kürtler*; Dilşa Deniz, *Yol/Re: Dersim İnanç Sembolizmi – Antropolojik Bir Yaklaşım* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012). Also see edited volumes, Serhat Halis, *Dersim Üç Dağ İçinde* (İstanbul: NotaBene Yayınları, 2019); Şükrü Aslan, *Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013) and *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010).

in the question concerning the roots and characteristics of their ethnic identity. It is a striking fact that there is a rigid connection between the parties of the violent history of Dersim and their approaches that ethno-politically want to classify Kurdish Alevis under specific definitions. The case of Kurdish Alevism, in that regard, includes several nationalist as well as religious approaches, which have continuously layered throughout historical incidents. The prominent discourses that are still effective in contemporary politics about Dersim and Kurdish Alevis can be briefly explored as follows:

In comparison to other Muslim societies of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish Alevis' extraordinary religious features were initially noticed and highlighted by Russian, Armenian and Western authors, especially by Western missionaries. Even though the missionary activities in the eastern regions of the Ottoman Empire had been started during the 17th century,[48] Kurdish Alevis mostly began to appear within various manuscripts (such as the letters of missionaries, the fieldwork reports of ambassadors, and the diaries of travelers) in the early 19th century.[49] The missionaries intended to emphasize the differences in religious discourses and practices of Kurdish Alevi communities compared to Islam.[50] Moreover, Kurdish Alevi beliefs, which were defined as "heterodox"[51] or "syncretic" by those authors, had many similarities with other ethnocultural minorities who live in the margins of the Middle East.[52] Thus,

[48] Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 31-78.

[49] Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık - Alevi Kaynaklarını, Tarihini ve Tarih Yazımını Yeniden Düşünmek* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015): 209-210. Some of these documents were also published and evaluated within various works. See Mehmet Bayrak, *Alevilik ve Kürtler* (Ankara: Öz-Ge Yayınları, 1997); Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Iskalanmış Barış: Dogu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ye Devlet 1839-1938* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005); Gezik, *Alevi Kürtler*, 19-29 and Güler, *Ötekinin Ötekisi*, 113-24.

[50] Dressler, Writing Religion, 31-78; Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 207-35.

[51] The terms orthodoxy and heterodoxy are highly controversial in Turkey, particularly when used in relation to Alevism. For criticism see Soileau, Mark. "Conforming Haji Bektash: A Saint and His Followers between Orthopraxy and Heteropraxy," *Die Welt des Islams* 54, no. 3-4 (2014): 423–59; Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "The Vefā'iyye, the Bektashiyye and Genealogies of 'Heterodox' Islam in Anatolia: Rethinking the Köprülü Paradigm," *Turcica*, no.44 (2012-2013): 279-300; Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion*; Janina Karolewski, "What is Heterodox About Alevism? The Development of Anti-Alevi Discrimination and Resentment," *Die Welt des Islams*, no. 48 (2008): 434-56.

[52] See Martin van Bruinessen, "'Aslını inkar eden haramzadedir!': The debate on the ethnic identity of the Kurdish Alevis," in *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, eds. Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, and Anke Otter-

Kurdish Alevis were mostly considered the descendants of early Christian churches and the carriers of pre-Abrahamic pagan beliefs. Such accounts are being considered and referred to as historical, ethnographical records that prove the non-Islamic features of Kurdish Alevis by some authors.[53]

Second, concerning the zeitgeist of the late 19th century and the nationalist demands of the young bourgeois of Ottoman's non-Muslim minorities for independency, the Ottoman Empire began to lose vast territories. Despite a series of administrative reforms issued to stop the disintegration of the empire, which mainly depend on centralization and the modernization of the state, the Ottoman Empire eventually faced losing its political power and control over its non-Muslim subjects. Consequently, after the failure of (Sunni) Islamic centralization politics, Turkish nationalism took the stage as a cure at the end of the 19th century, which eventually led to the establishment of the Turkish republic in the early 20th century.[54] Even though Alevis were accused of being heretics and had been persecuted for centuries, this new national discourse focused on all ethnic groups considered Muslim, including all Alevi groups (especially the non-Turkish-speaking ones[55]) to separate them from non-Muslims.[56] In this respect, the notion of Alevi was developed as a political reinterpretation reflecting Turkish modernism (or the new Turkish national identity) by the state.[57] Accordingly, the new state's intellectuals and ideologists argued that all Alevi communities' religious practices were indeed rooted in pre-Islamic Turkish traditions. Fuat Köprülü and Baha Sait represent the historical peak point of this state-related discourse.[58] They consider Alevism a kind of interpretation of Islam, represented by nomadic Turkish tribes

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Beaujean, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1-23; Bruinessen, "Between Dersim and Dâlahû", 65-93.

[53] Dressler, Writing Religion, 31-78; Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 207-35.

[54] Regarding intellectual and politic streams of the era, see Sibel Özbudun Demirer, "Anthropology as a Nation-Building Rhetoric: The Shaping of Turkish Anthropology (from 1850s to 1940s)," *Dialectical Anthropology* 35 (2011): 111-29.

[55] Alevis in Turkey have Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic ethnic orientations. However, the official discourse of the Turkish state still defines them as *Turkmen*, which connotes Turkishness.

[56] Meanwhile, the non-Muslim population (mostly Christians) had already been reduced due to the Armenian Genocide, forced evacuations and population exchange. See Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*.

[57] That approach still provides the socio-political and religious perspective for state-related scholars in Turkey. See, Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 1-31.

[58] For a detailed work on Köprülü's paradigma, must see Dressler. *Writing Religion*.

(Turcoman) who still preserve their Central Asia-originated beliefs, named Shamanism. Moreover, Alevi beliefs were also used to prove that Islam's Arabic form is an alien element within modern Turkish national identity. Thus, concerning that point of view, Kurdish Alevis have been identified as "descendants of ancient Turks" or "Kurdified Turks".[59] This is still adopted at various levels by Turkish state authorities and by state-oriented scholars.

Third, long after the failure of several rebellions during the early 20th century, which were repelled by large-scale massacres, Kurdish nationalism strengthened again with active guerilla warfare against the Turkish state in the 1990s. Also, as a matter of counter-effect of increasing politic influence of diasporic Kurdish Alevi communities[60] at the same time, Kurmanci- and Kırmancki-speaking Alevis were defined as Kurdish Alevis by a new generation of Kurdish intellectuals.[61] These thinkers mostly preferred to mention dissimilarities between religious customs, social institutions, rituals and everyday culture of Kurdish Alevis and Turkish-speaking Alevi communities. The purpose was to clarify that Kurdish Alevism has thoroughly different historical roots from Islam and Turkishness. They chose to strengthen the theory by connecting Kurdish Alevism to some pre-Islamic Middle Eastern and Iranian beliefs, such as Zoroastrianism, Mazdeism, and Manichaeism.[62] They usually referred to some early accounts of writings focusing on Kurdish Alevis in the 19th century.[63] On the other hand, some intellectuals underlined the cultural similarities between Kurdish Alevis and enclosed ethnoreligious communities – particularly *Ahl-i Haqqs* and *Yezidis* – to reveal the cultural singularity of Kurdish Alevis to a Middle Eastern historical background.[64]

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[59] Güler, *Ötekinin Ötekisi*, 125.

[60] For a brief understanding about diasporic Kurdish Alevi communities, see Janroj Keles, "The Politics of Religious and Ethnic Identity among Kurdish Alevis", 173-227.

[61] For some detailed analyses between Kurdish nationalist politics and Kurdish Alevis, see Michiel Leezenberg, "Kurdish Alevis and the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990," in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comphrehensive Overview*, eds. Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 197-212.

[62] See Mehmet Bayrak, *Alevilik ve Kürtler*, 1997; Ethem Xemgin, *Aleviliğin Kökenindeki Mazda İnancı ve Zerdüşt Öğretisi* (İstanbul: Berfin, 1995); Cemşid Bender, *Kürt Uygarlığında Alevilik* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1991).

[63] See for those publications of missionaries, Janroj Keles, "The Politics of Religious and Ethnic Identity among Kurdish Alevis", 180-81; Gezik, *Alevi Kürtler*, 20-21; Güler, *Ötekinin Ötekisi*, 113-24.

[64] For a brief review about those approaches and detailed ethnographical evaluations about similarities between Ahl-i Haqqs and Kurdish Alevis, see Bruinessen. "Between Dersim and Dâlahû", 65-93.

Fourth, during the irrepressible era of ethnic and religious revivals in the 1990s in Turkey and among diasporic communities in Europe, not surprisingly, some intellectuals started to claim that Kurdish Alevis had entirely different ethnic origins from Turks and Kurds. That identification was based on the Kırmancki language, which most Kurdish Alevis spoke.[65] This new ethnic discourse, Zaza, took spoken language (Kırmancki) as a decisive aspect. However, bringing Kurdish Alevis and their Kırmancki-speaking Sunni neighbors under a new national identity failed so quickly because of the bloody past between the two. As it is well known, Sunni Kurdish tribes actively took part during the Hamidian massacres against non-Muslim communities. It was a desperate effort when considering their mutual hostility.

On the other hand, this attempt also faced another fierce intellectual objection as it voiced against the Kurdish nationalist discourse. As a fifth approach, some Kurdish Alevi intellectuals have been asserting for over a decade that Kurdish Alevism is a distinctive ethnic identity apart from either Kurds, Turks, Zazas or any other Alevi communities in Turkey. Especially after the millennium, this approach gained popularity among young Kurdish Alevi generations. That was in connection with the rise of the Dersim issue in the public sphere.[66] Some researchers named it "Dersim revival", referring to the "Alevi awakening". The revival emphasizes new religious perspectives to Kurdish Alevi ethnic identity, especially regarding nature-based (sacred place)

[65] Since Kurdish Alevis speak two main languages -Kurmanci and -Kırmancki, they are usually defined as Kurds or Zazas. Kurmanci is well known as Kurdish and Kirmancki is mostly known as Zazaki in contemporary Turkey. Some researchers distinguish Kurds and Zazas as separate national identities when considering the languages. See Mesut Keskin. "Zazaca Üzerine Notlar", in *Herkesin Bildiği Sır Dersim*, ed. Şükrü Aslan (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 221-245. For heated debates between those who claim that Kurmanci and Kirmancki are different dialects of Kurdish, and those who believe them to be entirely different languages (Kurdish and Zazaki respectively). Also see, Michiel Leezenberg, "Kurdish Alevis and the Kurdish Nationalist Movement", 197-212 and Paul J. White, "The Debate on the Identity of the Alevi Kurds", in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, eds. Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 17-32; Bruinessen. "'Aslini İnkar Eden Haramzadedir!'", 19-20.

[66] Interestingly, the new discourse was mostly welcomed by younger Kurdish Alevi generations via popular culture trends, such as *ethnic Dersim music*. See, Leyla Neyzi, "Zazaname: Alevi Renaissance, Media and Musik in the Nineteens", in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, eds. Paul J. White & Joost Jongerden, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003), 111-25.

beliefs and oral narratives about the past century's atrocities.[67] As a result, all approaches, which come with heavy criticism of one another, developed their arguments predominantly regarding either the Kurdish Alevi religion's socio-religious structures or the Kırmancki language. However, the dominant contemporary perception of modern Kurdish Alevi identity seems to more related to the beliefs, rituals, and discourses relating to the natural world of Dersim nowadays.

Concluding Remarks

Although Kurdish Alevis are still highly involved in political movements, mostly related to socialist views and Kurdish nationalism, some Kurdish Alevi intellectuals have taken a different approach, described as Dersim ethnicism, in recent decades. From this perspective, Kurdish Alevism (or Raa Haqi religion) seems to appear as a singular cultural system due to its religious, linguistic, historical, sociological, and anthropological dimensions. The rise of such intellectual tendency is mostly related to the popularization of sacred place beliefs in Dersim and throughout the diaspora. Sacred places gained extensive symbolic popularity in line with the rise of Dersim ethnicism after the millennium. Consequently, sacred places have long been a potent indicator of Dersim and cover some modern political implications of the identity, such as environmentalism. In one example, Tunceli province has witnessed large-scale social movements against dam projects, which were intended to build on the rivers of Dersim in the mid-2000s.[68] The most influential argument of defiance depended on the idea of protecting the sacred land. After the destruction of rural life in Dersim, even though Kurdish Alevis did not live in most of this region, they undoubtedly perceived the dam projects as another threat to the sacred land's survival. Tunceli became the only city where almost every local inhabitant joined a march to protest against dam projects in 2014, and it was the most massive anti-dam march ever seen in Turkey to this day.

The point here that attracts the most attention is the increasing social and political role of individuals (especially *talips*) compared with sacred lineages

[67] See İmran Gürtaş, "Dersim Alevilerinde Kimlik İnşası ve Travma," In *Kızılbaşlık, Alevilik Bektaşilik Tarih-Kimlik-İnanç-Ritüel*, eds. Yalçın Çakmak and İmran Gürtaş (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 2015) 309-27 and Besim Can Zırh, "1980'ler Alevilik, 2000'ler Dersim: Uyanışı Anlamak," *Alevilerin Sesi* 161, (2012): 20-25.

[68] See Celal Cahit Agar and Steffen Böhm, "Towards a Pluralist Labor Geography: Constrained Grassroots Agency and the Socio-Spatial Fix in Dersim, Turkey," *Environment and Planning* 50, no. 6 (2018): 1228-49.

(*ocaks*) or conventional cultural institutions (*kirvelik*, *musahiplik*) during the social transformation. As mentioned before, socio-religious obligatory relations and religious orders between *talips* and *pirs* fell apart during forced modernization processes and conflicts in the 20th century. However, sacred places remained. They had always played a crucial role in providing a space for daily religious practices. That would eventually enable them to experience being a religious authority of their own. There used to be no essential need for obligatory institutional relations between *pirs* and *talips* to practice rituals at sacred places. This fact provided a wide space for *talips*, who would willingly like to maintain their cultural identity. Concerning the mass politicization of Kurdish Alevi communities from Turkey through Western Europe, this space became more suitable for new experienced actors. Individuality as an aspect of daily religious practice started to instrumentalize sacred places as the new socio-cultural sphere identifiers and turned them into a political account that has the power of leading ethno-politics. Besides, sacred places gained decisive importance in enculturating new generations. While rituals were being practiced at sacred places, constituent cultural identity elements were also reshaped by the *talips*' perspective. Their everyday culture, political attitude, and religious tendencies started to fill the gaps that opened during the absence of representatives of *ocaks*. It is a remarkable example of how individualistic initiative may have led to a new type of "religion-making"[69] process under certain conditions.

Simultaneously, in the sense of being a *talip*, this relatively autonomous religious sphere also gained new features in the Western European context. Kurdish Alevis' socio-cultural frameworks changed almost completely during the long decades of immigrant life and active politic engagement to ethno-politics. That fact mostly applies to the new generations who were born in Western Europe. For instance, while struggling against the Turkish state for official recognition of religious and national identity, Kurdish Alevis began to form up new religious and politic associations, theological discourses and even rituals with some modern notions and ideas. Claiming gender equality, social harmony, environmentalism, modernism (in the sense of living in western lifestyle) and secularism (in the sense of being politically opposed to Islam,

[69] Markus Dressler, "Modes of Religionization: A Constructivist Approach to Secularity," Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" 7 (Leipzig: 2019): 3-16.

which the AKP regime in Turkey represents) are the core discourses and distinguishing features embedded in Kurdish Alevism.[70]

Another fact that openly reveals the social transformational dynamics of modern Kurdish Alevi identity is the religious associations, the so-called *Cemevis*, widely acting in Dersim and Europe. *Cemevis* gained importance among political Alevi movements after Alevis started to live in Turkey's and Europe's metropolises.[71] Alevi communities established *Cemevis* in the 1990s to perform *cem* ceremonies in the urban environment. They were also used for social events as well as funerals, weddings, etc. However, their political symbolism implied much more. In contemporary Turkey, Alevism possessed a de-facto status as a religious identity. Even though Alevi's places for worshipping is not recognized officially, and the government still rejects their representation in the Directorate of Religious Affairs (an official state institution in Turkey and a very active component of AKP regarding Islamization of non-Sunni communities), the Turkish state tolerates *Cemevis*' activities in general. Moreover, in some cases, municipalities, mostly related to opponent politic parties, acknowledge *Cemevis* as worshipping places.

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[70] Gültekin, Ahmet Kerim, *Kutsal Mekanın Yeniden Üretimi – Kemeré Duzgı'dan Düzgün Baba'ya Dersim Aleviliginde Müzakereler ve Kültür Örüntüleri* (İstanbul: Bilim ve Gelecek Kitaplığı. 2020)

[71] At the turn of the century, *cemevis* became the main argument behind Alevi organizations to claim equal constitutional rights to those afforded to officially recognized religions by Turkey and the EU. They are represented as undeniable proof of the religious uniqueness of Alevism. This policy quickly yielded results in the 2000s in some European countries (first in Germany) rather than Turkey. For the first time, Alevism was officially recognized as a unique religious sect. Despite Turkey's negative attitude towards Alevism, the official status of Alevism in Europe had a large-scale sociological and political impact among all Alevi communities. Accordingly, *Cemevis* became a key determiner for Alevi identity. Given that *Cemevis* are publicly legal organizations, Alevi individuals (*talips*), intellectuals and religious authorities started to establish them according to their religious or political points of view. For further information, see Murat Es, "Alevist Politics of Place and the Construction of Cemevis in Turkey," (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006); Elise Massicard, "Alevi Communities in Western Europe: Identity and Religious Strategies," in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, eds. Jorgen S. Nielsen, Samim Akgönül, Ahmet Alibasic, Brigitte Marechal, and Christian Moe (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 561-92; Martin Sökefeld, "Alevis in Germany and The Politics of Recognition," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 28-29 (2003): 133-61; Derya Ozkul, "The Making of a Transnational Religion: Alevi Movement in Germany and the World Alevi Union," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 2 (2019): 259-73; Ali Çarkoğlu and Nazlı Çağın Bilgili, "A Precarious Relationship: The Alevi Minority, the Turkish State and the EU." *South European Society and Politics* 16, no. 2 (2011): 351–64.

On the other hand, *Cemevis* are also specific facts that reveal the dynamics of the social transformation of Kurdish Alevism. For example, some *Cemevis* were built near the most famous sacred places in Dersim during the 2000s. However, Alevism continues to be rejected by the Turkish authorities. There is, therefore, only one way to erect these buildings legally: by establishing them as associations. As a result, the management board for these associations began being formed by both *talips* and *pirs*, meaning conventional religious obligatory relations between them are bypassed. Thus, the rising prestige of sacred places and increasing numbers of *Cemevis* created a competitive situation among *pirs* due to attracting followers' attention and strengthening their religious authorities. The fact also remains that *ocaks* are similarly trying to functionalize the same religio-politic discourses and attempting to take advantage of current ethno-politics to re-establish their religious prestige. Today, being officially recognized as an independent religious belief under constitutional rights and re-formulating Alevism as a modern religion in the contemporary period requires certain systematic rituals, spatially redesigned sacred places, a rewritten theology and history. In this context, Kurdish Alevi *pirs* also try to provide religious services not just to their *talips*, as it has been a traditional religious order, but all *talips,* including other *ocaks*' followers. This transformation also reveals how a religious institution (which used to be obtained by birth) becomes a modern-day social-religious status re-interpreted through a new understanding.

In terms of "religion making from below,"[72] if we look at talip-dominated Kurdish Alevis' socio-political acts and discourses, those emerged concerning sacred places seem likely to be a new religious-political trend, which intends to secure cultural continuity and create a robust socio-political position for the subordinated identity. Despite being politically heterogeneous, *talips* seem able to move *pirs* to practice religion with a new understanding. Thus, one of the most critical outcomes of contemporary Kurdish Alevism is *talips*' increasing domination. In this sense, the case of Kurdish Alevism can also be seen as a reconceptualization of the cultural identity concerning sacred places. That establishes a new understanding of the ethnic identity depending on a new type of socio-religious order.

[72] Markus Dress1er, "Modes of Religionization": 12.

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CHAPTER 2

THE ARAB ALEVIS (‘ALAWĪS) IN THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY: AN OVERVIEW♦

Hakan Mertcan

Introduction

The Arab Alevis (‘Alawīs[1] from now on) are a significant minority, scattered across the Middle East and typically located along the Mediterranean coastline. However, despite increasing focus on the identity and politics of ‘Alawīs since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011, there is still little scholarly work on the ‘Alawīs of Turkey, known also as Nuṣayrīs.[2] The ‘Alawīs of Turkey, mostly misunderstood and ignored to a great extent, is an ethno-religious group. Described as a “heterodox” Islamic community, they are known as the Bāṭinī community.[3] They identify themselves as Arabs ethnically and ‘Alawīs in terms of religion.

♦ I am grateful to my colleagues Meral Şeker, Selim Çakmaklı, and Aydın Ördek for their helpful comments and suggestions.

[1] Alevi is the Turkish version of the word ‘Alawī, which is the transcription of the word from Arabic. Since the Arabic transcription is widespread in the English literature, the word ‘Alawī is used for (Arab) Alevis.

[2] The community in Turkey generally prefers to identify itself as ‘Alawīs instead of Nuṣayrīs. Hakan Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler (Tarih, Kimlik, Siyaset)*, 4th ed. (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2020), 298-302; For the terminology see Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Stephan Procházka, *The Plain of Saints and Prophets: The Nusayri-Alawi Community of Cilicia (Southern of Turkey) and its Sacred Places*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 19-23.

[3] The term Bāṭinī refers to communities that make distinction between the outer and the inner (esoteric) meaning in Islam, by means of this distinction, because of their very conditions of existence, the Bāṭinīs could have different interpretations of Islam other than sovereigns’ interpretations of Islam. The term, on the other hand, is also a designation that has been used pejoratively by Sunnī Muslim theologians. For the history and theology of the ‘Alawīs in general see Stefan Winter, *A History of the ‘Alawis, From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016); Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler*; Necati Alkan, “Fighting for the Nuṣayrī Soul: State, Protestant Missionaries and the

Comprising significant minorities chiefly in Syria and Turkey with varying political trajectories, the community is also legally recognised in Lebanon and represented in parliament. The ‘Alawīs are dispersed to other Middle Eastern countries, where they maintain their existence as a community generally by concealing their identity. Furthermore, as a result of forced and voluntary migration movements since the nineteenth century, significant amounts of ‘Alawīs can also be seen throughout the globe, from Europe to the United States to Australia. The ‘Alawīs have been living in Turkey for hundreds of years, mostly populated in Antakya, Adana and Mersin provinces. Yet, the ‘Alawīs have never been legally or constitutionally recognised by the Republic of Turkey. As with the Alevis, the ‘Alawīs’ religious freedom has been largely impeded, while their sacred sites have not been recognised officially. State authorities have always been suspicious of them and treated them as a potential threat to *national unity*. Therefore, the ‘Alawīs, just like Alevis of Turkey, have been at the target of the assimilationist (Turkification and Sunnification) and repressive policies.

Being under the sway of the Ottomans nearly four hundred years, the ‘Alawīs, despite being accepted in the sphere of Islamic religion, have been treated as a heretic community and exposed to discriminatory taxations and practices. After long years of misery, isolation and state violence, within the conversion (*ihtida* -Sunnification) policies in the reign of ‘Abdü’l-Ḥamīd the Second, a *compromise* between the ‘Alawīs and the central government was able to be achieved.[4] The administration of Republic of Turkey, in line with its assimilationist policies, accepted them as Turkish “brothers” but with a discriminative manner, always registered them as Arabs and Alevis.

Having quite a different religious creed and practice, the ‘Alawīs’ vision of Islam and their interpretation of Islamic principles are rather different from the hegemonic/dominant view. According to the ‘Alawīs’ creed, a belief structure centered in *the faith of ʿAlī*, *Alī* together with Muḥammad, was created from the divine light (Nûr) and has extraordinary attributes. In general, according to the Alevi creed ʿAlī is not an ordinary being; he represents the “always

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ʿAlawīs in the Late Ottoman Empire”, *Die Welt des Islams* 52 (2012); Yaron Friedman, *The Nusayri-ʿAlawis: An Introduction to the Religon, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010); Procházka-Eisl and Procházka, *The Plain of Saints and Prophets:*; Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrî-ʿAlawî Religion: An Enquiry Into Its Theology And Liturgy* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002); M. E. Galip et-Tavîl, *Arap Alevilerinin Tarihi-Nusayriler*, trans. İsmail Özdemir, (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 2000).

[4] Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler,* 94-112.

everywhere", is "the unlimited genius (ma'rifet)"; he is the Ma'na of the being. In other words, cosmic ʿAlī existed before the historical being ʿAlī (ibn Abī Tālib) who was born in Mecca in the 600s.[5] ʿAlī existed and spoke in various forms in pre-Islamic eras. But this fact does not invalidate the historical ʿAlī and the Islamic experience formed with him. In fact, cosmic ʿAlī includes the historical ʿAlī.

For the 'Alawīs, principles like prayer, fasting, concealment, pilgrimage, and jihad have different meanings other than those in the hegemonic Islam. For instance, prayer, without any certain form, is turning to the God; fasting is to remain true to one's own word; the concealment is to safeguard the trust; pilgrimage is the journey to the God and the jihad is to struggle with ego. Unlike Sunnī Islam, they do not adhere to the heaven-hell and fate belief. Reincarnation, in this system of belief, has a very decisive place. The 'Alawīs generally make their religious ceremonies in the *ziyarat*s or houses that are acknowledged as sacred places. The religious education process in the 'Alawīs' creed is subject to special conditions and differs radically from the Sunnī Islam. The religious affairs are the responsibility of the reverends who have the title Sheikh (*Şıh*), which is inherited by lineage. Sheiks still have significant influence on the community. Regarding creeds and rituals, the 'Alawīs have both common characteristics and significant differences with Turkish and Kurdish Alevis. For example, Cem (*Jam*' in Arabic) rituals of the 'Alawīs are performed in a quite different manner compared to those of Alevis. In these Cems, which are closed to the public, there is no *Semah* ritual, the *baglama* or any other instrument is not played, and women, who take part in organization of the rituals in a great deal and have a prestigious social status, do not participate in some parts of the ritual. At the end of the Cems, a specific food called Hrîsi, which is prepared with great care and has a sacred meaning, is shared with the participants.

Although it is hard to give a definite figure, it is estimated that approximately one million 'Alawīs live in Turkey.[6] It is known that, in Adana and Mersin provinces, the younger generations of this community's members,

[5] See also, Tord Olsson, "The Gnosis of Mountaineers and Townspeople: The Religion of the Syrian Alawites, or the Nuṣairīs", *Alevi Identity*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga & Catharina Raudvere (London, Taylor& Francis, 2005), 202; Ayhan Yalçınkaya*, Küf: Dede Korkut, Said Nursi ve Ali Üzerine* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2016), 187-267.

[6] It is not possible to give exact figures in this regard, because there is no official statistics on this subject due to census policy; see Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 2000), 63-4.

who have the power over the economic-political and social structure of Turkey, have significantly lost the use of their mother tongue. However, within the scope of religious education carried out by the ‘Alawīs sheikhs, it can be said that ‘Alawīsm awareness is protected more than ethnic identity. As an introvert community, the ‘Alawīs avoid revealing their creed and beliefs. In this context, silence/not expressing oneself (*kitmân*) to a stranger is a basic principle. Neither are they eager to reveal their esoteric creed and beliefs, nor impose them. The ‘Alawīs, being respectful to all holy scriptures and to the prophets and celebrating many days from the days of Moses and Khidr to the days that Jesus was born and ascended to the heaven to the days of Nowruz, state that – despite contrary claims – they themselves are a community that adhere to the truth/the genuine message of Islam.[7]

For a better understanding of the situation of the ‘Alawīs during the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP, Justice and Development Party) governments and the codes of the ‘Alawī identity, I will first briefly explain some basic historical stages in the development of the community. Secondly, I will analyze the ‘Alawīs’ relations with the state authority in the Republic of Turkey and the role they played during the process of modern state formation. Then I will focus on the identity issues faced by the ‘Alawīs and over time how they have responded and reacted to these. This chapter will not only offer an exploration of the hitherto hidden history of the ‘Alawīs in Turkey, but also will focus on the community’s evolution, history and political mobilization from its emergence to the current AKP era.

Historical Background

Emergence of the Community

In AD 632, a crucial crisis broke out among the Muslims after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Who would administer this new community after the death of the prophet? The debate and faction of this problem would become the beginning of an unending disagreement in Islamic community, i.e., the Sunnī-Shīʿī contrast. Right after the prophet’s death, one of the groups claimed that the caliphate was the right of ʿAlī ibn. Abī Tālib and the prophet annunciated ʿAlī

[7] For further evidence from various interviews, see Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler,* 302-314.

as the leader ("mawlā") in the farewell sermon in the valley called Ghadīr Khumm in 632.[8]

After the prophet's death, Muslims, starting with disobedience to the Ghadīr Khumm, experienced disagreements. The murders of ʿAlī in 661 and of his descents, especially the Karbala (Iraq) Massacre in 680, increased the tension. The followers of ʿAlī, although the Umayyad dynasty had taken power, acknowledged the imams who were descendants of Ahl Al-Bayt, as their leaders. In time, ʿAlī's followers separated into various branches, having different perspectives/interpretations. Some of them were accused of extremism (the Ghulāt Shīʿi); one of these groups was the 'Alawīs. The 'Alawīs were generally accused of extremism by adhering to the hegemonic Islamic beliefs. But they certainly do not see themselves as *extreme*.[9]

The 'Alawīs accepted Abu Shuʿayb Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al- ʿAbdī al-Bakrī al-Numayrī (d. 883), as their leader. They described Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr as the closest disciple (as the *bāb*: sacred *gate*) of the 11th Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī and they believed that he conveyed the creeds and precepts from al-ʿAskarī after his death. The 'Alawīs, with reference to Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, have been called Nuṣayrīs, in an accusatory and insulting term from the very early periods.[10] The 'Alawīs,[11] who exalt the affinity to Ahl al-Bayt and walk on the path represented by ʿAlī, who is given an extraordinary meaning, and the twelve imams, have also been accused of heresy and profaneness, and have been exposed to enormous persecutions and massacres in the course of history, just like other esoteric communities.

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[8] Bar- Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrî-'Alawî Religion,* 121; Yunus Ramadan, *Evrensel Değerlerin Yüce Simgesi Hz. Ali*, trans. Ahmet Bedir, (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2011), 46-55.

[9] For detailed information see Mahmut es-Sâlih, *Gerçeklerin Işığında Aleviler*, trans. Ahmet Bedir (Ankara: Baran Ofset, 2007); Mahmut Reyhani, *Gölgesiz Işıklar I Alevilik ve Öncesi* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 1997), Mahmut Reyhani, *Gölgesiz Işıklar II Tarihte Aleviler* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 1997); Şerafettin Serin, *Alevi Nusayriler Hakkında Soru ve Cevaplar* (Adana: Koza Matbaa, 2007); Mehmet Mullaoğlu, *Nusayriler Hakkında İddia, İsnad ve İftiralar ile Cevapları* (Antakya,1998); Ramadan, *Evrensel Değerlerin Yüce Simgesi Hz. Ali*.

[10] See, for example, Kummi/Nevbahti, *Şii Fırkalar Kitabu'l-Makalat ve'l- Fırak Fıraku'ş- Şia*, trans. Hasan Onat et al. (Ankara: Ankara Okulu, 2004), 238-39.

[11] This, of course, does not mean that the ''Alawīs do not inherit some legacy of their religious beliefs before Islam. Within the beliefs of this community, it is possible to trace back especially the ancient beliefs of Iran, Iraq and Syria regions. This generally applies to Jewish, Christian and Islamic communities' beliefs; it would not be scientific to reject the dialectical relationships and interactions in this kind.

One of the successors of Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdan al-Khaṣībī played a remarkable part as a savior-leader in the history of the ‘Alawīs. Al- Khaṣībī had a constructive role both in the creed of Alawism and spread of it; he is still accepted as a great religious leader (Sheikhuddin) by the ‘Alawīs.[12] Al-Khaṣībī, assembling an important community of believers, was the charismatic political leader of the ‘Alawīs and notable leader of Hamdānids, Sayf al-Dawla al-Hamdāni (d. 967); in this way he opened an exceptional new era for the ‘Alawīs in which they would be able to improve themselves and live according to their creed and values.[13] Even today the Hamdānid reign and the Sayf al-Dawla live in collective memory of the ‘Alawīs and affect the ‘Alawīs identity.

Following the Hamdānid period, Aleppo was dragged into prolonged turmoil, and various Arab tribes tried to rule. Here, for example, after the Hamdānids, the Mirdāsids ruled the region for about 50 years. In the following years, various political powers such as the Fatimids, the Crusaders, the Ayyubids, the Mongols, and the Mamelukes fought for power in the settlement areas of Alawīs. Eventually, Sultan Selim (d.1520), who was in a fight against Shīʿī Safawids, defeated the Safawids in Chaldiran in 1514 and marched towards Syria and Egypt.

The Ottoman Empire

With the collapse of the Hamdānids, another fearful era for the ‘Alawīs commenced, and they began to retreat towards Latakia, especially to the mountainous terrain known as the ‘Alawīs/Nuṣayrī Mountains. Upon (Yavuz) Sultan Selim I’s Marj Dabiq victory in 1516, they were obliged to dwell in these mountains.[14] Selim I’s military expedition to Syria and Egypt was a historical milestone for the ‘Alawīs. The Ottoman Marj Dabiq victory in the year 1516 paved the way for the horrific massacre of Aleppo and resulted in a disaster that the ‘Alawīs would never forget. Thousands of ‘Alawīs were massacred in Aleppo and in nearby areas. The survivors fled to the farthest regions of the

[12] Yaron Friedman, “al-Husayn ibn Hamdân al-Khasîbî: A Historical Biography of the Founder of the Nusayrî- 'Alawite Sect”, *Studia Islamica* 93 (2001).
[13] Es-Sâlih, 2007: 83-85, 93.
[14] Friedman, “al-Husayn ibn Hamdân al-Khasîbî”, 92; Yvette Talhamy, “American Protestant Missionary Activity among the Nusayris (Alawis) in Syria in the Nineteenth Century”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 47, No 2 (March 2001): 219; Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 267-69.

‘Alawī Mountains.[15] Selim I’s massacre was not limited to Aleppo and its neighboring areas, but the slaughter was extended to the ‘Alawīs’ settlements in Anatolia and Syria.[16]

Selim I’s massacre was a nightmare for the ‘Alawīs and was imprinted on their memory. It has become an important element of the ‘Alawī identity. Selim I is colloquially mentioned as a major ‘Alawī enemy similar to Muawiya and Yazeed. During religious education, the ‘Alawīs teach their children of their own historical/religious leaders, the religious rituals and practices, and their historical enemies. Cursing these enemies is also a part of the religious practices. In this way the collective memory is constituted and the group identity is sustained.

Following Selim I’s reign, the ‘Alawīs began to live under the Ottoman Empire which continued till the end of the empire. The Ottomans accepted the ‘Alawīs as a heretic community and never took them as a *genuine* Muslim community; however, they did not give them the non-Muslim millet statute. In the very long-lasting Ottoman reign, the ‘Alawīs who lived in the cities tried to survive by concealing their identity. The majority lived in the ‘Alawīs Mountains survived under very hard conditions and were semi-autonomous during those long centuries.[17]

The Ottoman administration often imposed heavy taxes on the ‘Alawīs, pursued discriminatory fiscal policies towards them, and applied punitive sanctions when the ‘Alawīs did not comply with such mandates. These punitive sanctions, as non-exceptional practices of the state towards these communities, involved mass arrests, massacres and forced exiles. Although these sanctions and resistance to them were not uncommon in the Ottoman Empire reign, they

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[15] Different figures on the size of the ‘Alawi massacre are given in the sources. According to the ‘Alawīs’ own utterances, 70,000 people were killed. In the ‘Alawīs’ written sources, the figures are as follows: Serin confirms the utterances and writes that 70,000 people were killed in the massacre; see Serin *Alevi Nusayriler*, 117. Reyhani states that the number is 80,000 not 70,000 see Reyhani, *Gölgesiz Işıklar II*, 81. es-Sâlih and et-Tavîl state that more than 40 thousand people were massacred only in Aleppo; see et-Tavîl, *Arap Alevilerinin Tarihi*, 249-250 and es-Sâlih, *Gerçeklerin Işığında Aleviler*, 110.

[16] Et-Tavîl, *Arap Alevilerinin Tarihi*, 250-54.

[17] Yvette Talhamy, “Conscription among the Nusayris (‘Alawis) in the Nineteenth Century.” British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 38, No 1 (2001): 25; Talhamy, “The Nusayri Leader Isma’il Khayr Bey and the Ottomans”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no 6 (November 2008).

were intensified especially during the restructuring and centralization period of the nineteenth century.[18]

In the history of the ‘Alawīs, the nineteenth century is significant as resistance and gunfights became more intense. The Ottomans launched a number of expeditions to fully control the ‘Alawīs and establish power for the central government. The ‘Alawīs resisted these military expeditions in various ways. The Ottomans tried to destroy the ‘Alawīs resistance by using many methods such as arrests, executions, exiles, mass punishments, disarmament, recruitment to the army, tax impositions, etc.[19]

In summary, the nineteenth century was a period of major changes regarding the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the ‘Alawīs. The Ottomans’ were concentrating on modernization endeavors, particularly evident in the reformation efforts of the Ottoman intellectual bureaucrats such as Midhat Pasha, and the Sunnification exerts of ‘Abdü’l-Ḥamīd the Second (building state schools and mosques in their regions). There were various operations by the empire to establish state power on-site. In short, the Sunnification policies of ‘Abdü’l-Ḥamīd the Second chastened the group regarded as *heretics*, and the so-called *heretic* ‘Alawīs could suppress the calamity in their social lives thanks to *taqiyya* (pretending to accept Sunnīsm).[20] It should be pointed out that the Ottomans' attitudes to all Alevi-esoteric communities (Qalandaris, Kizilbash, etc.) was negative. Even though it was argued that the Ottomans did not have a monotype policy fort the Alevis and the violence against them was not typical.[21] Forged by the Sunnī- Hanafī ideology especially from the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire stood against the ‘Alawīs with violence, and permanently labeled them as profaners, heretics, faithless people. Not only in the sixteenth century but also in the following centuries, especially in the nineteenth century,

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[18] Moshe Ma’oz, *Asad: The Sphinx of Damascus: A Political Biography*, Grove Weidenfeld, 1988, 3; Samuel Lyde, *The Asian Mystery* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), passim. Talhamy, “The Nusayri Leader Isma’il Khayr Bey and the Ottomans”, 895-908. For more information on *dirham al-rijal,* which was a discriminative taxation for Alawis, see Winter, *A History of the ‘Alawis*, 83-111.

[19] One of the important resistances of this period is, for instance, the movement led by Isma’il Khayr Bey; see Talhamy, “The Nusayri Leader”.

[20] For more information and documentations see Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler,* 82-116.

[21] İlber Ortaylı, “Alevilik, Nusayrilik ve Bâb-ı Âli”, in *Tarihi ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Türkiye’de Aleviler Bektaşiler Nusayriler*, ed. İsmail Kurt and S. Ali Tüz (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2004), 37.

the ‘Alawī-esoteric communities in general were exposed to heavy oppressions, assimilation, violence and massacres.[22]

General Situation after World War I

With the First World War, the situation of the ‘Alawīs gained a different dimension. The ‘Alawīs broke their isolation to a certain extent, established relations with different communities, and became an important actor on the political scene. As the empire collapsed following the war, the ‘Alawīs found themselves in quite a different political state.

After the foundation of the independent Syrian state, ‘Alawī Sheikh Saleh al-Ali (d. 1950), who started the resistance in the Latakia region of Syria against the French invasion following the war, emerged as one of the important figures enabling the integration of the ‘Alawīs’ into national unity in Syria. Zakī al-Arsūzī (d. 1968), who came from a well-known ‘Alawī family in the Sanjak of Iskenderun and was one of the important figures of Arab nationalist thought, was influential in the integration of the ‘Alawīs into the Syrian nation. Al-Arsūzī, who wrote articles in the newspaper of *al-Uruba* in the 1930s during the struggle for independence in the Iskenderun Sanjak, stated, against the Turkish thesis, that the ‘Alawīs were a part of the Arab nation, and tried to tempt the ‘Alawīs to the Arab cause, thus he and his organization (the League of National Action – LNA) were strongly prevented from achieving their goals. Consequently, al-Arsūzī and his close comrades were forced to leave Sanjak and tried to spread their ideas of Arab nationalism in Syria.[23]

In Turkey, during the French invasion, in the region of Cilician, the ‘Alawīs, who were organized in the National Awakening Society (Intibah-i Milli) that

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[22] See Osmanlı Belgeleri’nde Aleviler-Bektaşiler. ed. Cemal Şener, (İstanbul: Karacaahmet Sultan Kültür Derneği Yayınları, 2002); Osmanlı Arşivi’nde Mühimme ve İrade Defterleri’nde Aleviler-Bektaşiler. ed. Ahmet Hezarfen, Cemal Şener (İstanbul: Karacaahmet Sultan Kültür Derneği Yayınları, 2002); Ayhan Yalçınkaya, Alevilikte Toplumsal Kurumlar ve İktidar (Ankara: Mülkiyeliler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları, 1996), 146-51.

[23] The Baath Movement, which was also shaped by al-Arsūzī’s ideas, became attractive for the ‘Alawīs as well as the other minorities, and these minorities inclined to the ideal of living together under a national roof that is raising on a secular basis against the Islamic approaches that aimed at the unity of religion and state; see Dalal Arsuzi-Elamir, *Arabischer Nationalismus in Syrien: Zaki al-Arsuzi und die arabisch-nationale Bewegung an der Peripherie Alexandretta/Antakya 1930-38* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002); Keith D. Watenpaugh, “Creating Phantoms: Zaki al-Arsuzi, the Alexandretta Crisis, and the Formation of Modern Arab Nationalism in Syria.” International Journal of *Middle East Studies* 28, no. 3 (Aug1996).

aimed to focus on Arab identity, had to change the political axis they adopted because of Kemalists' power in the region and the chaotic environment caused by the invasion. A forceful group among them participated in the Turkish National War and had a great part in the liberation of the Cilician region.[24] Again, in 1939, during the annexation of the Sanjak of Iskenderun (Hatay) to Turkey, the 'Alawī elites –except for the LNA members – who acted in concert with *Turkish side* were decisive impact on the result. However, along the history of the Republic the members of this community generally oscillated between *existence* and *non-existence* and managed to exist only in *silence*. Although the official historical narrative has not totally ignored their status, it could only recall these people by associating them with Turkishness. As explained in the following parts, unscientific *Hittite Turks* thesis came out of this process.

The 'Alawīs in the Early Republican Period

From its foundation to the present times the Republic of Turkey has pursued assimilationist (therefore discriminatory) policies against the Alevi communities. These policies have been implemented in different degrees and forms and by different means and methods according to the dispositions of the political parties in power. In addition, the Alevi communities have experienced different policies according to their ethnic identities. For instance, the Kurdish Alevis and the 'Alawīs have been exposed to assimilation both in ethnic and religious respects. These policies were harshly implemented with the early period of the Republic and have been carried out in different forms and degrees. Besides assimilation the Turks have also become involving policies of physical eradication.[25] But despite being different regarding ethnicity, the Alevi communities have always been identical in being suppressed for their religious

[24] Et-Tavil, Arap Alevilerinin Tarihi, 301; Kemal Çelik, *Milli Mücadele'de Adana ve Havalisi (1918-1922)* (Ankara: TTKY, 1999), 137; Kasım Ener, *Çukurova Kurtuluş Savaşında Adana Cephesi* (Ankara: Türkiye Kuvayı Milliye Mücahit ve Gazileri Cemiyeti, 1970), 178.

[25] In this context, it is necessary to remember the Alevi massacres such as1938 Dersim Massacre, 1971 Kırıkhan Massacre, 1978 Malatya Massacre, 1978 Maras Massacre, 1980 Çorum Massacre, 1993 Sivas Massacre, 1995 Gazi Massacre; see Mehmet Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 123-159; Erdal Gezik, *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2004), 83-96; Aziz Tunç, *Beni Sen Öldür: Maraş 78* (İstanbul: Fırat Yayınları, 2014). Yalçınkaya argues that at the very heart of Alevi policy of the modern nation state in Turkey is the ethnocide; see Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Kavimkırım İkliminde Aleviler* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2014). The term ethnocide borrowed by Yalçınkaya from P. Clastres deserves to be taken into consideration for the Alevi case.

identities. This suppression can be traced back deep into many aspects of the social-political life.

Having positivist and secular ideals, the state authorities of the early period of the Republic tried to establish a legal system conforming to their political program. For example, the Law on Unification of Education dated in 1924 centralized education. The madrasahs that engaged in religious education were closed and religious lessons were gradually removed from the curriculum of all educational systems, and in 1937, it was announced that laicism was adopted as a constitutional principle.[26] But along with these important developments, the republic did not separate religious and state affairs; it preferred to take control of religion and use it as a political tool by incorporating it using the Presidency of Religious Affairs which leaned on a Sunnī-Hanafī creed. To put in another way, religion was organized by means of the Presidency, and thus had an important part in the production of the official ideology and to the masses. As a result, Hanafī-Sunnīsm was mounted as one of the major elements of the Turkish identity defined by the state.[27] The ‘Alawīs, like other non-Sunnī Islamic groups, were negatively affected by these policies and implementations, which were contradictory to laicism.[28] With the prohibitions concerning tombs and lodges in 1925, one of the indispensable elements of the ‘Alawīs creed, the *ziyarats* were faced with the danger of extinction as people abstained from visiting them. On November 1, 1928, the alphabet reform, switching the Arabic alphabet with the Latin one, had negative effects on the ‘Alawi Sheikhs who taught in Arabic and their disciples (thus most of the community) in the Arabic script. When the regulations to implement laicism such as the alphabet reform, the unification of education, the prohibitions on tombs and monasteries, and the suppressions on the Arab language are considered together, it can be argued that the ‘Alawīs’ traditional education and the teaching of Arabic language was oppressed and freedom of religion in general was violated. Furthermore, the existence of an institution such as the Presidency of Religious Affairs which,

[26] Hakan Mertcan, *Bitmeyen Kavga Laiklik (Türkiye’de Din-Devlet-Diyanet)* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2013), 107.

[27] Therefore, since the beginning of the Republic, the most fundamental features of laicism, such as the institutional separation of religion and the state, the neutrality of the state against religions –in other words the fact that a laic state does not grant any privileges to any religious beliefs– have never been put into practice.

[28] On the role of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and implementation of laicism in Turkey see Mertcan, *Bitmeyen Kavga Laiklik*.

from the very beginning, propagandized Sunnī Islam and used a discriminatory, insulting, assimilationist attitude against the Alevis is problematic.[29]

Because of the state's political orientation aimed to create a homogenous nation, despite their contributions to the emergence of the Republic of Turkey, the 'Alawīs (like other minor communities) could not have any chance of emerging as the citizens of the Republic with their own identities. The assimilationist policies imposed upon the communities from the early period of the Republic were implemented systematically and rigorously in 1930s and 1940s. Especially through the activities of the People's Houses (Halkevleri) and the Culture Committees (Hars Komitaları), these people were indoctrinated into the consciousness of Turkishness immediately, sometimes by consent, sometimes by force, and sometimes by *carrot and stick* methods.[30] One of the significant architects of the official history, H. Reşit Tankut, published a book in 1938 titled *Nusayriler ve Nusayrilik Hakkında* [*the Nuṣayrīs and on Nuṣayrīsm*]. This work was an important example of the endeavor to relate the 'Alawīs to Turkishness.[31] Tankut, under the influence of Turkist policies, compared some physical characteristics of the 'Alawīs to the racial characteristics of Turks and Arabs. Focusing especially on their head indices of the 'Alawīs who lived in Sanjak of Iskenderun, a province annexed to Turkey in 1939 and renamed as Hatay being berefted its historical name, Tankut concluded that the 'Alawīs were certainly Turks, not Arabs due to the characteristics of their heads.[32]

In line with the claims of the Turkish History Thesis, sovereign powers deemed the 'Alawīs as a community whose original self-identity was Turk, with no bearing on Arabians and was subsequently alienated from Turkish identity. They also described the 'Alawīs as the successors of the Hittites who were acknowledged as a Turkish tribe in the scope of the Turkish History Thesis; therefore, they named them "Hittite Turks". Thus, the mother tongue of the

[29] For the attitude of the Presidency of Religious Affairs towards the Alevis see Mertcan, *Bitmeyen Kavga Laiklik*, 153-160).

[30] For remarkable examples see Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri (BCA), 490.1. 583.11.1.93-94, 160. BCA, 490.1. 584.17.3. 5; Vehbi Evinç, "Hitabeler I", *Görüşler* 15 February 1939, 30-31.

[31] Before this book, Baha Said, with his article titled "Anadolu'da Gizli Mabetlerden: Nusayriler ve Esrar-ı Mezhebiyeleri" published in *Türk Yurdu* journal in 1927, triggered signal flare of the studies trying to assimilate the 'Alawīs into Turkishness; Baha Said Bey, *Türkiye'de Alevi - Bektaşi, Ahi ve Nusayri Zümreleri*. ed. İsmail Görkem (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000), 171-185.

[32] H. Reşit Tankut, *Nusayriler ve Nusayrilik Hakkında* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1938), 14-15.

community, Arabic, was denied and suppressed; what is more, the allegation that the language spoken by this community was not Arabic but *in fact* was Turkish was put into practice as a systematic policy.

The primary tool of assimilation policy against the ‘Alawīs in the single-party period was the Culture Committees. These committees were founded with the specific purpose of placing the ‘Alawīs into the Turkish identity in accordance with the official ideology and of designing and implementing policies in that direction. In the Culture Committees Regulations, Culture Committees were defined as cultural associations acting not independently of but in conjunction with the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP, Republican People’s Party) and People’s Houses (Turkish institutions for public education and spreading Kemalism). The Culture Committees were formed for limited geographical areas with respect to local needs. The Culture Committees' headquarters were in Ankara, and it had branches in Adana, Tarsus and Mersin. The meetings of the committees were held in the CHP’s places or People’s Houses or any other place determined by the Party. According to the Culture Committees Regulations, “protecting and enhancing the natural cultural level of people who cannot speak Turkish properly in all cases and making their family and social relations warmer and more harmonized with other Turkish citizens in their residential area” was the principal objective of the committees. In line with this objective, fundamental duties of the committees included the following: to align the educators with proper and popular use of the Turkish language; to encourage and pave the way for proper and popular use of the Turkish language in public and in private spheres; to indoctrinate speaking Turkish as a religious duty mandated by national honor to encourage and safeguard marriage between Nuṣayrīs and Turks by removing the detrimental effects originating from the sectarian discrimination; to instruct the fact that the ‘Alawīs are from the Turkish race; to make publicity and propaganda, and to organize conferences, shows, acts of showing the true path in order to achieve above-referred goals; to control whether Turkish is spoken or not; to make Turkish national songs and epics widely known and notorious; eventually, to “work for bringing about the achievement of the main goal by using all sorts of remedies and ways that would strengthen Turkish nation’s unity and solidarity”.[33]

The monthly magazine *Görüşler* (Views) issued by the Adana People’s House in that time also contained the striking traces of assimilationist policies implemented toward the ‘Alawīs. In February 1939, the activities and *modus*

[33] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri (BCA), 490.1. 583.10.1. 63-66.

operandi of the Culture Committees were made public.[34] Among the activities conducted, the spread of Turkish and the termination of speaking Arabic took priority. A series of activities were organized to that end, including establishment of schools and training centers, acts of showing the true path, conferences, meetings and movie screening. These efforts were characterized by a blood-based racism accompanied by the menaces to those who resisted assimilation.

Moreover, the suppression of the Arabic language had weakened the religious identity of the community. Such a suppression constricted and/or blocked the ways within which the ‘Alawīs had traditionally passed their religious doctrine to next generations. The education process of the ‘Alawīs children, which can be termed as “initiation to the path” is a hard process of many obligations for family, child (*tilmiz*) and religious instructor (*emmi seyyid*). Although a religious-cultural education of this kind is to some extent (unofficially) retained in Turkey, it has been rapidly eroded due to the traditional assimilationist state policy, the difficulties created by the modernization and the suppression of increasingly strengthening political Islam. In this respect, the training of religious functionaries, who were expected to take care of religious duties of the community has suffered substantial damages.

The ‘Alawīs in the Multi-Party System

The ‘Alawīs generally supported the Kemalist regime from the beginning of the Republic. The break with the Ottoman Empire that was seen as the sword of Sunnī Sharia, the belief that a new regime was emerging, Kemalist discourse of modernity and laicism, various promises and intimidation towards the ‘Alawīs, and the inadequate organization and weakness of the ‘Alawi community have been decisive in this political positioning. Certainly, there have been periodical alterations in this political attitude. There have emerged some fractures in the Kemalist route with the multi-party system. In any case, during the periods that the Islamist movements and parties gained power, the ‘Alawīs have come closer to those they considered to be the defenders of laicism. The 1970s, when the *Milli Nizam Partisi* (National Order Party) and then the *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party) participated in political life, are important examples/experiences of this kind. The 1970s can also be considered as the years that the ‘Alawi youth became one of the elements of the “radical” opposition to the political power.

[34] “Hars Komitesi Nasıl Çalışıyor”, Görüşler 15 February 1939, 25-28.

The Demokrat Parti (DP, Democratic Party), which took over political power from the CHP in the 1950 elections, succeeded in retaining power until 1960. The period of 1950-1960 was not a period for which a uniform reading could be done to understand the positions of the ‘Alawīs. In Hatay which was annexed to Turkey later, the ‘Alawīs conformed to their traditional leaders’ preferences and voted for the CHP, however, those who lived in Adana and Mersin overwhelmingly voted for the DP. In the 1954 elections, DP was supported in all three provinces. The DP’s tendency to establish an oppressive regime also reduced the support of the ‘Alawīs. In 1960, a military coup put an end to the DP rule. In the period of the 1961 Constitution, which was prepared after the military coup and had democratic characteristics, social movements started to rise. Although after March 12, 1971, Military Memorandum, the left opposition and the struggle for rights and freedom were tried to be suppressed, the 1970s continued to be the years of the rise of leftist movements. As in the 1960s, the connection between the leftist movements and the Alevis continued to strengthen. The leftist movements regarded Alevis as [natural] “allies”. Alevis were also sensitive to the messages of the left and socialism, both due to their class position and having been marginalized.[35] It was in this process that the ‘Alawīs were also affected by the rise of the left and began to take part in the social struggle. Although the traditional elites of the ‘Alawīs, with a pragmatic approach, took part in right-wing politics, the leftist opposition mustered up support among ordinary ‘Alawīs people, because of their social class positions and being members of an ethnic and religious minority. No doubt, these sensitivities have taken different forms for different generations of the ‘Alawīs, as the case with other Alevi communities. For example, while the ‘Alawī youth had been more open to the socialist left, the older generations have generally supported CHP politics.[36] For the post military coup of September 12, 1980, identity had become more important, the civil society organizations – with the weakened effects of the military coup – had become more active and the identity-oriented activities and demands had become consolidated.

In the context of the transformation of political power, in 1950s, under the Democratic Party governments, the instrumentalization of religion was accelerated, and especially in 1970s and 1980s, significant shifts occurred in the concept of laicism. The new path adopted was towards the so-called *Turkish-*

[35] Elise Massicard, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 29.
[36] For more information, documentation and analyzes on these issues see particularly Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler,* 234-298.

Islamic Synthesis. It was introduced and developed by *Aydınlar Ocağı [The Intellectuals' Hearth]*[37] in the 1970s and became official ideology in the aftermath of the September 12, 1980 military coup.[38] According to this ideology, the main components of *national culture* were *Turkishness* and *Islam*. These two components make a whole and cannot be separated from each other. Since association of Turkishness and Islam was accepted as the ideal state of society, the reconstruction and dissemination of these values were assigned to the state. Thus, the state and accordingly society could be protected and strengthened.[39] The reflections of this understanding could be seen clearly in the 1982 Constitution, which was made after the 1980 military coup. Political Islam in Turkey is based on this synthesis and characterized by this ideology. The current ruling political Islamist AKP government is a result of such a process.

Following the military coup of the September 12, 1980, fundamental changes have taken place in Turkish political life. In general, a major change has occurred in the state-religion affairs. As mentioned above, the adoption of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis –developed by the nationalist-conservative circles in 1970s – by the state has shaped the political destiny of the country as well as the existence and future of the Alevi communities. The reflections of this Islamic ideology could be obviously observed in the discourses of the top state bureaucracy, in the official reports, legal texts or at least in the compulsory religious lessons under the name of *Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge* that have included to the curriculum for the first time as a constitutional regulation.[40]

The impact of Islamic ideology on the political systems has increasingly consolidated during the AKP rule. During the 18-year AKP reign a period has been launched in which policy implementations have created a transformation in the legal and political system, and the whole system have been reorganized on a religious axis. This period is a *new* period of authoritarianism for the proponents of laicism, democracy, religious minorities, and the Alevi communities as well as the ‘Alawīs.

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[37] A conservative club established in the early 1970s by right-wing thinkers; see Mertcan, *Bitmeyen Kavga Laiklik*, 210-11.

[38] Mertcan, *Bitmeyen Kavga Laiklik*, 223-227.

[39] *Aydınlar Ocağı'nın Görüşü: Türkiye'nin Bugünkü Meseleleri* (İstanbul: Aydınlar Ocağı Yayınları, 1973), 207.

[40] For an extensive discussion of this issue see Pınar Ecevitoğulları and Ayhan Yalçınkaya. *Aleviler Artık Burada Oturmuyor* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), 155-176 and 201-209.

‘Alawīs under the Rule of the AKP

In its 18-year rule, the AKP has created structural changes to Turkey’s legal, political and social order. When the process of the Turkish modernization is scrutinized, with the Republican period fundamental reformations in the political and legal system were-made (even with remarkable contradictions and problems) in line with the principle of laicism and notable steps have been taken for modernization. Although they have significant problems and frailties, having attained to a mature point to an extent, the laicism practices are being repressed today. To put it another way, the rule of the AKP has made Islamic ideology the dominant political system. In this overall situation, the ‘Alawīs as well as other Alevi communities and religious minorities have deteriorating conditions.

The ‘Alawīs who have tried to integrate the political-legal system beginning from the early periods of the Republic of Turkey, and are an important component of Turkish society, have not been recognized officially as a community and the members of the community have been treated inconsistently with the national law and the principle of equality. During AKP rule, the discriminatory and marginalizing policies have incrementally increased, not just for the ‘Alawīs but for all Alevi communities, which seems unlikely to end under such a political Islamic rule, materialized in the AKP politics. In the period of the AKP rule, not just the ‘Alawīs but all Alevis have been affected negatively by the political Islamist policies and have been confronted with serious oppression and discrimination. Accompanied with the Syrian War, the raise of political Islam deteriorated the conditions for the Alevis.

When the policies implemented by the AKP are analyzed and compared with those of previous periods, it can be noticed that there is some parallelism between the Kemalist policies and the AKP policies.[41] However, the remarkable differences between them will also be noticed. Taking into consideration the case of the ‘Alawīs, it can be found out that Arab identity was denied (and Alawism was mentioned in connection with Turkish identity) in the early period of the Republic, while Alawi identity has particularly been targeted in the AKP period. The Syria War erupted in 2011 was a milestone in this respect. Based on my observations about the ‘Alawīs’ organizations, activities, forms of their connection with the political system, their attitudes towards the policies of the governments, youth movements, their way of expressing themselves publicly

[41] The adoption of Sunnī Islam, but not the recognition of the Alevi identity, and the assimilation policies implemented in various ways are examples of this case.

and the forms of their existence, I can state that the existential concerns of the ‘Alawīs have augmented in this period. In other words, the ‘Alawīs, who are among the communities worried by the raise of political Islam and increasingly suffered from this process, feel they are between bare existence and annihilation.

After the Syria War that began in 2011 in which Turkey has been an important actor from the very beginning, the hate speech against the ‘Alawīs, especially produced by the political Islam, has been on the agenda. This was neither random nor accidental. For instance, during the 1998 tension between Turkey and Syria, the utterance of similar discourse by the political Islamists proved that this was strictly related to the ideology of political Islam. In the political Islamist discourse the Syrian regime had been depicted as an ‘Alawī-Nuṣayrī dictatorship and the all the faults of this regime had been laid on the ‘Alawīs who are seen/shown as the owners of the power. Thereupon a *language* of insult, humiliation and menace against the ‘Alawīs of Turkey had become commonplace.[42] I think that this discourse reflected the ideas that the ‘Alawīs in Turkey are extensions of the Syrian regime, they have connections with the Syrian intelligence (al-Mukhabarat) and paramilitary forces, and they might betray the Turkish side in a conflict between Syria and Turkey.[43]

When the place of the ‘Alawī community in history, its current situation, its inner and organizational structure is taken into consideration, it can be found out that the community members are not homogenous, do not have uniform relations with the governments, and have various political attitudes. Despite this heterogenous structure, in some cases, especially against political Islam, the ‘Alawīs can come together around their Alawī identity, jointly react the political

[42] Affected all the Alevis in general, the hate speech has not remained in discourse. Within this period, there have been many assaults against the Alevi communities. See Pınar Ecevitoğulları and Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Aleviler Artık Burada Oturmuyor* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), 225-28.

[43] After a demonstration that took place in Hatay on September 1st for the International Day of Peace the headlines of the government advocate, top-circulated, newspapers can be given as examples. On September 3rd, 2012 Sabah was published with the headline “Dikkat! Hatay’da Şebbiha Eli Var” [Caution! Shabiha finger in Hatay]. The newspaper, contrary to facts, announced that the demonstration was organized to support Assad by the Syrian intelligences (al-Mukhabarat and Shabiha). Yeni Şafak published same news with the headline “Hatay’da Esed’e Destek İçin Provokatif Yürüyüş” [The Provocative Demonstration in Hatay to support Assad]; see “Hatay’da Esed’e Destek İçin Provokatif Yürüyüş”, Yeni Şafak accessed November 12, 2018.
https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/hatayda-esede-destek-icin-provokatif-yuruyus-406356

Islamic menace and get together behind a struggle frontline. Recent social struggles are examples for such cases.

The first remarkable step was taken by publishing newspaper Güney Uyanış after 1980. Having a socialist perspective, this newspaper was involved in activities in the ‘Alawīs settlements and published various studies, articles, news about the ‘Alawīs. The association that was founded in Adana in 1990 with the name Akdeniz Sosyal Dayanışma Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği (ASDA - The Mediterranean Association of Social Solidarity, Education and Culture) has been a significant ‘Alawī institution. ASDA, organizing meetings about Alawīsm and Arabic courses, even in limited levels has tried to engage in activities regarding the ‘Alawī creed and identity. The nongovernmental organizations, beginning from ASDA, especially since early 2000s, with the new amenities provided by the legal system have proliferated. The associations, for the first time, began to use the ‘Alawī attribution publicly. Adana Alevi Kültürünü Araştırma Derneği (AKAD - Adana Alevi Culture Research Association) began to work in 2006 with great hopes with several institutions becoming publicly known such as İskenderun AKAD, Samandağ AKAD, Mersin Kilikya Nehir Derneği (Mersin Cilician River Association), Arap Halkı Alevileri Dayanışma Derneği (Arab Alevis Solidarity Association), Akdeniz Arap Dili ve Kültürü Enstitüsü (Mediterranean Institute of Arab Language and Culture), Ortadoğu Arap Halkları Araştırma Enstitüsü (Middle East Arab Peoples Research Institute). But these nongovernmental organizations are generally in the period of *infancy*, they are timid and weak in their activities.[44]

The most vivid and interesting social movements come from the ‘Alawīs youth. Since 2011, with the violence and terror in Syria, discourses such as *Nuṣayrī-‘Alawī oppression in Syria*, *the dictatorship of Nuṣayrī-‘Alawī minority*, etc. have become usual in Turkey. Such discourses have especially been developed by the political Islamists, including the top administrators of the AKP.[45] This has triggered reactions especially in ‘Alawī youth. In 2011, for the first time, the ‘Alawī youth[46] participated the İzmir Alevi Meeting holding Arabic banners, and after a while they came together under the name of the

[44] Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler,* 335-338.
[45] “Hüseyin Çelik Suriye’ye Aleviler üzerinden saldırıyor!”, SoL, accessed October 26, 2019,https://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/huseyin-celik-suriyeye-aleviler-uzerinden-saldiriyor-haberi-46199; M. Emin Akın, “Suriye’de Nusayri Zulmüne Hayır Diyemeyenler, Ümmeti Bir Akide Savaşına Doğru Sürüklüyorlar.” accessed, October 26,2019.http://islam-tr.org/konu/suriyede-nusayri-zulmune-hayir-diyemeyenler-ummeti-bir-akide-savasina-dogru-surukluyorlar.24238/.
[46] Hakan Mertcan, “Yekfi!”, *Radikal İki*, March 20, 2011.

"Arap Alevi Gençlik Meclisleri" (*'Alawī Youth Councils*). The first banner of the 'Alawī Youth Council appeared on May 1, 2012 in Ankara. The synergy that came out of these events has spread to cities like Ankara, İstanbul, Adana, Antakya, Mersin, Eskişehir, and Muğla. İzmir Councils have been founded, and participated in meetings with banners, slogans and styles peculiar to themselves. In the course of events that were triggered by the war in Syria, they cried out *Enough*! to the war, to assimilation, to disregard, to discrimination and to massacres. As the children of the 'Alawī community that confronted severe oppression and assimilationist policies, both in the Ottoman era and the Republican era, they have tried to resist by diluting the impacts of the assimilationist policies. In the meantime, "Ehlen" Magazine started publishing in 2014 as a culture-art-politics magazine. "Ehlen", which represents a first in terms of the ʿAlawī community, points out an important place in the struggle for identity of the ʿAlawīs, and has been published for four years.

'Alawī Youth Councils have carried out intense discussions and education activities on the 'Alawī creed and history. They have made studies of art, literature, cinema, music, folklore, history, belief. They have attracted attention with their distinctive statements and visual materials in the press releases, marches, meetings, reunions, demonstrations, youth camps, forums, panels, campaigns, etc. These activities have been banding tradition together with modernity. Although recently, especially with the State of Emergency after the Military Coup Attempt of July 15, 2016 the activities of the Councils have reduced, the youth movement has become a milestone for the political history of the 'Alawīs and their political mobilization.[47]

[47] For some of these occasions see "Bir arada olduğumuz günlere Ehlen", BirGün, accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/bir-arada-oldugumuz-gunlere-ehlen-67437.html; "Arap Alevileri yalnız değildir", Yeni Soluk, accessed November 22, 2019, https://yenisoluk.com/arap-alevileri-yalniz-degildir; "İstanbul Arap Alevi Gençlik Meclisi 18.00'de Kadıköy Boğa'da", Genç Gazete, accessed November 22, 2019, https://gencgazete.org/istanbul-arap-alevi-genclik-meclisi-18-00de-kadikoy-bogada/; "Arap-Alevi Gençlik Meclisi'nden protesto", Siyasi Haber, accessed November 21, 2019, http://siyasihaber4.org/arap-alevi-genclik-meclisinden-protesto; "Arap Alevi gençliği sokakta: 'Katliamlara sessiz kalma, ayağa!'" SendikaOrg., accessed November 12, 2019, http://sendika63.org/2015/01/arap-alevi-gencligi-sokakta-tekfircilere-karsi-ayaga-240166/#more; "Mersin'de Alevi katliamı protestosu", Cnn Türk, accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/mersinde-alevi-katliami-protestosu.

Conclusion

The Alevi identity has never been officially acknowledged in Turkey but conceived as a problem by the state and has always been approached with doubt. The ‘Alawīs, too, have got their share from the state's overall assimilationist policies towards the Alevi communities. The ‘Alawīs have been exposed to assimilation both in ethnic and religious respects. The assimilationist policies that were implemented from the early period of the Republic have been sustained in different forms and degrees.

The ‘Alawīs, tired of the oppression and discriminatory policies of the Ottoman period, supported the Republic due to the Kemalist regime’s discourses with hope for a new political order. Even the assimilationist and discriminatory practices could not prevent them from supporting the Republic. Despite all the negative aspects of the republican regime that crystallized in time, the opportunities that have been created by the shift from oppression, insult and the life of misery to a relatively wealthy and modern life, the power gained in this way have made the ties with the regime tighter. I think that the ‘Alawīs have reacted positively to the secularization project of the new regime, which created discomfort among wide Islamist sectors of the society, even though they have some troubles with this project. That is to say, just like other esoteric communities which have felt the oppression created by the Sunnī Islam and its institutions for centuries, the ‘Alawīs’ assessment that the liquidation of the religious ideas and institutions from the state and public life would open a more comfortable and safe life for themselves is meaningful both in historical and sociological terms.

Even though the state seemed to liquidate Sunnī Islam, it needed a new ideological mechanism. The owners of the new regime tried to liquidate the Islamist political groups, both because of their ideology (the positivist conception of world) and the idea that the Islamists might be the source of the opposition. However, they, on the one hand, performed this liquidation, on the other hand, safeguarded the political system against the large mass of people who could be affected by the Sunnī Islam. Despite running into contradictions with the laicism discourse, they restructured the religion and attached it to the state by leaning on the Sunnī Islam. The ‘Alawīs, due to the relative improvement in their conditions have ignored these contradictions (despite the violation of rights originating from the contradictions) for a long time. Of course, it would not be correct to see the improvements in their condition as the sole source of their consent for the political-legal order offered by the state. In

addition, the state harsh reactions to the *critiques* towards itself and manipulative approach should be underlined.

As mentioned above, in the single-party period the ‘Alawīs was always part of the authoritarian plan of the state. This was a recovery period in which there was no serious opposition against the regime, the assimilationist policies of the state were obeyed, and Turkish identity was embraced for survival. It should also be emphasized that the hope cherished for the new regime and the expectations for a better life were strong, and that this, despite all hitches, made the ‘Alawīs adopt Kemalism widely.

It appears as the AKP governments, from the beginning, had the tendency of sustaining and intensifying the assimilationist policies against the ‘Alawīs. I think that a strategy of creating an *Alawism* close to the state by impeding the solidarity between the ‘Alawi community will have place in those assimilationist policies.

The AKP’s coming to power has a special meaning for the ‘Alawi community: the domination of Sunnī Islam and the fear from sharia. The perturbation of the ‘Alawi community concerning safety with respect to political-legal and social order have begun to increase. Besides, the year 2011, in this context, was a crucial turning point in the AKP rule. When the period after the annexation of Sanjak of Iskenderun in 1939 is taken into consideration, there is evidence that indicates that for the ‘Alawīs there was never a period of such existential anxieties that was so intensive and widespread in the whole Republican era. The anxiety here is not just about the spiritual existence but also about the material existence. Simply it is the anxiety about right of life, felt by the whole community.

The political Islamist polices of the AKP, its implementations against targeting laicism and modernity *re*-strengthened ties between the ‘Alawīs and Kemalism. In a period that the ‘Alawi community has just had, the potential to question the Kemalist ideology, the fear created by the AKP has impeded this questioning and caused Kemalism be reproduced in the ‘Alawī community. Nevertheless, it is not yet clear which tendency will predominate. The test of the ‘Alawīs with nationalism and/or the path that would be taken between the Arab nationalism and Turkish nationalism will be a decisive problem for the envisaged future of the ‘Alawī community. Once again, at this very point, this envisaged future will also be determined by the war and peace relation of the ‘Alawī creed with a nationalist ideology.

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CHAPTER 3

THE YEZIDIS IN TURKEY – A STIGMATISED IDENTITY

Victoria Arakelova

General

The Yezidis or Yazidis[1] (Arab. *yazīdīya*, Kurdish *ēzdī*), a Kurmanji-speaking ethno-religious group, have for centuries been part of the variegated map of the Ottoman Empire and then the Republic of Turkey. Despite numerous attestations of the Yezidis in various sources from medieval times,[2] the community life of this people, their identity and culture have long remained among the least investigated problems. Apart their historical motherland, the northern part of Iraq (north-west of Mosul and Jebel Sinjar [*Ĉīyə̄ Šangə̄lē*], west of Mosul), currently the Yezidis are also found in Syria, Eastern Turkey, Armenia and Georgia, as well as in Russia and Europe. Almost the entire Yezidi population of Turkey, based previously in compact settlements in the rural centers of Tur-Abdin, Nisibin, Diarbekir, Mush, Sasun, and Bitlis, as well as on the upper shores of the Tigris river, has moved to Syria, Germany, or other Western-European countries. Discussing the distribution of the Yezidis in Turkey, the catalogue of the "Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey" (Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, 119), mentions dozens of the Yezidi villages in the frontier provinces bordering on Syria and Iraq, in

[1] On the Yezidis in general, their history and religion see: John Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival* (London and New York: KPI, 1987); Philip Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995); Birgül Açikyildiz, *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Garnik Asatrain and Victoria Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and their Spirit World* (Durham: Acumen, 2014), Victoria Arakelova 2015, *Ezdinerə ev nranc' kronə (*Yerevan: Publications of the Caucasian Centre for Iranian Studies, 2015); on the Yezidis in Turkey particularly, Ceyhan Suvari, *Eziditer - Etnodinsel Bir İnanç Olarak Ezidilik* (Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi, 2013).

[2] See Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival*, 42-58, 73-81; Victoria Arakelova, "Marginalii k istoriografii o ezidax," *Iran-Nameh: Armenian Journal of Oriental Studies*, vol. 42–43 (2011): 58–64.

particular: Mardin (*ca*. 25 villages), Urfa (24 villages), Siirt (14 villages), Diarbekir (4 villages), Gaziantep (4 villages), and Adiyaman (2 villages). According to the data presented by the Yezidi Verein in Hannover, 121 Yezidi villages in the region have been destroyed or taken over by Muslims in the recent past.[3]

Generally, the statistics on the Yezidis are among the most problematic of issues; their concrete number have been almost never available: in various censuses, they have often been counted with other religious or ethnic groups. For example, in the Census of the Russian Empire of 1914, the Yezidis of Western Armenia (currently eastern parts of Turkey), are counted together with the Qizilbashes, while in most of the Soviet censuses of population (except those of 1926 and 1989), the Yezidis of Armenian and Georgia, as Kurmanji-speakers, were identified as Kurds,[4] what, naturally, seriously distorts the whole picture and presents no reliable figures. Nowadays, the total number of the Yezidis can be approximately estimated to be around 400,000-450,000 people: in Iraq and Syria (without taking into consideration mass migrations caused by the current Near Eastern crisis), correspondingly around 200,000 and 80,000–100,000; Armenia 45,000; Georgia 25,000; Russia 15,000–20,000; Western Europe 50,000–60,000; all in all, some 400,000–450,000 people.[5] There is no approximate data on the Yezidis of today's Turkey. The Turkish Demographic Profile of Index Mundi 2019,[6] apart from proper Turks, indicates 19 percent of the Kurds and 7–12 percent of other ethnic minorities represented in the country. In terms of religious identity, the source mentions only 0.2 percent of minorities (mainly Christian and Jews) versus 99.8 percent of Muslims. In relevant research, information on the Yezidis as a minority in Turkey is also missing.[7] Mass migrations and disappearance of whole Yezidi villages leave no

[3] Ibid.

[4] See Nodar Mossaki, "Yezidis in Censuses in the USSR and Post-Soviet Countries," in *Religious Minoritie in Kurdistan*, ed. by Khanna Omarkhali (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 97-138; Victoria Arakelova, *Ezdinerə ev nranc' kronə*: 9-11.

[5] Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*, vii.

[6] Index Mudi "Turkey Demographic Profile 2019", https://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/ demographics_profile.html.

[7] See, e.g., Nigar Karimova and Edward Deverell, "Minorities in Turkey." *Occasional Papers*, no 19 (Stockholm: Utrikespolitiska institutet, 2019).

chance to reconstruct any figure based on the number of villages and their dwellers either.[8]

The Yezidis speak Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji), but call their language *ēzdīkī*, i.e., "the Yezidi language", thus emphasizing their peculiar, non-Kurdish identity.

The Yezidi society is a closed endogamous community with a caste system consisting of the three main components: the clergy including the casts of the *sheikhs* (*šēx*, Arab. *šayx*), the *pirs* (Pers. *pīr* "elder, saint"), and the laymen—*mirīd* (Arab. *murīd*, meaning "disciple"). Other casts like *Kochak*, *Faqir*, *Qawwal*, *Farrash*, and *Kebani* have particular functions in the contexts of the temple service.

Most of the Yezidis live the sedentary life of cattle-breeders.

The religion of the Yezidis is a unique product of the Near Eastern non-dogmatic milieu, rooted in mystical Islam, but later, having totally dissociated itself from the Muslim milieu,–became a basis for a principally new ethno-religious identity. Its eccentricity, manifested in numerous non-dogmatic peculiarities, brought the Yezidis the disrepute of heretics and even devil-worshippers and actually doomed the community to constant persecution in the Muslim environment.

The basic source reflecting the peculiarities of the Yezidi religious tradition is the multi-genre folklore, the so-called *qawl-ū-bayt*—hymns fixing most of the doctrinal aspects of Yezidism and used in orthopraxy.[9] The hymns contain considerably more information on the Yezidi sacred knowledge then the so-called Yezidi holy books—*Kitēbā Jalwa* ("The Book of Revelation") and *Mashafē Raš* ("The Black Book"), the latter being pretty late compilations.[10]

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[8] The pro-Kurdish *Peace and Democracy Party* deputy Ayla Akat Ata gives the figure of 400 Yezidis currently living in Turkey (" Parliamentary investigation request for Yazidi people in Turkey," *EKurd Daily*, April 19, 2014, https://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2014/4/turkey4996.htm.

[9] See Ordikhane Celil and Celile Celil, *Zargotina k'urda* (Yerevan: Armenian Academy of Sceinces, 2978); idem, *Kurdskij Folklor* (Moscow: Nauka 1978); Margarita Rudenko, *Kurdskaya obryadovaya poeziya* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982); Philip Kreyenbroek and Khalil Rashow *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005); Victoria Arakelova, "On Some Peculiarities of the Yezidi Lore Translation," In *Oriental Languages in Translation*, ed. by Andrzej Zaborski and Marek Piela, vol. 3 (Krakow: Polish Academy of Sciences Press, 2008): 97-104.

[10] See Anastas Marie, "La découverte récente des deux livres sacrés des Yézîdis," *Anthropos. Internationale Zeitschrift für Völker- und Sprachenkunde*, vol. 6 (1911): 1–39; Maximiliam Bittner, "Die heilige Bücher der Jeziden", *Denkschriften der Kaiserlisschen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. 55. 4 (1913): 1–97; Garnik Asatrian

Origin of the Community

The emergence of Yezidism, or, rather its shaping as a principally new ethno-religious phenomenon, should be analyzed in the context of the religious situation in Northern Mesopotamia of the XI-XIV centuries. The variegated ethnic and religious milieu of this active contact zone was a fertile ground for the occurrence of this syncretic phenomenon deprived of strict dogma. For at least first three or four centuries it was crystallizing as a principally new ethno-religious group nowadays known as Yezidism.

The legendary history of the Yezidis connects the emergence of the first Yezidi community with Sheikh ʻAdi bin Musāfir (Šeyx ʻAdī; born around 1075), although in fact, the latter founded the Sufi order of ʻAdawiyya, which later became the mainstay of the new syncretic closed group.[11]

One should take into account active contacts, mutual influence, transformations and synthesis of various ideas — those of mystical Islam, different forms of Christianity, Gnostic trends, Old Iranian heritage and multiple pagan cults — which played their role in the shaping of this new teaching.

One of the important components of the mentioned milieu was the religious-political movement of the followers of the Umayyad dynasty. Having lost political power centuries earlier, the Umayyads still enjoyed fairly high religious authority; some of their representatives became Sufi sheikhs. The most iconic figure of the dynasty appeared to be Yazid I (Yazīd bin Muʻāwiyah), the second Umayyad caliph, whose personality is unambiguously evaluated in the history of Islam because of the Karbala tragedy. A group of the Umayyads' followers, including particular fans of Yazid bin Muawiya himself, could well have built up a segment in the Adawiyya order, particularly taking into consideration the fact that Sheikh ʻAdi himself belonged to this dynasty. It was exactly this group, which strengthened the cult of Yazid to the community, that later became the basis for the deification of this personality and his transformation into one of god's manifestations in Yezidism.[12]

A crucial segment of the Yezidi doctrine is its obvious gnostic elements. There is no historical data pointing to possible direct influence of gnostic sects

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and Arshak Poladian, "Ezdineri davanankə. Himnakan astvacutʻyunnerə ev surb grkʻerə," *Patmabanasirakan Handes*, vol. 4 (1989): 131–50.

[11] Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 37-44.

[12] Ibid., 45-50; see also Victoria Arakelova, "Sultan Yezid in the Yezidi Religion," *Studies on Persianate Societies*, vol. 3 (2008): 198–202.

on the formation of Yezidism. Gnostic ideas, which were literary in the air of the then Northern Mesopotamia, could penetrate into Yezidism on different levels, but mainly, most probably, through esoteric Islam–Sufism and other heterodox trends.[13]

Finally, at the turn of the 1st–2nd millenniums, certain tribes of the region were still adherents of pre-Islamic cults or more likely, retained some elements of these cults, were already known as followers of the religion of the Magi (Arab. Majūs, "Zoroastrians") − magūšūtā.[14] Nevertheless, the issue of the supposedly pre-Islamic Iranian elements in the Yezidi religion should be approached with caution. Some archaic cult elements in Yezidism may well also be manifestations of universal religious clichés traced in Northern Mesopotamia and elsewhere in Western Asia, including the Iranian space, and not the result of direct or indirect Zoroastrian succession.[15]

Apparently, the environment in the community, which was later transformed into the proper basis for the Yezidi ethno-confessional group, was quite tolerant; the lack of formalized dogma, the priority of mystical and emotional knowledge over orthodoxy, generally typical of the Sufi environment, gave rise to a rather flexible structure, which ultimately resulted in Yezidi syncretism. The Sufi core of the community naturally deified Sheikh Adi as the head of the order, the Umayyads' followers could particularly worship Yazid bin Muawiya; other elements that flowed into the community could well have transformed into cults of numerous deities, holy men, etc., either giving way to or dissolving under the onslaught of more significant figures or leaving their colors in the palette of Yezidism.

It is hard to assume when exactly the particular backbone of the Adawiyya Sufi order, once widespread in many parts of the Middle East, lost its Islamic features and turned into a new syncretic sect. The isolation of the community and its remoteness from the dogmatic centers played a significant role in this process. The Adawiyya conveyed to the Yezidi community some important characteristics of Sufism: spiritual hierarchy, deification of the leader, the

[13] See in detail Victoria Arakelova and Garnik Asatrian, "Gnostic Elements in Yezidism," in *The Gnostic World*, ed. by Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen, and Jay Johnson (London-New York: Routledge, 2018): 358–69.

[14] On the formation of the Yezidi community, see Victoria Arakelova, "K istorii formirovaniya ezidskoj obščiny," *Iran-Nameh: Armenian Journal of Oriental Studies*, vol. 40 (2005): 63–66.

[15] See, e.g., Victoria Arakelova, "Notes on the Yezidi Religious Syncretism," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 8.1 (2004): 19 –28.

veneration of prominent Sufis (e.g., al-Khallaj, Rabi'a Adaviya),[16] elements of Sufi symbolism (the mystical meaning of the circle) and so on, but the most important, the apology of Satan, the latter being obvious in the cult of Malak-Tawus, the central figure of Yezidis.[17] Definitely, not less than three or four centuries separate the foundation of Sheikh 'Adi's order from the time, to which we can reliably attribute the existence of Yezidism as already a relatively shaped doctrine.

Religious Doctrine

The Yezidis are followers of the syncretic religion called *Sharfadin* (*Šarfadīn*). They classify it as monotheism, a belief in only one god, *xwadē* (or xwadī, xudā, deriving from New Pers. *xudāy*), and his manifestations − the holy triad of Malak-Tawus (the Peacock Angel), Sheikh 'Adi, and Sultan Ezid − coexist with the whole folk pantheon of deities, holy men and patrons. The latter are rather elements of popular religion preserved by many Near Eastern peoples, than the ground for polytheism.

The monotheism of the Yezidis is clearly expressed in their Symbol of Faith—*Šahdā dīnī*:

Šahdā dīnē min ēk Allāh, ...
Silt'ān Šēxadī pādšē mina, ...
Silt'ān Ēzdī pādšē mina,...
Tāwūsī malak šahdā ū īmānēd mina...
Haqa, xwadē kir, [am] ēzdīna,
Sar nāvē Silt'ān Ēzdīna.
Al-h'amd lillāh, am ži ōl ū tarīqēd xō di-řāzīnā.

The Testimony of my faith is one god,
Sultan Sheikh 'Adi is my king,
Sultan Yezid is my king,
Malak-Tāwūs (The Peacock Angel) is the symbol [of faith] and my faith.
Indeed, by god's will [we] are Yezidis,
We are called by the name of Sultan Yezid.
God be praised, we are content with our religion and our Community.[18]

[16] Victoria Arakelova, "Sufi Saints in the Yezidi Tradition (1): Qawlē Husēyīnī Halāj," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 5 (2001): 183–92.
[17] See in detail Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 26-29.
[18] Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, *Its Observances and Textual Tradition*: 226.

The figure of the *xwadē* is quite vague. According to the Yezidi tradition, despite being creator of the Universe, the xwadē is completely indifferent to its fate and he transmits all the worldly affairs to his manifestations. There are just few examples of direct address to the *xwadē* in the Yezidi *qawl-ū-bayt*, the Yezidi morning prayer and the hymn of glorification, "Madh'ē Xwadē" ("Praise to God") being among those rare cases.[19] As the most transcendent figure, the *xwadē* is almost tabooed to be called out in vain. He represents a typical example of a *deus otiosus*, an impartial and removed god, whose features are blurred against the background of his active representatives. To be more precise, the triad, having shaped already within Yezidism, was superimposed upon the already available tradition of monotheism initially present in the Yezidi religion as a heritage of the mystical Islam.

Malak-Tawus (*Malak tāwūs*, *Malakē tāwūs*, or *Tāwūsē/ī malak*, Arab. *Malak Ṭāwūs*, i,e., the Peacock Angel)[20] is the most important character of the Yezidi holy triad and, in fact, the essence the Yezidi religion. He is characterized as the symbol of faith or the faith itself (*Tāwūsī malak šahdā ū īmānēd mina*)[21] – "Malak-Tawus is the symbol [of faith] and my faith"), his central cult is the main distinguishing feature of Yezidism.[22] It is exactly because of the controversial figure of Malak-Tawus regarded in some traditions as the embodiment of the lord of darkness, the Yezidis have often been described as "devil worshippers".[23]

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[19] Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 4-6.

[20] See on this character in detail: Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel* 9-36; also idem, "Malak-Tawus: The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 7.1–2 (2003): 1–36.

[21] C.S. Dewrēš, *Du'a ū druzgē ēzdīya* (Yerevan: n.p., 1993): 11.

[22] On the comparative analysis of the niches of Malak-Tawus among the Mandaeans, the Ahl-i Haqq and Yezidis see Arakelova, ""The Shibboleths of Heresies: On Some Essential Markers of the Near Eastern Non-Dogmatic Milieu," in *Studies on the Iranian World II: Medieval and Modern*, ed. by Anna Krasnowolska and Renata Rusek-Kowalska (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2015), 119-24; also Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 30-32.

[23] See, e.g., Alexandr Eliseev, "Sredi poklonnikov dyavola (Ocherki verovaniya ezidov)," *Severnyj vestnik*, no. 2 (1888): 51–84.; Alphonse Mingana, *The Yezidis: Devil Worshippers of the Middle East: Their Beliefs and Sacred Books* (London: Holmes Pub Group Llc., 1993); cf. Mahmud Bayazidi, *Rusûmat'nameyê ek'radîye/ / Nravy i obyčai* kurdov, ed. and trans. by M.B. Rudenko (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostočnoj Literatury, 1963), 74; Rifaat Ebied, "Devil-worshippers: The Yazidis," in *Mehregan in Sydney* (*Sydney Studies in Religion 1*), ed. by Garry Trompf and M. Honari (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1994): 93-98.

Malak-Tawus is another eponym for the Yezidis, who also call themselves *milatē Malak tāwūs*—"the nation (or tribe) of Malak-Tawus". In "The Black Scripture" or *Mash'afē řaš* (Arab. *Kitāb al-aswad*), Malak-Tawus is identified with Azrail, the messenger of death, one of the four archangels nearest to God.[24]

Malak-Tawus may appear as the demiurge or as his agent of creation. In the whole *qawl-ū-bayt* there is only one song directly concerned with Malak-Tawus, *Qawlē Malakē tāwūs*, what can be also explained, as in the case with the *xwadē*, by a partial taboo upon his name: cf. "Never mention my name or my features, lest you should commit a sin" ("The Book of Revelation," Part 4, No. 8). *Qawlē Malakē tāwūs* emphasizes the virtues of the character: his strength, kindness, limitless power, fame, and so on. "The Book of Revelation" (*Kitēbā ǰalwa*) is devoted entirely to Malak-Tawus, representing thus an important source for the reconstruction of this character and his main characteristics.[25]

The special status of Peacock Angel is also seen is his attribute *bēširīk-bēhavāl*, "having no companion or friend,"[26] or in other words "the only one".

According to Yezidi religious tradition, as is reflected in "The Black Scripture" (sects. 1-8), Malak-Tawus is accompanied and assisted by seven of his 'avatars': the angels Azrail, Dardail, Israfil, Mikail, Jabrail, Shamnail and Turail, the attendant angels of god, Azrail featuring as Malak-Tawus himself. The Yezidis believe each year during the celebrations of Jamā'at, the Festival of the Assembly, on September 23-30 at the shrine of Sheikh 'Adi in Lalish each year, Malak-Tawus with the angels determines the fate of the subsequent year.[27]

The figure of Malak-Tawus has a complex genesis rooted, on the one hand, in the ambivalent image of the peacock in various religious tradition, and, on the other hand, in the Islamic apocryphal tradition, particularly in the Sufi idea of the apology of Satan.[28]

Going back to the mythological concept of the expelled deity, the Sufi approach to the fallen angel as an adherent absolutely devoted to the Creator, moreover, ready for self-sacrifice and doomed to exile, the one who is tragically in love, without whom, however, there can be no recognition of the object of love, has greatly contributed to the image of Malak-Tawus in Yezidism. This

[24] Bittner, *Die heilige Bücher der Jeziden*: 24-28.
[25] Ibid, 24-39; Asatrian and Poladian, "Ezdineri davanankə": 140-144.
[26] Avdal, *Ezdineri kronakan havatalik'nerə* (Yerevan, Typewritten Ms in Armenian), 1957, fol. 81.
[27] Cecil Edmonds, *A Pilgrimage to Lalish* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1967): 4.
[28] See in detail Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis*, 20-29; also Peter Wilson, "Iblis and the Black Light," *Gnosis*, vol. 14 (1989-1990): 45.

perception of Satan is so ambiguous that the word "Satan" (Arab. *šayṭān*) is taboo among the Yezidis, and even more interestingly this taboo has come to cover a number of similar-sounding words (for example, the words *šatt*, "estuary," *qaytān*, "rope" and so on) that are substituted by synonyms.

Incidentally, the title of the Yezidi religion, *Sharfadin*, should be regarded as an allegory substituting the tabooed name of Malak-Tawus. Literary meaning "the honour of religion" (Arab. *Šaraf ad-dīn*), the term had, most probably, been one of the main epithets of the principal deity.[29]

The two other representatives of the Yezidi holy triad, Sheikh 'Adi and Sultan Ezid are clear examples of the deification of historical personalities. Sheikh 'Adī bin Musafir (*Šīxādī*, *Šēxādī*, *Šīxāndī*, or *Šēx*[*ē*] *A'dī* [*Ādī*] in the Yezidi tradition), a prominent Sufi master with a well-documented biography was definitely venerated among the 'Adawiyya Sufis. The Yezidis inherited this tradition from their precursors and developed it to the level of deification, approaching Sheikh 'Adī as a manifestation of the *xwadē* with peculiar functions.[30]

Sultan Ezid (Si/ult'ān Ēzīd), known as the lord of people and their worldly life, is sometimes even associated with Malak-Tawus himself. The cult of Sultan Ezid among the Yezidis grew out of popularity of Yazid bin Muawiyya, whose veneration was among the common trends of the time. According to the Yezidi tradition, Sultan Ezid broke away from Islam and adopted the religion of Šahīd bin-ǰarr, the son of Adam,[31] that is, Yezidism. In some marginal trends, though, Sultan Ezid is not identified with the historical Umayyad caliph at all.[32]

All the three representatives of the Yezidi holy triad are often interchanged with each other, their characteristics, domains and functions overlap in various contexts. All the three can appear in the same status, representing the creator, the symbols of faith, etc.

Apart from the triad, the Yezidi folk pantheon includes numerous minor deities, guardian spirits, saints, and holy men, who patronize diverse spheres of

[29] Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis*: 29-30.
[30] See Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival*, 15-16; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis*: 37-44.
[31] Esther Spät, "Shahid bin Jarr, Forefather of the Yezidis and the Gnostic Seed of Seth," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 6.1–2 (2002): 27-56.
[32] See on this character in detail, Arakelova, "Sultan Yezid in the Yezidi Religion: Genesis of the Character," *Studies on Persianate Societies*, vol. 3 (2008), 198–202; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis*: 45-50.

human activity or personify natural phenomena. Their names feature the caste-related titles: sheikh (*šēx*), pir (p'īr), and dervish (*dawrēš*).

Among the representatives of the folk pantheon are the following. "The Thunderer" acting under different names − Māma-(Mam)řašān (or Mahmad-řašān, lit. "pouring, darting Mahmad (Muhammad)", Šēx A'brūs − the lord of lightning, A'bdī Řašō (or A'bd Řaš) − the god of thunder and lightning, and Bā-raš − the spirit of the hurricane.[33]

Another atmospheric deity is Šēx Mūsē-sōr, "the Red Sheikh Mūs (Moses)" controlling the air and sending the wind in fair weather during threshing work for winnowing.[34]

The deities of the sun and the moon are Sheikhs Shams (otherwise Šēx Šams, Šēx Šims, Šēšims, or Šēšim) and Faxr ad-Din (or Farxadīn,/Faxradīn). Sheikh Shams' figure is particularly significant in the folk pantheon. Among his epithets are the following: *bīnāyā ĉavā* ("the eyes' light") − a metaphor for "godhead", *masabē mina*, "the essence of my religion"; *ĉirā dīnī* ("the light of the faith"); the *qibla* ("pivot"); *qawatā dīn* ("the power of the faith"); *xudanē ma'rīfatē ū ark'ān ū nāsīna* ("the master of spiritual knowledge"); *mōrā Šēx Šims* ("the owner of the seal"); *ĉirā bar sunatē* (the torch of the [Yezidi] community); and *ĉavē xwadē* (God's eye). Sheikh Shams is attributed with power over hell and the *Sirāt* bridge,[35] and his name is mentioned in Yezidi lore more frequently than that of any other deity.[36]

Malak Faxradīn (Faxr ad-Din) or A'zīz Malak Faxradīn − that is, (Saint) Angel Faxr ad-Din − is identified in the Yezidi tradition with Turail (or Nurail), the seventh avatar of Malak-Tawus. He is considered the creator of Yezidi religious lore, or *Qawl-ū-bayt*, and the *qawwals* (reciters) are known as *Jēšē Malak Faxradīn*: "the armies of Malak Faxradīn".[37] Faxr ad-Din's role as that of

[33] Garnik Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova, "The Yezidi Pantheon," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 8.2 (2004): 234-242; idem, *The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis*: 54-61; see also Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism, Its Background, Observances, and Textual Tradition*: 109, 115.

[34] See Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 61.

[35] Celil and Celil, *Kurdskij Folklor*: 33-34.

[36] Victoria Arakelova, "Three Figures from the Yezidi Folk Pantheon", *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 6. 1-2 (2002): 57-67; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 67-69.

[37] Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*: 218-219.

the moon deity can be observed in the ritual of healing from "lunar disease": *kēma hayvī* or *hīvē lēxistī* (lit. "the [state of being] moonstruck")[38].

Two female-deities, Pīrā-Fāt and Xatūnā-farxā, most probably, represent the same *denotatum.* Pīrā-Fāt, the foremother of the Yezidis, has saved from annihilation the seed from which the Yezidi people originated. She is also the patroness of women in labor and newborn babies, protecting them from the evil demoness Āl.[39] Xatūnā-farxā has the similar function of protection of the infants, but mainly on the so-called *čilla*, the initial forty days of life.[40]

Mamē-Šivān (or "shepherd Mam" and Gāvānē Zarzān ("herdsman Zarzān") are the dual deities of livestock, having an important status in the religious mentality of the cattle-breeding society. The Yezidi farmers address them with specific formula:

Am pištī ta, Mamē-Šivān, dičin bar vī pazī; pišti ta,
Gāvānē Zarzān, dičin bar vī dawārī; am pištī ta,
Mamē-Šivān, paz xway dikin,
am pištī ta Gāvānē Zarzān, dēwēr xway dikin.

Relying on you, Mamē-Šivān,
we follow that flock (of sheep); relying on you,
Gāvānē Zarzān, we follow the herd (of cows);
relying on you, Mamē-Šivān,
we go after the small animals;
relying on you, Gāvānē Zarzān, we go after the cattle.[41]

The significance of these characters is evident in various in rituals and feasts related to them.[42]

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[38] Victoria Arakelova, "Healing Practices among the Yezidi Sheikhs in Armenia," *Asian Folklore Studies*, no. LX. 2 (2001): 319–328.

[39] Garnik Asatrian, "Āl Reconsidered," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 5 (2001): 149–57; Victoria Arakelova, "Al (Spirit Possessions—Iran, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Afghanistan)," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, ed. by Suad Joseph, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 52-53.

[40] Garnik Asatrian, "Foremother of the Yezidis," in *Religious Texts in Iranian Languages*, ed. by Fereydun Vahman and Claus Pedersen (Copenhagen: Danish Royal Academy of Sciences, 2007): 323-28; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 72-77.

[41] Mamo Davrešyan, "Andrkovkasyan k'rderi anasnapahut'yan het kapvac havatalik'ner," *Lraber hasarakakan gitut'yunneri*, vol. 6 (1977): 74.

[42] Ibid, 73; Tatyana Aristova, *Kurdy Zakavkaz'ya (Istoriko-etnografičeskij očerk*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1986): 75, Asatrian, "The Lord of Cattle in Gilan," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 6.1–2 (2002): 83; also Arakelova, "The Siyah-Galesh and the Deity

Xidir-Nabī (or Xidr-Navī − "Prophet Xidr"; Arab. al-Xiḍr, Pers. Xizr or Xezr) is a universal figure, popular among numerous peoples in the Near East and Central Asia. Identified with the Prophet Elijah in many cultures, in the Yezidi tradition Xidir-Nabī is referred to as Xidirnabī-Xidiraylās or simply Xirdaylās.[43] One of the sons of Sheikh Shams and a celestial warrior, Xidir-Nabī is described as *mērē gāz-gēdūkā* ("the man of mountains and gorges") or *haspē sīyārē bōz* ("rider of a white horse"), who patronizes the young, travelers, and those in love. In many aspects the Yezidi Xidir-Nabī reveals striking parallels with the Armenian popular saint Surb Sargis (St Sergius) with similar functions.[44] The festivals of both, correspondingly in the Yezidi and Armenian traditions, are also similar to each other in the something is missing here.[45] Apparently, the Yezidi version of this character was shaped under the Armenian cultural influence.[46]

Pirā-stēř or Prikī stēř (lit. "the old woman of bedding") is a female spirit, unique to Yezidi culture. An old woman, invisible to the eye, is believed to live in bedding (*stēř*) and roam about the house at night.[47]

Šēx-kirās ("the spirit of the garment") is an almost forgotten figure, who was probably responsible for the process of death or the transmigration of the soul (*tanāsux*).[48]

Milyāk'atē-qanǰ (lit. "the holy angel"), the only example of the *Deus Phalli* in all New Iranian folk pantheons, is only once attested in the lore.[49]

Patrons of Cattle-Breeding Iranian People," in *Iran: Qiestions et connaissances*, vol. III, (Studia Iranica Cahere 27), ed. by Bernard Hourcade (Paris: Peeters, 2003): 171-76; Asatrian and Arakelova, "The Yezidi Pantheon": 256-59; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 80-82.

[43] Anait Papazyan, "Al'-Xidr i Il'ya: Mifologičeskie istoki analogii," *Palestinskij sbornik*, no. 28 (1986): 89–97; Krasnowolska, *Some Key Figures of Iranian Calendar Mythology* (Krakow: TAiWPN Universitas, 1998); Celil and Celil, *Zargotina k'urda*: 308.

[44] Sargis Harut'yunyan (ed.), *Surb Sargis: Gitžołovi nyut'er* (Yerevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 2002).

[45] Šēx K'eleş, *Řē-řizma miletē ēzdī angorī qirarē dīn* (Yerevan: n.p., 1995); Davrešyan, "Andrkovkasyan k'rderi anasnapahut'yan het kapvac havatalik'ner": 73.

[46] Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 95-97.

[47] Ibid. :92.

[48] Arakelova, "Three Figures from the Yezidi Folk Pantheon": 68-69; also Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 77-80.

[49] Avdal, *Ezdineri kronakan havatalik'nerə*: 93-94.

Some elements of the phallic cult can be traced to the Yezidi festival *Barān-bardān* ("the releasing of rams").[50]

Other characters of the Yezidi folk pantheon are as follows: Dawrēš-a'rd or Dawrēšē-a'rd (lit. "saint/master/host of the Earth"), who is the lord of the Earth (the underworld) and has the function of preserving people's hidden or pawned possessions; Šēx A'lī Šams (or Šīxālī-Šamsān) − the protector of wayfarers, captives, exiles, and all those in strange lands; Xatā-jōt ("spirit of the furrow") − the patroness of agriculture; Xudāne-mālē ("master of the house")− the spirit of the household, living in fireplaces and protecting families' welfare and morality; Šēx Mand or P'īr Mandī-gōrā, the lord of graves carrying the epithet *šēxē řaš* ("the black sheikh") −a chthonic character possessing the power over snakes and scorpions; Ibrahim-khalil ("the friend of god") − the Yezidi version of the Biblical Prophet Abraham, with no specific function, but mentioned in the prayer before an ordinary meal; Jin-tayār ("the flying jinn") − the lord of the genies, curing, inter alia, the mentally ill; and Pīrē-Libinā(n), the "builder spirit," who is said to have built many of the sanctuaries in Lalesh and is also believed to facilitate marriages.[51]

The Yezidi tradition has also preserved elements of animal worship (particularly that of the dog, the snake, the chameleon, and the rooster) and plant cults (the onion and the mandrake). Among the celestial bodies and natural phenomena having connotation in the tradition are the following: the Milky Way (Kurmanji *Rīyā kādizīyē* − "the road of a straw reaper or thief"), Venus (*Stayrā sibē* − the morning star), Sirius (*Galāvēž*; lit. "([the star] bringing people to perdition"), and the constellations of Libra (*stayrā Mēzīn*), Pleiades (*Pēwir*), and Aries (*Barān*), as well as lunar eclipses, rainbows, earthquakes, thunder, and lightning.[52]

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[50] See Arab Şemîlov, *Berbang* (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1969); Garnik Asatrian, "Armenian *xoygołowt'iwn:* Tracing Back an Old Animal-Breeding Custom in Ancient Armenia." *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 2 (1998): 63–65; on his cultic significance in relation to fertility, Victoria Arakelova, "Milyak'ate-qanj—The Phallic Deity of the Yezidis," in *Religious Texts in Iranian Languages*, ed. by Fereydun Vahman and Claus Pedersen (Copenhagen: Danish Royal Academy of Sciences, 2006): 329–36; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 82-86.

[51] On all the mentioned characters, see in detail Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 87-99.

[52] Victoria Arakelova, "Some Natural Phenomena and Celestial Objects in the Yezidi Folk Beliefs," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 10.1 (2006): 26–34; eadem, "The Onion and the Mandrake: Plants in the Yezidi Folk Beliefs," *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 7 (2014): 149–156; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 109-120.

The absence of dogma resulted in the coexistence of some conflicting ideas in Yezidism. For example, tradition has preserved three legends related to the Yezidis' origin, going back to three different sources − the apocryphal Abrahamic tradition,[53] the Iranian mythologeme of the preservation of the primordial seed,[54] and the Iranian epic tradition (related to one of the storylines of *Shahnameh*).[55] Another example of the above stated paradoxes is the obvious contradiction between the Abrahamic idea of the "hereafter" and the idea of metempsychosis (*tanāsux*) once existed in Yezidism.[56]

Grouping a niche for Yezidism on the Near Eastern religious map, one should pay particular attention to some of its common features with various segments of non-dogmatic environment, first of all, the heterodox Shi'a milieu.[57] Dogmatic Shi'a elements are surprisingly preserved in the tradition as well.[58] The obvious Sufi heritage is, in many cases, reinterpreted in accordance with the proper Yezidi doctrine.[59] The Gnostic content, presented on different levels, requires specific analysis.[60]

Identity Issue

Yezidis are an illustrative example of an ethno-religious identity, which is based on the unique religious system, Sharfadin, and specific features solely characteristic of the Yezidi esoteric community, e.g., the religious institution of

[53] Spät, "Shahid bin Jarr, Forefather of the Yezidis and the Gnostic Seed of Seth".
[54] Asatrian, "Foremother of the Yezidis".
[55] Arakelova, "Yesdistan versus Kurdistan: Another Legend on the Origin of the Yezidis," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 21.4 (2017): 376–380.
[56] See Victoria Arakelova and Tereza Amrian, "The Hereafter in the Yezidi Beliefs," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 16.3 (2012): 309–318; Arakelova, "The Shibboleths of Heresies": 26-28.
[57] Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 53 et seq., Victoria Arakelova, "Notes on the Yezidi Religious Syncretism," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 8.1 (2004): 19-28; idem, On Some Derogatory Descriptions of Esoteric Religious Groups," in *Mediaeval and Modern Iranian Studies (Studia Iranica, Cahier 45)*, ed. by Maria Szuppe, Anna Krasnowolska, and Claus Pedersen (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2011): 33-44; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 121-123.
[58] Garnik Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova, "On the Shi'a Constituent in the Yezidi Religious Lore," Iran and the Caucasus, vol. 20. 3–4 (2016): 385–95.
[59] Arakelova, "Sufi Saints in the Yezidi Tradition", idem, "On Some Peculiarities of the Yezidi Lore Translation"; Asatrian and Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel*: 128-129.
[60] See in detail Arakelova and Asatrian, "Gnostic Elements in Yezidism".

the "brother and the sister of the next world"[61] or the circumcision of the dead.[62] The Yezidi community is called the *Ezdikhana* (*Ēzdīxāna*, "adobe of the Yezidis"). Once an esoteric term, it is used now as general opposition to other communities: *sirmān* (*silmān*) − "Muslims", *fila* − "Christian", etc. There are specific parameters of belonging to the *Ezdikhana,* which are determined by *Farzē brātīyē,* "The Canon of Spiritual Guidance (lit. *Brotherhood*)", and actually define the character and specificity of the Yezidi community. The latter confines itself to three major prescriptions: the prohibition of marriage with adherents of a different faith, providing the purity of the religion; prohibition of marriages between representatives of different castes, providing the caste purity; following the basic precepts of the religion, aimed at preserving the traditions. Breaking those rules is seen as a dreadful sin; a Yezidi, who has ignored just one of those prescripts, is considered an apostate and must be expelled from the community.[63] It is exactly the closed endogamous character of the *Ezdikhana*, which has provided a strong drive to ethnicity and shaped the identity with the particular ethnic and religious markers: *Milatē min – ēzdī, dīnē min − Šarfadīn* ("my nation is Yezidi, my faith is Sharfadin"), the Yezidis say, sometimes adding *Zimānē min − ēzdikī* ("my language is Ezdiki"). This formula can be regarded as kind of the Yezidi credo, incorporating the main aspects of the group identity.

Discussing the Yezidism in its current state, it is appropriate to speak of the unity of the Yezidi (religious) belonging and their ethnicity, typical of any ethno-religious group, whose self-awareness is primarily based on a *non-proselyte religion, practiced exclusively within the given closed community* (e.g., the Druzes or the Mandaeans). As much as Yezidism, as Weltanschauung, determines the general definition of its carriers, the Yezidis, to the same extent it can be determined by the virtue of the latter.

There can be no doubt that the *Adawīyya* order was initially multi-ethnic and definitely included Arabs, a Kurdish-speaking segment, Syrians, etc. It is hard to talk about an ethnic dominant at the early stage; most probably, the sheikh layer was represented exclusively by Arabs. The factor of Kurmanji were gradually increasing, in all likelihood, as a result of separation from Islam, and,

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[61]Garnik Asatrian, "The Holy Brotherhood: The Yezidi Religious Institution of the 'Brother' and the 'Sister' of the 'Next World,'" *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 3–4 (1999-2000): 79–96.

[62]Peter Nicolaus, "Yezidi Circumcision and Blood-brotherhood (Including the Circumcision of the Dead)," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 20. 3–4 (2016): 325–345.

[63] Ankosi, '*Farze bratie' u ezidov*: 12-15.

correspondingly, from its doctrinal language, and also, because of the formal ban on literacy among the laymen, while, in terms of the newly crystallized religious knowledge, because of the constant shift of the emphasis to the nascent proper Yezidi religious lore in Kurmanji. Thus, Kurmanji became the language of the Yezidi religious knowledge (although the so-called sacred books are in written in a mixed southern Kurdish dialect) and the native dialect for all the Yezidis regardless of where the communities live.

The problem of the irrelevant definition of the Yezidis as "a Kurdish tribe" or just as Kurds is the result of several factors, but primarily, the deliquescence of the Kurdish identity itself, fuzziness of any definition of the Kurdishness as a unified phenomenon. The generalized ethnonym "Kurds" covers one of the world's largest conglomerations with the prevailing tribal consciousness, discontinuous in terms of language, religion, culture, etc.[64] The identification of the Yezidis with Kurds in some Soviet censuses of population was determined by the factor of the common language and the disregard of any religious (and, correspondingly, ethno-religious) identity as it was in the atheistic state. However, despite the decades of formal unification, the Yezidis in Armenia and Georgia have preserved their identity clearly. Formulating the main identity markers of the Yezidis, we should take into account, that the first two of them are definitions *ex negation* (what is typical of the closed ethno-religious community, having dissociated, through their history, from particular religious and ethnic environments). Thus, the Yezidis should be characterized as: 1) not Muslims (the religious differentiating characteristic); 2) not Kurds (the ethnic differentiating characteristic); 3) the people of Malak-Tavus − *milat-ē Malak-Tāwūs* (the figure actually providing the uniqueness of the cult and one of the community's eponyms); 4) the people ("the lambs") of Sultan Ezid − baryē Sultan Ezid (the latter here not only representing a member of the Yezidi holy triad, but also extending his name to the main eponym of the community); 5) the members of *Ezdikhana*, and therefore 6) *the* bearers of the esoteric religious doctrine, *Sharfadin*, *and* adherents of the unique code of *Farzē brātīyē.*[65]

The Yezidi Issue in Turkey and Cross-border Zones

Some of the most dramatic episodes of Yezidi persecutions were perpetrated by the Ottomans and the Young Turks. The first mass exodus of the Yezidis from

[64] On the problem of the Kurdish identity, see Garnik Asatrian, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 13 (2009): 1–58.

[65] Victoria Arakelova, "Ethno-religious Communities: To the Problem of Identity Markers," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 14.1 (2010): 1–19.

Turkey occurred between 1915–1918, when, as a result of genocide by both the Turkish state and the majority of Kurdish tribes of the Hamidian regiments, the Yezidis who inhabited the border territories, left the country and found refuge in Armenia and Georgia.

The Yezidis' second exodus from Turkey started in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when tens of thousands of Yezidis living mainly in Urfa, Mardin, Batman and Diarbakir, again under the heavy oppression of the Turkish state and the Kurdish neighbours, were forced to seek refuge in Europe, while many of them were just gradually pushed from Turkey to Syria.

The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) deputy Ayla Akat Ata says that some laws passed by the Ottoman authorities are still applied to the Yezidis: in official documents, they are registered as Muslims or non-believers. The Yezidis are often dispossessed of their lands by their Kurdish neighbors, with the connivance of local authorities; sometimes, owners cannot get their land back, even despite the decisions of restitution by some courts. In April 2014, the parliamentarian raised the issue also in the contexts of securing the right to return to Turkey and to receive compensation for their losses for those Yezidis who had left the country with the second wave of the exodus.[66] Yet, the situation since then has dramatically changed to the worse, as the Near Eastern crisis deepened with the rapid spread of influence of the terrorist militant organization of the *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.*

The Yezidis have turned to be among the most vulnerable groups in all the countries the current war in the Near Eastern has touched − in fact, in most all the territories of the Yezidis' historical residence are within the dominant Islamic population. The *Islamic State*'s policy, aimed "to subjugate civilians under its control and dominate every aspect of their lives through terror, indoctrination…"[67] has resulted in a whole range of crimes committed against this ethno-religious group: forced conversion to Islam, slavery and massacres, as well as destruction of shrines and annihilation of villages.[68] Stigmatized as

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[66] Uzay Bulut, "Motion in Turkish Parliament Calls for Restoration of Yezidi Rights," *Rudaw*, April 27, 2014, https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/27042014.

[67] "Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria. Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the SAR," November 14, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20150204115327/http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/HRC_CRP_ISIS_14Nov2014.pdf.

[68] "OHCHR and UNAMI: A Call for Accountability and Protection: Yezidi Survivors of Atrocities Committed by ISIL, Geneva/Baghdad", August 2016, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIReport12Aug2016_en.pdf.; also Peter Nicolaus and Serkan Yuce, "Sex-slavery: One Aspect of the Yezidi

devil-worshippers, the Yezidis, alongside with the extremely negative attitude of their own Muslim neighbors, had to face brutal persecution and mass killings by the *Islamic State* terrorist group in the territories covered by hostilities, particularly, in the Iraq–Syria–Turkey cross border zone. The *Islamic State*'s scorched-earth policy in the Yezidi-inhabited areas significantly undermined the economics of the community, prime arable land having been rendered unusable, wells poisoned, farms burnt.[69] The peak of this dramatic developments was the Yezidi genocide in Sinjar, Northern Iraq, in August 2014, having followed the Kurdish *Peshmerga* withdrawal from the city. There is still no concrete figure of those murdered and executed, dozens of mass graves have been discovered in Northern Iraq. Many Yezidis, especially women, are still kept in captivity. In the controversial and constantly changing situation in the Iraq–Syria–Turkey cross border zones the Yezidi still face the threat of persecutions.[70] The situation with the Yezidi refugees in Turkey awaiting their chance to flee to Europe, is not less dramatic.[71] In the Near Eastern region, which for centuries has been home for the Yezidis, the latter have remained kind of unwelcome neighbors for their Muslim surrounding even in a more or less peaceful periods of history. The current turbulent phase, the region seems to go through, will definitely result in crucial changes on its ethno-religious map, including its Yezidi segment.

Mass migrations, necessity of adaptation to principally new environments, challenges of globalization — all may result in serious transformations in the tradition and in the formation of new syncretic forms of the Yezidi identity.[72]

Genocide," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 21.2 (2017), 196–229; on the latest update, see "COI Note on the Situation of Yazidi IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, May 2019," https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5cd156657.pdf.

[69] See, e.g., Peter Schwartzstein, "The Islamic State's Scorched-Earth Policy," *Foreign Policy*, April 6, 2016, https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/06/the-islamic-states-scorched-earth-strategy/.

[70] Joseph Hinks, "Yezidis in Iraq and Syria Fear Fresh Persecution After Turkey's Offensive," *Time*, October 24, 2019, https://time.com/5706818/yezidi-isis-turkey-syria-iraq/.

[71] See, e.g., Joanna Paraszczuk, "Displaced and Traumatized By IS, Yazidis Try -- And Fail -- To Reach Europe," *Radio Free Europe*, July 08, 2015, https://www.rferl.org/a/tracking-islamic-state-yazidis-iraq-turkey-/27116455.html.; Nurcan Baysal, "Yezidis in Turkey still awaiting their Fate," *Ahval*, September 28, 2018, https://ahvalnews.com/yazidis/yazidis-turkey-are-still-awaiting-their-fate.

[72] See, e.g., Arakelova, "Yezidis and Christianity: Shaping of a New Identity," *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 22.4 (2018): 353–365.

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CHAPTER 4

THE ZAZA PEOPLE – A DISPERSED ETHNICITY

Eberhard Werner

Introduction: The Socio-Linguistic Context[1]

The Zaza people, also called Dımılı or Kırmanc, inhabit as homeland a geographical area in East Anatolia, west to the neighboring Kurmanji speaking Kurds. Smaller groups with Armenian or Aramaic background are also present till these days. Historically, at least going back to the early Middle Age these ethnic segments of the Ottoman Empire (15th-20th century) or previous empires were often isolated and therefore self-ruling, with little interference by the central governing authorities. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in the year 1923 the Zaza people are under threat to lose their identity by different factors, mainly the education system run in Turkish as well as the loss of tribal structures. In the late 20th century, the developments in the diaspora played an important role in the longing for identity and the Zaza people self-confidence. The main influence being linguistic approaches like education in Zazaki,[2] developing orthographies and literacy material for the different dialects.

In looking at the linguistic and socio-cultural diversity of the Zaza people we will find reference to other ethnicities of the Fertile Crescent[3] with similar social

[1] This paper is written from a German, thus Western European, point of view. It presents ethnographic and bibliographic research on the Zaza people based on a long intersubjective relationship with members of this people group. The *ethnocentric* point of view which is presented here is enriched by the observations and opinions of Zazaki mother tongue speakers. However, I am well aware that conclusions made in this paper will not cover the insights of a member of the investigated ethnicity. Emic and etic research factors add to a balanced ethnographic presentation. Notebook, diary, questionnaire and Internet research were used to combine different sources of information with each other. In spite of its subjectivity, I hope that this study provokes further studies on the subjects by both insiders and outsiders.

[2] The suffix *–ki* is a marker for language, e.g. İngilizki 'English', Alamanki 'German'.

[3] Mentioned first by archaeologist James Henry Breasted in *Outlines of European History* (1914) and *Ancient Times, A History of the Early World* (1916). Some authors don't include the northern borders to the Caspian Sea and the Eastern parts of Anatolia.

realities. The Zaza people present socio-linguistic commonalities to the ethnic continuum of the so-called 'Caspian Sea language belt'.[4] These ethnicities have in common that they are divided into religious variations of Sufi (Iran), Sunni and by origin Zoroastrianism influence. Along these lines we also find a split into their linguistic variation. They either live in smaller monolingual rural areas or in larger settlements relate closely to their neighboring people groups in interdependence. Apart from these commonalities we find disparity and a lack of cohesion between these groups. However, one identifying factor of many of these social groups is in the terms "Kurd, Kurds and Kurdish". As such, they are called so by the national or neighboring powers, often in a negative sense.[5] A general lack of consensus is found in the relationship of Kurdish groups among each another. As needed, political alliances are formed that follow the same pattern as the Kurdish people themselves experienced from stronger national powers. For instance, the militarily organized interventions of Sheikh Ubeydallah (1890), Sheikh Said (1925) or Seyid Rıza (1938) broke up because of the internal lack of Kurdish cohesion.[6]

However modern usage of the term includes those parts that play a significant role in the Zaza origin.

[4] The term should be clarified as the "Southern Caspian Sea Language Belt" as it refers to the languages *Tat*, *Gilaki*, *Mazanderani*, *Deylami* and *Semnani* as well as their dialects. Socio-linguistically, this language belt has much in common with Zazaki and the Zaza people. Some even assume that 2.000 years ago the Zaza people migrated from that area to the West, leaving socio-linguistic traces in the Iranian province of Hewram and finally settling in its recent homeland in East Anatolia (McCarus 2009, 587). The migration westward was also assumed for the Gurani / Gorani, a closely related ethnic group now settled in West Iran (Hennerbichler 2004, 197). Although Mackenzie refers to a westward migration, he assumes that the Zaza were pushed by larger "Kurdish" tribes (MacKenzie 2002, 541-542). David N. MacKenzie. "The Role of the Kurdish Language in Ethnicity", in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, eds. Peter A. Andrews and Rüdiger Benninghaus (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, [1989] 2002), 541–542.

[5] This reference is either a discriminating, or, very rarely, an honoring term, given political or economic circumstances. One stereotype in literature against "Kurds" was about the "thieving Kurd", which focused on the nomadic and rebellious lifestyle of some of the 'Kurdish' ethnicities. E.g. Martin Tamcke, "'The Thieving Kurds': A Stereotype among Syrian Christians." In *Religious Minorities in Kurdistan: Beyond the Mainstream*, edited by Khanna Omarkhali, 339-352. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014.

[6] Robert Olson, *The emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). 1-2. Mehmed S. Kaya, *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: A Middle Eastern Minority in a Globalised Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 58-62. The latter two, like the 1921 Koçgiri rebellion were by Zaza run resistance fights. Interestingly the 1921 Koçgiri rebellion and the 1938 Seyid Rıza upheaval were started by Alevi people. The Seyid Rıza upheaval was historically named

The Zaza Language - Zazaki

Zazaki belongs to the North-Western Iranian group of languages and is supposed to form an identifiable language cluster together with *Gurani* / *Hewrami* of Western Iran and Eastern or Northern Iraq. The affinity to other languages of the South Caspian Sea, like *Gilaki*, *Mazanderani*, *Talyshi*, *Semnani* and the *Sharmizadi* dialects suggests speaking of a "South Caspian language belt" (see introduction on commonalities). The exoterm naming *Zazaki* is nowadays used as an emic term as well, besides three other historical emic terms *Dımılı* (may be derived from the "Daylamites"), *Zonê ma* 'our language' and *Kırmancki* (only used in Northern Zazaki) that have long tradition in that culture.

There is no common written foundational tradition that the whole group would rely on. In contrast to the Kurdish chronicles in five books, which are written in Persian and called *Sherefname* (*Sharafname*), we lack a written Zaza history.[7] *Evliya Çelebi* observed in his work *Seyahatname,* from his travels in the 17th century, that Zaza is one of sixteen (elsewhere fifteen) Kurdish dialects.[8]

The Zaza people hand down their culture orally. Hence, we could speak of a culture using oral tradition as a way of conserving their history. The first written discussions about Zazaki date from 1932. In their linguistic description Hadank and Mann report about two expeditions into the homeland of Zaza from 1901–1903 and 1906–1907. Their research was the most groundbreaking work on the Zaza people and their language. An historic overview of research and the designation of the Zaza is found in Selcan (1998, 7–123). Only a few documents were written before 1980, when a writing movement started in the European Diaspora. A deep interest in orthography and alphabet came up with

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tertele 'big disaster, tragedy'. E.g. Hüseyin Çağlayan, *38 ra Jü Pelge*, (İstanbul: Vêjiyayışê Tiji, 2003). [Engl.: One Side of 38.].

[7] Martin M. van Bruinessen, "The Ethnic Identity of the Kurds", in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, eds. Peter A. Andrews and Rüdiger Benninghaus (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, [1989] 2002), 617. Karl Hadank, *Mundarten der Zaza, hauptsächlich aus Siwerek und Kor* (Berlin: Verlag der preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Kommission bei Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1932), 1.

[8] Michiel Leezenberg, "Gorani Influence on Central Kurdish: Substratum or Prestige Borrowing?" (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam), (Unpublished paper), 1993, 11. Also Online in the Internet: URL: http://home.hum.uva.nl/oz/leezenberg/GInflCK.pdf [PDF-File] [accessed 2021-02-20].

the result of the first printed books in Zazaki, published in Sweden and Germany.[9]

The standardization process of the alphabet was moving in two directions and is still in progress. One group of authors, usually including the Alevi Zaza, follow the proposal of Jacobson, using the Turkish alphabet with some adaptations.[10] Publication with this alphabet is spread mainly by the publishing house "Tıj Yayınları" in İstanbul, and countless books and magazines were produced in the diaspora and in İstanbul. Keskin has developed an alphabet towards a cross-dialectal standard approach, which was published 2017 in Austria.[11] Another group of writers gathered around the researcher under the pseudonym "Malmisanij (Malmîsanıj)", who tend to merge the Zaza into the "Kurdish" language. Since 1997 they have published an excellently researched three-monthly monolingual magazine named *Vaté* (36 editions; Zilan 2011). The so called "Vate Çalışma Grubu" (*Grûba Xebate ya Vateyî*) claims the standardization of Zazaki by using the alphabet of the Kurdish diplomat and academic *Jeladet Ali Bedr Khan* (1893–1951). This was invented in the 1930s for Kurmanji, the Northern Kurdish dialect spoken in Turkey.[12]

It is worth mentioning the foundational grammar of the Southern dialect in English by Todd ([1985] 2002), the dialectical differentiating grammar on Zazaki by Paul in (1998), the grammar of the Northern dialect by Selcan (1998) and a discourse grammar for the Mamekiye dialect by Crandall (2002).[13] Besides several other language descriptions, wordlists and lexicons, teaching lessons in Southern Zazaki were published in 2006 by Gündüz,[14] as well as an

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[9] Ebubekir Pamukcu (ed.), *AYRE: Pêserokê Ziwanî.* (ISSN 0283-2240, Stockholm), 1986-1987. Ebubekir Pamukcu (ed.), *PIYA: Journal of Zaza Language and Culture,* 14 issues, (Stockholm). Asmeno Bewayir, Mehmet Doğan , X. Çelker, *WARE*, *Zeitschrift der Dımıl - Kırmanc - Zaza - Sprache und Kultur.* (ISSN: 0946-4573, Baiersbronn/ Germany).

[10] Michael C. Jacobson, *Zazaca Okuma-Yazma El Kitabı*. 2nd ed., (İstanbul: Vêjiyaişê Tiji/Tij Yayınları), [1993] 1999. [Engl.: Writing and Reading Manual for Zazaki.].

[11] Mesut Keskin, On the standardization efforts for a comprehensive literary language in Zazaki. In *Zazaki – yesterday, today and tomorrow*, ed. by Arslan, Zeynep. (Grazer Plurilingualismus Studien. Austria, 2017).

[12] Emir Djeladet and Roger Lescot, *Kurdische Grammatik - Kurmanci Dialekt*, (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1986), 3-6. Honeyboon, *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey*. 2. ed. (Stockholm: Sara publishing and distribution, 1995), 1-4.

[13] Marie Crandall, Discourse Structures in Zazaki Narrative. MA Thesis, (Mainz: Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 2002), [unpublished]. [Northern Zazaki Dersim dialect.].

[14] Deniz Gündüz, *Türkçe Açıklamalı Kürtçe Kırmmanca/ Zazaca Dil Dersleri,* (İstanbul: Vate, 2006).

extensive language learning handbook of Northern Zazaki published in 2012 by Keskin.[15] Linguistic borrowings are from Turkish, Persian, Kurmanji, Armenian and Russian.[16]

The Zaza Society

Historically the Zaza ethnicity consisted of a conglomerate of different small-scale societies, which are referred to as *aşiret* 'tribe', *ezbet* 'family branch' or *kuflet* 'extended family'. In the Zaza ethnicity a *kuflet* 'extended family' (3 generations) often shares a local residence and goes beyond the "core family" (parents, children). *Tribe*, as a small-scale society, is represented in this setting by a social subgroup which functions independently and is self-ruling. The loose relationship of tribes within the social system of the Zaza people is contrasted with strong inner-tribal cohesion. Social stratification is or was reflected in a three-class system. The small ruling upper class (extended family of agha, sheikh, religious or political leaders), a large strong and mainly independent peasantry middle class (nowadays industry-oriented), and a smaller socially lower class, which consists of e.g., migrants, disabled or chronically ill people, widows or orphans without relatives or people without land property. We will now examine a description of the homeland, the population and dispersion, the religious and linguistic divide and the population of the Zaza people.

The Homeland, Population and Dispersion

The *Zaza* ethnicity call their homeland *Welatê ma* 'our homeland' and originally inhabited the area of the head waters of the Euphrates (*Fırat*[17]) and the Tigris (*Dicle*). This is, among other things, reflected in the fact that the Euphrates is addressed only as *ro* 'river' by the Zaza people and not even by its proper name. In addition to these two huge rivers, the smaller *Murat*, *Peri*, *Sinag* and *Pülümür Çayı* are essential sources of water for the Zaza people during the hot, dry summers resulting from continental climate influences.

[15] Mesut Keskin, *Zonê Ma Zanena? Zazaki für Anfängerinnen und Anfänger – Nord-Zazaki*, (İstanbul: Geoaktif Yayınları. 2012), 1-3. Some years later the same lessons were written for a Turkish audience.

[16] The influence of Arabic through religious influence was mainly by Turkish loanwords and in Islamic-influenced religious areas of life.

[17] Proper names are nowadays often adapted loans from Turkish. Original terminology has influence from Armenian, Farsi and Kurmanji. The Karasu or Western Euphrates which origins in Erzurum is one of the two sources, which run through the Zaza homeland in Erzincan province.

Water holds a position of immense importance in the practices and rituals of daily life, reflected in the language by idioms, poems and even religious concepts (ritual and daily cleansing). Geopolitically, water and the rivers play also an important role. The economic *Güney Doğu Anadolu Projesi* 'Southeastern Anatolia Project', known as GAP, is a hydroelectric project that started in the 1970s and which runs right through the Zaza homeland. Some Zaza villages were flooded entirely and populations were separated by the effects of the project.[18]

The Zaza people are traditionally farmers, with dominant orientation toward peasantry (livestock and agriculture). The rivers and creeks offer the opportunity for fishing, adding to nutrition, and watering the livestock. The herding on *ware* 'higher mountain pasture' is often reflected romanticizing in poetry or music and expresses closeness to nature.[19]

Estimations of the Zaza population range from two to five million, whereas a realistic number would be around three to four million.[20] Due to political causes (relocation, persecution, destruction) and economic reasons only half of the population is living in the *welat* 'homeland area' nowadays. The large cities of Turkey in the east and west became settlement areas for the Zaza Diaspora.[21] Close to one quarter of the Zaza people live outside Turkey in the far-Diaspora. Europe, mainly Germany, but also Sweden, Netherlands, France, Austria and Switzerland became the settlement area of the far-flung diaspora. Smaller groups went to the US or to Australia. Seasonal work, like tourism or harvesting, is oriented towards distant large cities during the summer (Diyarbakır, Adana, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Izmir, İstanbul).

So we have a population that is dispersed into one of these groups, living:

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[18] For instance the Gerger area was separated from the central town of Siverek, which is an economic and social center.

[19] History reveals no hint of any nomadic past of the Zaza people in contrast to some Kurmanji speaking groups.

[20] Geoffrey Haig refers his numbers back to national sources and estimations by Western scholars (Haig 2001, 181). Geoffrey Haig, Book Review: Grammatik der Zaza-Sprache. Nord-Dialekt. *Linguistics* 39/1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 181-197. Zülfü Selcan has the most exhaustive list of studies about the Zaza, Zazaki (their language) and literature about the Zaza (e.g. Selcan 1998, 7-46). He also refers to different estimations in this list. Official (Turkish) numbers are mainly low to avoid minority issues. Zülfü Selcan, *Grammatik der Zaza-Sprache - Nord-Dialekt (Dersim-Dialekt)*, (Berlin: Wissenschaft and Technik), 1998.

[21] These cities include mainly tourist centers like Adana or Antalya or the big industry zones of İstanbul, Izmir or Ankara.

- permanently outside Turkey,
- permanently in Turkey but outside the homeland,
- seasonally outside, but otherwise in the homeland,
- permanently in the homeland.

One detail about the Zaza is important to note. The Alevism-practicing Northern Group inhabits the area of Ovacık, Tunceli, Varto, Elazığ, Pülümür, Erzincan and Harput. This group is mentioned as *Kızılbaş* / *Qızılbaş* 'red-headed'.[22] This geographical area is mountainous and hence a difficult to access terrain. In contrast the Southern and Eastern groups live in an area of larger plains and less mountains, with the exception to steep riverbanks.

Religious Affiliation

All major religions penetrated the Zaza society due to the immediate proximity of the different Silk Roads that passed their homeland. Zoroastrianism or *serduşt* (Zazaki) originated from Persia / Iran (6th century BC). Zoroastrianism, in Asia called Parsism, mixed with, or was based on, *animist* elements. It had some influence on the whole Zaza society, but mainly on the Northern group. Today's Alevism practice and spread reflects those influences well. Christianity started in Israel in the first century but soon spread out over the whole homeland area of the Zaza then called Asia Minor. The Armenians became the first people converting to Christianity and starting a National Church called the Armenian Apostolic Church (4th century AD) which is still alive today. This kingdom was completely in the homeland area of the Zaza people and further reached east to the Kurdish-Kurmanji area. If the Zaza settled there before the foundation of that Church, then the influence of *Christianity* and vice versa would be from early on.

A unique phenomenon can be found in the existence of five villages around *Gerger* (*Alduş*) which are considered to be of Christian origin, although today many inhabitants of these villages practice Islam. Looking back at the history of the Zaza homeland, the to and fro of conversion and belonging to influential institutions led to a variety of strange situations. The above-mentioned Christian villages claim their origin in the Assyrian / Syrian Church, but one would presume that they were in the past Armenians who converted a long time ago. The assumption comes from the fact that the Armenian Apostolic Church dominated the area and the Syrian Churches came in later. The 19th century

[22] Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Der verpasste Frieden: Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938* (Zürich: Chronos), 2000, 69-71.

brought with it a Western Christian development ministry movement, which started in the West of Anatolia and moved slowly to the East of Anatolia. The foreign Christian workers worked among the Christian minorities of Turkey that lived all over Anatolia.[23] The gain for the Zaza people was that the hospitals, the educational system and the counselling of developmental aid workers were open to most people in the Anatolia area. In 1902 a Bible translation in Zazaki was published with 25 copies. They were spread out in the Zaza homeland area.[24] During these days many Zaza were aware of some Christian traditions they knew about. They also practiced traditions that were derived from Christianity, such as marking a cross on the forehead of ill people.[25]

Islam had at least two breakthroughs. It entered the area and sphere of the Zaza people, either during the main spread in the 7th and 8th century or by the Seljuk expansion (11th to 12th century AD / 5th to 6th century AD). It is not known if the conversion was forced. The status of the Zaza during the Ottoman Empire (ruled by Sunni Muslims) gives the impression of relative independence in legal affairs, but heavy taxation and overall military observation.

It is interesting to notice that other heterodox groups in the Near East show very similar religious structural divides. We find this in:

- the *Al-e-Haqq* / *Sunni* split within the Gorani / Hawrami ethnicity, settling on both sides of the Western Iranian and Northern Iraqi border near Sulaymaniya,
- the *Yezidi* / *Alevism* / *Sunni-Shafi'i* split in the Kurmanji speaking ethnicity
- the *Alevism* / *Sunni-Hanafi* / *Sunni-Shafi'i* split within the Zaza ethnicity.

A religious divide of Islam within the three groups of Zaza can be roughly stated as: the followers of the Islamic school of Hanafi speak the so-called Southern Zazaki, the followers of the Shafi'i school speak the so-called Eastern Zazaki, and the followers of Alevism speak Northern Zazaki. Thus, we can carefully conclude that the religious split goes hand in hand with a linguistic division. Having said this cautiously, we notice that the Eastern Zazaki group includes also a smaller Alevism-following group which settled north in the Bingöl area.

[23] The reason for that was that Christians belonged to the Ottoman millet system with an own independent court of law, like Jewish Halakha or Muslim Sharia. Due to this separation the Christian groups fell under special taxation and legal treatment, which led to local persecution by despotism.
[24] Personal communication with a Zazaki speaker at Mardin Artuluk University, 2011.
[25] Personal communication with a Southern Zazaki speaker in 2012.

The majority of the ethnic Turkish population in Turkey follows Hanafi-Sunnism. Close to a third of the ethnic Turkish population is practicing a slightly different version of Alevism that in contrast to the Zaza Alevi people is more oriented towards Sufi-orders (e.g. the *Bektaşi* rite).[26]*Alevism*, as practiced by the Northern Zazaki speakers, is at first sight a secret and humanist religion. Alevism became popular through Hacı Bektaş Veli (1209–1271 CE), who was born in Nishapur (North Eastern Iran) and died in Hacıbektaş (Central Anatolia).[27] His shrine is now a museum and not open to worship or pilgrimage. With that, the central place of identity was lost as well as the institution of the Alevi *dede* 'grandsires'. In modern times, socialism is one of the most favorited ideologies of this group. Interestingly, due to his socialism-oriented reforms that follows the French model, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is honored in some social groups of the Zaza even up to the level of an incarnation of Veli.[28] Ethics of the Alevi belief is well voiced in the term "beware your eyes, your mouth and your loins". Alevism is founded on the belief to worship uniquely molded rock, tree or water formations as godly or divine expressions.[29] Spiritual growth is conveyed in four doors named *seriat* 'law', *tarikat* 'way', *ma'rifat* 'awareness' to *hakikat* 'truth'.[30] They represent the way to divine wisdom. The first door *seriat* is what pious people perform without an inner commitment to the higher divine awareness that the fourth door, *hakikat,* opens up.[31]

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[26] Sweetnam, *Kurdish Culture*, 225-226.

[27] Suvari, Çakır Ceyhan and Elif, Kanca, "Between Christianity and Islam: Heathen Heritage in the Caucasus", in Uwe Bläsing, Victoria, Arakelova and Matthias Weinreich, (eds.): *Studies on Iran and the Caucasus. In Honour of Garnik Asatrian* (Leiden, Brill, 2015), 511–519.

[28] Suvari and Kanca, *Between Christianity and Islam*, 515. However, as mentioned before, national politics were fought by some Zaza groups since the beginning of the Republic of Turkey.

[29] Baba Düzgün is the most famous holy mountain in Tunceli area. Families go there to pray and sacrifice, mainly goats. The lives of Alevi people are well described in Ferber, Oda and Doris Gräßlin, *Die Herrenlosen: Leben in einem kurdischen Dorf* (Bremen, Germany: Edition CON, 1988. [Engl.: The masterless: life in a Kurdish village.]. The Animist-like worship of natural phenomenon goes back to the belief that all nature has a soul and an unseen reality of spiritual beings parallel the physical reality.

[30] Bumke, Peter J., "Kurdish Alevis - Bounderies and Perception", in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, eds. Peter A. Andrews and Rüdiger Benninghaus (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, [1989] 2002), 510-518.

[31] Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, „Das Alevitum in der Türkei: Zur Genese und gegenwärtigen Lage einer Glaubensgemeinschaft", in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, eds. Peter A. Andrews and Rüdiger Benninghaus (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, [1989] 2002), 505. [Engl.: "Alevism in Turkey: On the Etiology and recent Situation of a Community of Belief."].

In Alevism endogamy and the initiation practices of either chosen or historically evolved clans or tribes of '*pir*dom' closed the clerical system to foreigners. Only recent studies reveal more about the Shi'ite, Sufi'i, Gnostic, Christian, and Zoroastric (Parsistic) background of this belief system.[32] The professional function of "passing on traditions" through the social institutions of the Alevi *tikme* (student) by the *rayber* / *rehber* (guide) and the *pir* (elder; pirdom: *rayber*, *mürşid*, occasionally by Turkish influence called *dede*), and the political *agha* (chief; aghadom) is or was part of the Alevi Zaza society, and guaranteed the continued existence of the Alevi Zaza culture.[33]

Question of Identity: Kurds and Kurdish

The question whether the Zaza are "Kurds", or whether Zazaki is a "Kurdish" dialect, leads to two considerations. Linguistically, Zazaki is defined as a language on its own; ethnically, the issue is more complicated. It has to be emphasized that the term "Kurdish" is ethnologically coined and therefore a description of a variety of ethnicities bound geographically and historically. [34] It is mainly used for all people groups or "mountain people" of the Taurus and Zagros mountain ranges, including Zazaki-, Southern Kurdish-, Sorani-, Bahdeni-speakers, and other smaller people groups of that area.[35] Thus, referring to "Kurdish" as a language includes many languages and dialects, which leads to the practice of some social groups considering Zazaki to be a "Kurdish" dialect, "Kurdish" or "Kurdish" language, but never a dialect of Kurmanji. A Zazaki speaker would never say, s/he speaks Kurmanji or identify that as their mother tongue.

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[32] Denise L. Sweetnam, *Kurdish Culture – A Cross-Cultural Guide*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, [1994] 2004). Kaya, *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey*, 70-73.

[33] Personal communication with mother tongue speaker MT in 2012.

[34] For the Kurds in general (including the Zaza) see Bruinessen (2013). For the Zaza people see Gündüzkanat (1997).

[35] We recognize the Turkish proverb *denizi görmemiş Laz'a Kürt denir* "a Laz who has not seen the sea is called a Kurd", which reflects a perception of the Kurds as "mountain Turks". It reflects a strong rejection that is based on superiority and mistrust against any ethnicity in the Turkish republic. The "Kurds" are considered the largest ethnic minority, with over 20 Mill. in contrast to a Turkish population of 60 Mill. However, given the cross-border spread the term "minority" for the Kurdish population could be questioned, if it was not for political reasons.

The Zaza in the Diaspora (outside Turkey)

To understand the situation of the Zaza people living in the diaspora in Europe, some historical background information is necessary. The Diasporic Zaza community is far from being homogenous regarding their reasons for migration, their religious background or their attitude towards the host country.

The diaspora into Western countries began with the post-war capitalist dawn. Mainly the automotive, chemical and heavy industries demanded manpower.[36] Turkey's manpower resources came into focus, and in 1961 an agreement with Turkey led to a huge wave of Turkish-background migrant workers who had Zaza or Kurmanji-Kurdish origins. The rural East Turkey was a great recruiting location. A reason for this could have been the ongoing struggle of the ruling Turkish governments with the Eastern Anatolian "Kurdish" ethnicities. A military coup d'état in 1960 led to a strong anti-Kurdish attitude in Turkey, which could have been one reason for allowing migration movements from East Turkey. After a decade of intense migration, most countries signed a halt to recruitment (e.g. Germany in 1973). Later, in 1980, many Zaza and Kurmanji speaking asylum seekers fled to Germany, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Netherland and France as a result of another military coup d'état which led to oppression in the east of Turkey. Germany became a point of attraction due to close family relationships. France was also a place to go, because East Anatolia was a French colony until 1922, as a result of the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916, which left its traces in mutual economic interests.[37] Sweden, on the other hand, opened its borders to asylum seekers due to liberal politics.

The host countries of the Zaza Diaspora all have a democratic and Western setting, with an underlying Christian orientation (e.g., France) or with strong Churches (e.g., Germany). The Alevi or Sunni Islamic religious attitude that the Zaza people brought with them was new and at first alien to the hosting nations. This led to a variety of democratic opinions ranging from unquestioned open hostility against "the Turks", as they were named, on the one hand, to unquestioned social support of "foreigners, migrants, asylum seekers" on the other. The need of social cohesion pushed the Zaza into the formation of culture clubs or social associations. Integrative politics developed in Western countries after the second generation of the guest laborers, and later the asylum seekers. From the 1990s on, migrants entered jobs requiring higher education as soon as

[36] The first guest laborers in Germany came from Italy. They arrived in 1955 (also the year of recruitment agreements); in 1960 Spanish and Greek foreign workers arrived.

[37] Philipp G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, *The Kurds: Contemporary Overview*, Reprint, (London: Routledge, [1992] 2002), 143–144.

they were able. Through involvement in politics, medicine, law, the economy and social sciences, the "Turkish" migrants were increasingly recognized publicly. This is well observed and represented by the Turkish-German Business Organization – TD IHK – Cologne.[38]

The Zaza in Germany and Europe developed a strong manpower based on economy. Often the same diasporic industry is also built up in the homeland and thus supports homeland industry or vice versa, as for example the marble, construction or carpet knotting industry. An immense support for the homeland area assisted the Turkish economy directly and indirectly by the constant and increasing flow of money coming from the diaspora. The multilingualism of the Zaza people in Zazaki, Turkish, German and English (other languages as well) has a positive impact to the tourism industry between Europe and Turkey.[39]

A European congregation of Dersim associations, mainly from Alevi or Northern Zaza background was formed in the 1990s and brought together readers and writers on questions of orthography (European Democratic Federation of Dersim Associations). These meetings attracted also Sunni background Zaza that were interested to write and read their language. Also, initiatives on the education of children in language and traditions began in Europe with more success for the Northern group than for the Southern or Eastern group.

Glimpses on Family, Inheritance and Wedding

This paragraph describes the family life, inheritance and wedding practices out of a categorization of the social structure of the Zaza people group. To understand the social structure of the Zaza people from an individualist Western point of it is important to recognize the globally dominant collectivist framework of societies, which subordinate the individual to the group conscience. Actions, decisions and planning of an individual is oriented towards the whole as one organism.

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[38] Türkisch-Deutsche Industrie und Handelskammer (TD-IHK) 2014. Online: URL: http://www.td-ihk.de/home [accessed 2021-02-20]. [Engl.: Turkish-German Chambers of Industry and Commerce.].

[39] 4.3 Mill. Tourists from Germany visited Turkey in 2010 (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 17.07.2013: http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/tuerkei-tourismus-boomt-das-neue-reisemekka-der-deutschen-11009348.html [accessed 2021-02-20]. [Engl.: Booming Sector Turkey-Tourism.]. A total of 40. Mill. tourists visited Turkey in 2018, 4.5 Mill. were from Germany (https://www.france24.com/en/20190131-tourist-numbers-turkey-surge-2018-data [accessed 2021-02-20]).

The Zaza people follow a *patrilineal* system. The patrilineal orientation is defined as the family following the father's blood line of ancestry.[40] Thus we speak of a *consanguine* (same blood) descendent within the father's line, whereas marriage brings in the mother's line as *affine* (indirect or not comparable) to the father's line.[41] Inheritance is passed on mainly *post-mortem* to the eldest child following a *primogeniture* system that is the right of the first-born.[42] The marriage of the eldest son is particularly important, because his family passes on the family honor. Family honor is a metaphysical concept, described as the "good name" of a family. The term "name" stands for the reputation and the prestige a family owns and to which all family members take responsibility.[43]

There was an economic burden at least in the middle and lower classes to gain prestige through the *bride wealth* (also *dower* or *indirect dowry*). It is a means of economic exchange of labor. The loss of a daughter's manpower was restored by the bride wealth and the option to hire people as a result of that exchange.[44] In the homeland and in former times a girl (daughter) could be married at about 12 years old, directly after her menstruation started. Parenting a daughter meant losing her soon after she would become a substantial help to the family. In the homeland the Zaza practiced strict *parental arrangement* of marriage, so the groom and the bride knew each other beforehand from family celebrations or from the neighborhood, as extended families lived in close settlements together. A *bride wealth* is determined between the parents, a common Islamic practice in the Near East as for example in Arabic, named *mahr*, *sadäq*.[45] I was told that a wealthy family expects a high price to avoid a socially unacceptable marriage. Bride wealth is bound to the sexual purity of the bride; for a girl with a doubtful morality the dowry is lowered and family honor can be doubted. In the Zaza community the costs of the wedding ceremony are paid by the groom's family. One informant told me that the bride and her family

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[40] Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31-32.
[41] James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*. 2nd ed. (Prospect Heights: Waveland, [1975] 1989), 83.
[42] Robert Parkin, *Kinship: An Introduction to Basic Concepts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 25.
[43] Sweetnam, *Kurdish Culture*, 63.
[44] G. M. Lamsa, *Die Evangelien in aramäischer Sicht* (St. Gallen: Neuer Johannes Verlag, 1963), 40-41.
[45] Munir D. Ahmed, Frauenfrage und Islam, in Steinbach, Udo and Rüdiger Robert (eds.): *Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten: Politik, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Geschichte, Kultur* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1988), 521-522.

do not feel bargained for or sold, since the honor system requires the transaction as a normal procedure. Reciprocity asks for mutual empowerment, thus both families gain power and prestige.

In the Zaza community the conjugal (marital) family consists of parents of opposite sex and their children. Foster children can also be adopted and integrated and have restricted rights to inheritance but full societal status as part of the family. Formerly the *endogamous* marriage system protected the society against a division of heritage and a religious segregation. It included particularly the extended family,[46] but an extension to the small-scale society (tribe, clan) was common practice.

The *patrilocal* social system of the Zaza ethnicity expects the bride to move into the groom's house. There she submits to the parents-in-law. The mother-in-law is regarded as adopting the daughter-in-law as her own child. While the bride is brought by her close family and friends to the place of the wedding ceremony she is covered with a red scarf. Then later the transfer to the groom's house is accompanied by her close female relatives while singing and dancing women go along with her, trilling loudly; their hands are covered with *henna*-painting and points on the palm. In some tribes, mainly of Alevi background, the older Zaza women wear traditional clothing including hats with silver coins woven into cords that hang down to the shoulder. The hair is an especially attractive aspect of women and thought to be susceptible to the evil eye. As such it has to be covered modestly with a scarf.[47] A bride is expected to be serious during the transfer and the start in her new family.[48] However, there is also joy and fun expressed by the guests and the extended family members during the wedding celebration. In the case of the bride, she is mourning the loss of the family life that she was used to.

In the homeland, the wedding ceremony includes three days of celebration. Generally, according to my informants, one can say the first day is made up of saying goodbye to the old life as a bachelor (or a single person). The second day concerns the celebration of the unification of the two families, with the groom and the bride in the center. The third day is marked by the final transfer and settlement of the bride into the groom's family. This includes sexual intercourse

[46] For an extensive description of the extended family see the kinship diagram by Werner (2012). Roughly speaking the Uncles / Aunts¸ their children (Nephews / Cousins) and the grandparents, as well as the great-grandparents, belong to the extended family.
[47] Sweetnam, *Kurdish Culture*, 89-90.
[48] Sweetnam, *Kurdish Culture*, 11-12.

and building up the family honor of the newly established family. With the settling into the groom's family, the marriage ritual is complete. The two are either living in the groom's family without having their own space, or they start building their own home close by, still supporting the groom's parents.

Obviously, there are many changes to the social system in the *diaspora*. As a result of the scattering of the Zaza in the diaspora, the hold of the extended family is weaker. With regard to daily life activities, the nuclear family became more self-focused. The switch from peasantry (homeland) to industrialization (host country) changed the whole way of life. Included was the move from a sharing-based society (reciprocal exchange-oriented) into a socio-Capitalist system. A re-orientation towards self-sustaining businesses (restaurants, construction business) and luxury goods (i.e., cars) started developing among the diaspora. House ownership, higher education, and a Western middle-class lifestyle became standard. Because of the widespread dispersion of the Zaza extended families and their small-scale societies, the three days wedding celebration was now reduced to a huge wedding ceremony with lots of relatives, up to 1,200 people. Thus, a wedding could become a financial issue for the parents of the groom.

Over the decades the host country's education system, prompted the integration of the Zaza people. Intermarriage between partners of the host country and the Zaza ethnicity are less common than Zaza become married to Turkish or Kurmanji speaking spouses often engaged from the homeland and brought in to the diaspora. This fact challenges the national populations by huge family reunions and immigration based on arranged marriages. Thus, the traditional endogamy is more and more giving way to an exogamic practice. Another indicator for integration is the growing number of Zaza that build their economic existence as business owners in Germany (construction, food industry, services sector). The diasporic presence of the Zaza people, the Kurmanji speaking ethnicity and the Turkish ethnicity are nowadays an integral part of the German nation, numbering more than 3 million.[49]

[49] This number is a rough guess by former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl in Philip L. Martin, "Germany: Managing Migration in the Twenty-First Century", in Cornelius, Wayne A. (ed.), *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, Stanford University Press, 246, Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1997: "If we today give in to demands for dual citizenship, we would soon have four, five, or six million Turks in Germany instead of three million". Germany doesn't count citizenship in statistics and with dual citizenship the numbers are mixed up, so there is little empiric data to get an estimation. Dual citizenship was introduced in 2014 in Germany, Switzerland 1992,

Economic and Socio-Linguistic Developments During the Rule of the AKP

In this paragraph a very short glimpse of political developments is given, affecting the diaspora and the homeland. The Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP, Justice and Development Party) was founded in 2001 by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He has been the leader since then, apart from a two year break, 2014–2016, when Ahmet Davutoğlu was the leader. With more than 10 Million members (2019), the AKP follow a conservative democratic direction. The roots can be traced back to a specter of Islamist, right conservative and left parties, which were dissolved during the foundation of the AKP. During their rule from 2002 until today, a move from a pro-Western and pro-American direction towards a Turkish nationalistic one is obvious.

The early years of the AKP after 2002 attracted many minority groups such as the "Kurds" including the Zaza people, due to the modern and Western-oriented political and economic direction of the ruling party. When the AKP came to play, a hostile atmosphere in country against minority groups was common; it was the time of strong military and police surveillance, especially in East Anatolia; the deployment of village guards and the destruction of houses after the coup d'état in 1980. The climax of discrimination in 1994 led to a wave of "Kurdish" asylum seekers in Europe. Then in the years after 2002 the ruling AKP approached the Kurds, by addressing mother tongue education and a truce with the Kürdistan İşçi Partisi (Kurdistan Workers' Party; Kurdish: *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*; Turkish: PKK[50]).

The pro-Western orientation of the AKP during the initial years raised the hope of some sort of sovereignty for the Eastern provinces of Turkey. The establishment of political parties, like the Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party, Kurdish: *Partiya Demokratîk a Gelan*; HDP), which was founded in 2012, came into strong opposition to the conservative-nationalist orientation of the AKP. The HDP is in fraternal relationship with the Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi (Democratic Regions Party; Kurdish: *Partiya Herêman a Demokratîk*; DBP), founded in 2014 and a leftist offspring of the Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party; Kurdish: *Partiya Aştî*

Denmark 2015, Belgium 2008, Sweden 2001, France 1992, and only exceptionally in Austria (not in Liechtenstein and the Netherlands).

[50] The PKK was founded in 1978 in the Kurdish inhabited area of Turkey and Iraq. Two ceasefires from 1999–2004 and from 2013–2015 interrupted the ongoing struggle between the PKK and the Turkish state. Since 2015 the Turkish military and intelligence services' campaigns have been increasing and reaching cross-border, first into Northern Iraq, and also into Syria since 2019.

û Demokrasiyê; BDP). As mentioned earlier the Northern Zazaki speakers that follow Alevism tend towards socialist ideologies. Thus, they are attracted to the parties stated above.

From early on the CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi founded in 1932 by Kemal Atatürk) and the founding fathers of the Republic of Turkey attracted the Zaza people as well, due to their socialist ideology. Later on, the Kurdish socialist ideology of HDP fascinated the Zaza people; though, the AKP still gained a lot of interest, due to her capitalist and still broad social activities. The conservative Turkish stance guaranteed stability and as long as there was a pro-Western orientation, the many Zazas living in Europe and their families profited from the economic capitalist approach. Facilitation of travel, an increasingly growing travel business, and economic links to the homeland (see above) were supported by the politics of the AKP.

An interesting development between the diaspora and the homeland is mentioned here. Many retired people stay for longer times in their homeland, having real estate there, and come back for medical care to their European host countries. The controversy in the land of migration as well as their Turkish nationality is huge. Reports are given that neither country lets them feel at home. However, it is still an act of prestige to get to Europe and to acquire the citizenship of a European country. The AKP gave full support to these political and economic developments within the EU. And even more, the AKP organized the Islamic training and education of Turkish citizens in Europe by state run mosques that are headed by religious teachers called Imams. These Imams are educated in the Islamic education centers that are close to the AKP (DITIB, Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği; English: Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs). There are mosques that follow a conservative Islamic education system in Europe and that allow people of Kurdish background to worship. The language of instruction is mainly Turkish, which makes it more difficult for Kurmanji and Zaza speakers to feel at home. This mixture of languages leads to disunity in the Sunnite population and is still an "unsolved problem" for the AKP.

The State Universities of Munzur (Dersim), Bingöl and Mardin (Artuklu) were plucked out of thin air between the years 2007–2008 (see above). Mother tongue education for adults, as well as linguistic and social research on Kurdish language and society, was allowed since 2012/13 at Munzur and since 2013/2014 at Bingöl University. To a limited degree in public schools children are taught in Zazaki, during supplemental sessions. However, pre-school training is only allowed in the national language. Such democratic approaches

towards the Kurds were limited in 2015 and more so after the so-called "coup d'état" in 2016, which was attributed to the Fethullah Gülen movement. International symposiums on language and society at the Mardin, Bingöl and Dersim Universities in the years 2011–2013 couldn't be pursued, because the suspicion and observation of the national officials suppressed international participation. From a sociolinguist point of view Zazaki is positioned on level 6b in the sustainable use model.[51] This means that the language is only spoken at home, in the near neighbourhood and the extended family, but not used in public affairs or as a language of trade. The only remaining monolingual speakers are older than 70 years. The children are educated in another language. A sustainable diglossia can be assumed, at least for the Sunni Zaza population. Shifting towards language death within a very short time, maybe two generations, is a real danger, especially for the Alevi Zaza. The opening of Mardin, Bingöl and Munzur University to socio-linguistic interests on Zazaki attracted prominent authors and mother tongue researchers to these education centres. With the coup d'état in 2016 these structures became more observed and official surveillance increased enormously. On the local level, all linguistic efforts towards children and adults were reduced due to state interference by law and police. E.g., in Çermik elementary school offered Zazaki lessons but parents were afraid to send their children there.[52] Also, an increased military and police presence by street blockades, with random identity checks and jailing, stopped any free travel or exchange of goods based on a free market. The years 2002 to 2016 could be said to have been a progressive phase for mother tongue education in the Zaza community. Since 2016 all literacy attempts have been reduced to more or less private initiatives.

Conclusion: In the Heart of Struggle - The Zaza, Zazaki, Anthropological Considerations

This study presents an overview of the dispersed Zaza ethnicity. It is assumed that the Zaza have inhabited their recent homeland for a long time, even back to the turn of times. Zazaki is related to Kurmanji and shows common features, but obviously there is no comprehensibility, and numerous differences on grammar and vocabulary are given. It is without question that Zazaki is linguistically not

[51] M. Paul Lewis and Gary F. Simons, *Ecological Perspectives on Language Endangerment: Applying the Sustainable Use Model for Language Development*, 2011, as of 2020-03-20, URL: https://scholars.sil.org/sites/scholars/files/gary_f_simons/-presentation/applying_the_sum.pdf.

[52] Personal communication June 2018.

a dialect of Kurmanji, but a language by itself. The homeland of the Zaza people varies from high mountains in the North, to plateaus in the South. Smaller villages are still settled mono-ethnically, larger cities and towns are populated by the Zaza ethnicity, the Kurmanji speaking Kurdish people or the Turkish population. Zazaki as a North-Western Iranian language is split into many dialects, these dialects can be grouped at least in two main dialect clusters such as the Northern or Alevi Dialects and the Southern Sunni Dialects. Paul (1989) is describing the dialect variants of Zazaki triangular: the Alevi dialects, the Cermik/Siverek dialects and the Palu/Bingoel dialects. Some authors relate to a grouping of and the Southern or Cermik/ Siverek / Bingoel-Palu dialects or threefold in the Northern or Alevi Dialects (Dersim/ Tunceli, Varto, Ovacik) and the Southern or Cermik/ Siverek and the Eastern or Central Bingoel-Palu dialects. However, such linguistic classifications are only auxiliary and do not represent the numerous linguistic transitions.

They also represent a threesome split in Alevism (Northern), Hanafi-Sunnism (Southern) and Shafi'i-Sunnism (Eastern) religious orientation. Huge migration movements since the 1960s until today are a social challenge to extended families and rural village life. Western cities of Turkey, as well as Europe, came into focus for migrants. The largest diasporic community is in Germany, which challenged the Alevism and the Muslim background Zaza to arrange their lives under Christian rule in a system of social and health welfare, and as low-budget laborers. The threesome religious split is a challenge to the Zaza unity. Alevism is a humanist-based gnostic religion that performs worship and prayer to natural attractions (springs, trees, mountains) and emphasizes the equality of humans. Sunnism, on the other hand, is interested in subordination to the religious code of Sunni Islam, while the Hanafi follow a more conservative tradition with their own educational madrasas (religious schools). This is also a big issue for the dominant national religion of Hanafi Sunnism (Turkish population), whose followers are barely drawn to the Hanafi oriented Zaza ethnicity any more than to the Alevi or Shafi'i Sunni. However, there are smaller groups of Alevi Turkish groups too. Christianity (the Assyrian Church or some Armenian influence) was rooted in some villages around Gerger, in the province of Adiyaman, neighbouring Cermik, and still survived but marginalized today.

The Zaza people experience huge culture change and language loss by their assimilation into the national education system in the homeland, and by dispersion and immigration. In this sense they are ethnically considered to be "Kurdish" as part of the large people groups in South-East Anatolia, North-East

Syria, Northern Iraq and Western Iran. As a matter of fact an alignment to the "Kurdish" political movement is only cautiously approached, since similar suppression by Kurmanji Kurdish parties as by the national government is expected. Here the Zaza people are in the middle of political tensions: Turkish nationalist want to Turkisize them, and Kurdish nationalist want to Kurdisize them. In between these struggles the Zaza population lacks unity due to dialectical varieties and an almost unbridgeable religious division. This leaves little room to develop a robust Zaza identity.

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CHAPTER 5

LAZ: THE *GOOD* CITIZENS OF MULTICULTURAL TURKEY

Nilüfer Taşkın

My primary goal in this article is to elaborate the changing context of the *Laz ethnic identity* over the last two decades in Turkey. To do so, I will investigate the facts that shaped the contemporary Laz identity particularly the cultural performances that have emerged in this period in urban areas. My main concern, therefore, is to understand the contextual framework of these performances which functioned to transform an *invisible* identity to an excessively *visible* one. Even though the *Laz* are frequently paid lip-service when listing the ethnic minorities in Turkey,[1] the Laz identity are rarely subject of academic studies from a full-fledged sociological perspective. On the other hand, they are widely visible on popular cultural products through the *Laz stereotype*. In general, this negligence can be attributed to the overall perception of the Laz identity and I believe it is strongly related to the historical context of it.[2]

A Brief History of the Term "Laz"

The words such as *Laz*, *Lazi* or *Lazepe* in Laz language, *Lazlar* in Turkish, *Lazi* or *Č'ani* in Georgian signify an ethnic group native to the Black Sea coastal regions of Turkey and Georgia. Even though there are discussions about the historical roots and the specific location, the Laz are said to be one of the chief tribes of the ancient civilization of Colchis.[3] The Laz were initially early

[1] One can easily see the frequent use of the rhyme *"Türkü Kürdü Ermenisi Lazı Çerkezi…"*

[2] This article is mainly composed of the arguments of my graduate thesis written in Boğaziçi University which was published in 2016. Besides my personal experience in a middle-class Laz family surrounded by a Laz community in Istanbul, my particular interest in this subject has been generated largely by cultural events and organizations in which I found myself involved since 2000s. These events were mainly in the field of music and dance.

[3] Ali İhsan Aksamaz, *Kafkasya`dan Karadeniz`e Lazların Tarihsel Yolculuğu* (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 1997), 19; Ildiko Beller Hann, *Doğu Karadeniz'de Efsane Tarih ve Kültür* (İstanbul: Çivi Yazıları Yayınevi, 1999), 19; Michael E. Meeker, "The Black Sea Turks:

adopters of Christianity during the Byzantium era in the 4th century, and subsequently they converted to Sunni Islam of the Hanefi sect during the Ottoman rule of the Caucasus in the 16th century.[4]

The people in Turkey use the name *Laz* in a general way to refer to all inhabitants of Turkey's Black Sea provinces to the east of Samsun, and the word is often associated with certain social stereotypes. The Laz themselves are increasingly keen on differentiating themselves from other inhabitants of these regions. The non-Laz community commonly refer to the Laz community as *Mohti/ Komohti-Laz,*[5] meaning *real Laz* to emphasize their bilingual characteristic. Laz language is a sister language of Georgian,[6] yet it is not a written one: Turkish and Georgian serve as the literary languages for the Laz in Turkey and Georgia, respectively. Therefore, the Laz are typically bilingual, and their language is endangered.

Today most Laz speakers live in the Northeast of Turkey, formerly known as Lazistan[7] (modern Rize and Artvin provinces) in a narrow strip of land along the shore of the Black Sea. There are also Laz communities in northwestern Anatolia where many immigrants have settled since the Turko-Russian War (1877-1878).[8] And there is a large Laz community in Istanbul, Ankara and other big cities of Turkey and in European countries.[9] In all these regions, the Laz people live together with Hemşin people -who either speak an ancient Armenian dialect or its Turkish accent- as well as with Georgians, Turks and, relatively more distantly, with the Pontic Greeks in the west.[10] That means there are common cultural characteristics shared with those ethnic groups particularly in music, dance, language and cuisine.

Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, no. 4, (1971): 336; Neal Ascherson, *Karadeniz* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), 253.

[4] Aksamaz, *Kafkasya`dan Karadeniz`e Lazların Tarihsel Yolculuğu*, 39; M. Recai Özgün, *Lazlar* (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları Yayınları, 1996), 85.

[5] *Mohti/Komohti* means to *come* in the Laz language.

[6] Silvia Kutscher, "The language of the Laz in Turkey: Contact-induced change or gradual language loss?" Last Access November 2019, https://ids-pub.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/3413/file/Kutscher_Language_of_Laz_in_Turkey_2008.pdf.

[7] *Lazona* is used as a geographical term in the Laz language.

[8] Özhan Öztürk, *Karadeniz Ansiklopedik Sözlük* (İstanbul, Heyamola Yayınları, 2005), 763.

[9] Ali İhsan Aksamaz, *Laz Dili Temel Dersleri* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2016).

[10] Öztürk, *Karadeniz Ansiklopedik Sözlük*, 761-764.

Tea Farming and the Domestication of the State in the Laz Region

One of the most important arguments of my research is that tea farming is an important contextual aspect shaping the contemporary identities of the Laz. I claim that today the Laz identity that came into prominence is highly influenced by its historical relations with the Turkish state. I think, tea farming engendered the *domestication* of the state in the Laz region. I use the term *domestication* to denote the recognition, being recognized and internalizing of the nation state.[11]

The traditional economy in the region was based on agriculture and the production of hazelnuts, maize, rice, and hemp until the 1950s, when the introduction of tea cultures began. They have grown in importance since then. Another aspect of this former economy is the export of labor. Older male members of the family used to go abroad to metropolises, particularly in Soviet Russia, to work in the service industry. [12] The introduction of the tea industry eliminated the hitherto closed economy, the self-rearing way of life. Tea farming's pivotal role has been the key factor in the Laz community's change from a relatively autonomous position to becoming a subsidiary to the state. This is because tea farming was primarily encouraged and subsidized by the state itself. Even though there have been other entrepreneurs since 1986, the state-owned Çaykur, based in Rize, is still the biggest and the most stable tea company in the country. Benefiting from state subsidization of tea farming, community living in the Laz region in the Eastern Black Sea became almost dependent on the state with a navel cord. Before 1950, Rize was doubly remote, being on the periphery of an already peripheral state. In short, the region began to experience an economic boom due entirely to the expansion of a single crop.[13] Eventually, the Laz were to enjoy upward mobility in terms of class.

Floya Anthias' argument about identity is helpful to formulate the perception of the identity of the Laz in connection to the notion of class. She argues that the "issues of exclusion, political mobilization on the basis of collective identity, and narrations of belonging and otherness cannot be addressed adequately unless they are located within other constructions of difference and identity, particularly around gender and class."[14] Thus, I define the contemporary Laz identity in the urban context, as constituted with the middle-

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[11] Chris M. Hann, *Tea and the Domestication of the Turkish State* (Cambridgeshire: The Eothen Press, 1990), 66.
[12] Uğur Biryol, *Hemşin Pastası*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2007).
[13] Biryol, *Hemşin Pastası*, 15.
[14] Floya Anthias, "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limit of 'Culture'," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, No. 4 (2001): 620.

class values. In this respect, I would like to emphasize the adoption of the hegemonic cultural discourse which made it possible to avoid any marginalization.

Considering the transformation from lower class peasants to middle class community by tea farming, one can say that the Laz community has been quite privileged by the Turkish state. This privilege consequently led them to identify positively with the state, rather than against it[15] concurrent with their historical mission of being *custodians of the border*. Moreover, the state's imposition of administrative boundaries and the consolidation of village infrastructure have helped to induce some new feelings of community.[16] I should also take into account that *tea* has turned into a national symbol in the last fifty years. That also connected the Laz to the nation as producers of a *national beverage*.

The domestication of the state enabled the majority of the Laz to identify with it—to feel themselves to be, for the first time, members of a national society while many other citizens remained subject to arbitrary power, and large groups including the entire Kurdish minority, for example, was excluded from full societal membership meanwhile.[17] That is to say, while the economic and social deprivation by the state constituted the Kurdish identity around a lower class position,[18] those benefits and recognition by the state constituted the Laz identity around a middle-class position.

The Effects of the Cultural Policies of the Turkish Nation State on the Laz Identity

During the foundation and the following years of the new Turkish Republic, *Kemalist nationalism* can be considered as a top-down, or state-led, nationalism. Its first goal was to modernize the state and social structures through a project of social engineering. It was a vigorous search from above for the creation of a new nation and the invention of a new Turk by eliminating the popular notions of Islam and Ottoman heritage. Its project of turning existing more-or-less ethnically and culturally heterogeneous people into a nation depended on the binary logic of *old* and *new*. [19] Here, the aim was to transform society by

[15] Hann, *Tea and the Domestication*, 66.
[16] Ibid., 65.
[17] Ibid., 73.
[18] Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014).
[19] Mahmut E Bozkurt, *Atatürk İhtilali* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1995), cited in Yılmaz Çolak, "Nationalism and the State in Turkey: Drawing the Boundaries of 'Turkish Culture' in the 1930s", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 3, No. 1, 2003: 5.

transmuting all traditional structures into a *developed* and *civilized* whole; that is, society became a target for constructing a *better* future.[20]

Culture as an idea and discourse seemed to express the construction of a *modern* society and *civilized* citizens. Yılmaz says:

"the state discourse on culture did not accept the equal value of all forms of life and assumed a strict hierarchy among them. It is hierarchical and radically assimilationist. By setting a strict hierarchy between *archaic*, *backward* life forms and *modern*, *civilized* ones and applying coercive and non-coercive radical assimilation policies, the politics of culture in the early Republican regime constituted a set of processes employing both exclusion and inclusion."[21]

The expectation was that non-Turkish Muslims would eventually be assimilated and this has encouraged the denial of the existence of the non-Turkish Muslim community like Laz, Kurds, *Hemşinli*s, Circassians, etc. by the state and most political parties.

Since the ethnic differences were reduced to the level of regional differences, all the regions were represented as if they were local versions of Turkishness. Moreover, the ethnic minorities began to be represented via the common homogeneous stereotypes: Backward/ Separatist Kurds, Stupid/ Cunning/ Patriotic Lazis, etc. When we look at the Laz people in their relationship with the Turkish state historically, it would not be unfair to say that they were not exposed to the same level of persecution compared to 'dangerous identities' such as the Kurds, Greeks and Armenians. However, the Laz also experienced pressure from assimilationist policies which influenced the contemporary Laz identity greatly. Language, still one of the determinant signifiers of an ethnic group, enables cultural members to transfer their ethnic identity to the next generations despite the hegemonic governance of the state on the individuals. As I find a straightforward relationship between language and ethnicity in terms of ethnic identification, I would say that the most concrete effect of assimilation policies has been on Laz language.

When I searched for the reflections of that ideology on the public memories of the Laz, I found out that the temporality of Lazness is strongly embedded in the past. When the past is associated with lower standards of life and hardship, then the past is inevitably considered to be unpleasant. That is to say, Lazness

[20] Bhikhu Parekh, "Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse," *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 1, (2006): 25-52.
[21] Parekh, "Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse," 15.

which was highly associated with peasantry was tried to be abandoned in order to be a part of the nation, and become a modern, acceptable citizen. In the fieldwork, I observed that particularly young women were eager to marry officers to escape difficult village life and learn to speak Turkish.

The perception of Lazness was not only associated with the unpleasant past, but also spatially to the village/Laz region/Black Sea as an outcome of the modernization project of the Turkish state. Because "the modern cities are rather designed for the nation-states where all the differences are melted in a pot."[22] Locality is only tolerated in the form of nostalgia[23] or when it is marketable in the private sphere. As I mentioned earlier, urban life assumes a kind of fusion and thus abandonment of the local cultural values for a successful adaptation. The first to leave the village was of course the 'language' or at most it has to be kept in the houses. This would cause the Laz language to be the language of private sphere. The problems connected to language have been the toughest experience for the Laz migrants, these obstructed them from socializing with others in the city at first. There was a clear belief that the Laz language was extremely detrimental to the Turkish accent and as a result meant failure at integration process.[24] This general belief led to a turning point for my generation, born after the 1980s, when the parents stopped speaking Laz with their children. Thus, transmittance of the Laz language suffered a dramatic rupture with the next generations.

The Constituton of the Laz Identity in Antagonism to the Kurdish Identity

Stuart Hall says that: "in common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. Like all signifying practices, identification is subject to the *play*, of différance. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and

[22] Sibel Demirtaş, Bülent Diken and İştar B. Gözaydın, "Mekân ve Ötekiler", *Defter* 28, (1996): 40.

[23] I refer to the term *nostalgia* in line with Rosaldo who takes it as "a dead, innocuous creature jettisoned the politics", see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remarking of Social Analysis*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 69-70. For example, the Laz accent can be tolerated unlike the Laz language spoken in the public sphere.

[24] Murat Çakır expresses his anger to such a mentality common in his family who considered speaking Laz as obscurantism who detained him speaking his mother tongue. Selma Koçiva, *Lazona Laz Halk Gerçekliği Üzerine*, (İstanbul: Tüm Zamanlar Yayıncılık, 2000), 182.

marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of *frontier-effects*. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process".[25]

In this respect, the facts that enable the Laz to differentiate themselves from the 'others' change contextually. I suggest that the constitution of the Laz identity constructed with the Kurdish identity over the last two decades, especially in the urban context. That is to say, Laz identity has been positioned as an opposite of the Kurdish identity particularly after 1980s, when the Kurdish nationalism was on the rise. The Laz resembled the Kurds in terms of their rural origin and bilingual character but differed in their historical relationship with the state.

One might think that this differentiation mechanism emerged once the physical interaction occurred in the metropolis as a place of *confrontation of the foreigners;*[26] however despite the physical affinity in the city, the cities are the places of social interaction, the public sphere is not well designed to enable the 'differences' to confront with each other.[27] In the case of Laz, I would suggest that the differentiation is rather ideological where the Laz themselves tend to secure their middle classness and privileged position in the eye of the state. Laz people clearly observed how the Kurds in the city were humiliated due to their different languages and cultures, exposed to physical and economic violence and were marginalized. Therefore, in order to protect their privileges, they preferred to avoid their differences from the dominant culture and to be assimilated.

While the 'other' of the Kurdish identity is usually considered to be the Turks, the 'other' of the Laz is not Turks, but Kurds. As the leading cultural/ethnic identity was articulated and politicized by the Kurds, either as a reason or the consequence of this announcement has highly marginalized them within the nation. Therefore, the Laz were quite hesitant to expose themselves in the public sphere, due to the fear of being marginalized and loosing their privileged status. Consequently, condemnation of the Kurds has been a convention in order to articulate one's Lazness safely. Similarly, the Laz were expected to set an example for the whole nation in contrast with the *unfavorable* Kurds. Despite their similarity with Kurds in terms of bilingualism and having a district culture, the Laz were praised for not being a *demanding* [cultural rights] ethnic group like Kurds.

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[25] Hall, "Who Needs 'Identity'?", 2-3.
[26] Demirtaş et all., "Mekân ve Ötekiler", 39-43.
[27] Ibid., 40.

The Replacement of Experience by Representation

Since the foundation of the republic in Turkey, as the cultural differences were reduced to regional differences; the language, music, dance, etc. were expected and represented to be in line with *Turkishness* according to cultural policies. For example, the Kurds were assumed to be speaking a South-Eastern Turkish accent, and similarly the Laz, the north-Eastern Turkish accent. Even when it was called the *Laz language* (*Lazca)* it was still supposed to be a *distorted* accent of Turkish.

The widespread Laz stereotype has identified with the Black Sea region *via* popular cultural products and the media. This stereotype is still represented as macho, extremely naive or cunning, speaking a funny Turkish accent, dancing *horon* with *kemençe* improperly. Despite the apparent cultural differences, Lazness is defined within Turkishness and as a regional version of it. It would not be wrong to say that the Laz stereotype is commonly found to be a sympathetic one within the nation, particularly by the Turks, and therefore has positive connotations at first glance. Especially within the popular discourse, *the Turkishness of the Laz* has not been considered to be a controversial and debatable claim at all until the last two decades.[28] One of the researchers on the Laz culture, Ildiko Beller Hann says that "the term *Laz* also camouflages the multicultural structure of the Black Sea region. Many people, particularly in the texts, are aware of this stereotype: energetic, brave, savage, cruel to the women but care about children's education. This common stereotype leaves very little space for the ones in the east (Laz, Hemşin, Georgian.)"[29]

Hall's argument about stereotypes shows how a stereotype can be simultaneously both negative and positive:

"People who are in any way significantly different from the majority- *them* rather than *us* –are frequently exposed to binary form of representation. They seem to be represented sharply opposed; polarized, binary extremes-good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/ compelling-because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to be both

[28] The name 'Laz' is commonly used as a joke to refer to awkward stupidness just as it is used for the Britons, Scots, etc. as a part of a humorous genre that circulates within almost all societies. The Laz jokes (Laz Fıkraları) are quite popular either told orally or written—and there are many Laz joke books.

[29] Hann, *Doğu Karadeniz'de Efsane Tarih ve Kültür*, 23.

things at the same time!"[30] Hall also says that "stereotypes get hold of the few *simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized* characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development eternity. So the first point is- stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes *difference."*[31]

From this respect, I would suggest that the Laz stereotype reduces the Laz to a couple of exaggerated characteristics. The opportunity for the Laz to express and represent themselves is almost closed off. As the stereotype objectifies the Laz, it does not leave them any chance to open up any space to their experience. Under these conditions, the Laz consciously or unconsciously camouflaged their Lazness in order to be taken seriously and to be unmarked especially when migrating to the metropolises. That is to say, in order to be an acceptable subject in everyday life, Lazness has to be abandoned. Therefore, we can interpret the existence of the stereotypes as a threat from the state to the citizens to adjust themselves according to the acceptable citizens' norms; otherwise the marking and exclusion would be inevitable.

Multicultural Policies of Turkey in 2000s

When we come to the end of the twentieth century, we see that the effects of globalization which alter the conventional nationalist discourse and promote instead, multiculturalism in Turkey. As a consequence of the decline in the legitimacy of monolithic cultural policies of the nation states, the persistence of ethnic minorities as indicative of backwardness and anti-modernism has gradually lost considerable ground. Furthermore, it can even be argued that some are now glorifying ethnic-pluralism as an indicator of modernity and democracy. However, as a result of the Kurdish Political Movement revitalizing in 1980s, having social, cultural and economic roots historically, the 1990s were still tense for discussing the notion of 'multiculturalism'.

When we come to the 2000s, the notion of multiculturalism gets rather reified with the relatively liberal policies of the Adalet ve Kalkında Partisi (AKP, *Justice and Development Party*). Responding to the changing demographics, economic geography as well as the peoples' democratic

[30] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (London: SAGE, 2013), 229.
[31] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," 258.

aspirations, the party has positioned itself as pro-market and pro-European.[32] Despite its repressive policies towards 2020s, initially, the reformist AKP governments initiated several breakthroughs to mend relations with ethnic and religious minorities and address the current and historical problems of groups such as the Alevis, Armenians, the Gypsy community and Kurds.[33] Afterwards, the Laz have benefited from those liberal policies lately too. Elective courses in the Laz language at some elementary schools in Laz regions could be considered as a historic step for the Laz people. [34] This step was not even dreamed of by Laz intellectuals in 1990s.

Despite of the possibility of forging a more pluralistic democracy, the changes in the hegemonic discourse had not yet been supported by persistent changes in the legal framework in Turkey. However, what I would like to emphasize here is that the power of AKP enabled certain people to feel comfortable with their traditional values and adapt those values to the modern life. In short, my purpose is to demonstrate that this conceptual change enabled people to express their ethnic, cultural origins without being apologetic compared with earlier times. However, this is a relative freedom compared with the past and some ethnic and religious groups such as the Kurds and Alevis are still having significant problems of expression compared to the others. Despite the recent challenges, the hierarchical scaling between the *traditional* and the *modern* is still considerably maintained by the people of Turkey.

The Laz Cultural Movement: Reconstructing the Temporal and Spatial Dimensions of the Laz Identity

Since 1990s, the above-mentioned *Laz stereotype* has been increasingly contested[35] and challenged through some performances in music, dance, theatre, publications and the Internet in particular. The main motivation has been to expose Lazness in the public sphere where more or less almost all the Laz

[32] Soli Özel, "Turkey's Quest to Modernise Remains on Track," *Financial Times*, 25 July 2007.

[33] Murat Somer, "Does It Take Democrats to Democratize? Lessons from Islamic and Secular Elite Values in Turkey", *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 5, (2011): 511-45.

[34] A commission has been formed in 2013 with the efforts of Laz Language Institute to create a curriculum - which has been admitted by education ministry authorities on August 28, 2013. See "Institute Releases Videos to Promote Laz Language", last access, October, 2019, https://bianet.org/english/print/158615-institute-releases-videos-to-promote-laz-language.

[35] Selma Koçiva, "Laz Fıkralarıyla Üstümüze Gelenler," *Özgür Politika*, 11 October, 1998.

experienced Lazness through this *invisibility* and incommunicability.[36] This invisibility should not be considered as having been completely detrimental for the Laz. On the contrary, it has sometimes enabled them to be as free as an invisible man is free of charge of his faults. For example, I believe that this invisibility protected them from being subjected to violence from either the society or the state.

Despite the existence of diverse and even rival discourses, the common motivation of these struggles was to take Lazness out of the Laz stereotype, giving back the honour of the Laz culture to itself, exposing the Laz identity in the public sphere, and unmarking or re-marking the Laz identity. To put it in other words, whatever they did, those intellectuals intended to bring the Laz culture from the past to the present time, and bring it to the center of the city from the village.

At this point, I would like to note that I assume a sort of differentiation between the actors of the Movement and the intended consumers of their productions as *Laz people*. This is because I see a difference in the construction of Laz identity for both sides. First of all, while the intellectuals define Lazness with the concept of *difference*, the Laz people do it with *similarity* with the Turkish nation. Secondly, the intellectuals consider the Laz as a minority[37] who have suffered from assimilation policies of the nation state(s)[38] while the latter deny any implication of oppression or pacification. However, the distance between the two groups has been closing since the beginning of 1990s to eventually meet at the same point: enjoying music and dance in the public sphere since 2000s.

When we look at the related productions of Laz cultural movement as a whole, we can easily grasp the notion of 'loss of the Laz language'. The language has been considered as being almost the most important signifier of the Laz. If to make the Laz language 'visible' in the public sphere was the first task, to remove the pejorative connotations around it was the second. If they manage to transform the self-perception of the Laz people, they believed, they could incite the people to speak and revitalize their language.

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[36] My graduation research project for the Sociology department was about "Reading the Urbanization Experiences of the Laz through the 'Laz' jokes. See Nilüfer Taşkın, "Laz Fıkraları ve Lazların Kentleşme Süreci," BA Thesis, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2003.

[37] The term *minority* here refers to a socially subordinate ethnic group.

[38] Not only the Turkish state but also there are references of Soviet Russia because of the Laz population in Georgia.

The band Zuğaşi Berepe was one of the significant actors who managed to introduce the Laz language to a group of educated youth living in the urban areas in 1993. By composing and singing in Laz language – which was previously regarded as *the villagers*' language in a *modern* musical genre, *rock*, was a successful mission of reconstructing the temporal and spatial aspects of the Laz identity. Their music and especially Kazım Koyuncu was considerably influential on the Laz youth some of whom had later involved in similar performances.

In 1990s, main productions of Laz Cultural Movement were dictionaries, compilations, journals, albums etc. However, music and dance were much more popular than others. I interpret this because music and dance were considered to be less political activity, rather a cultural entertainment, therefore enabled Laz community to come together safely. The intellectuals in the movement pay lip service to the 'cultural difference' suspending any 'separatist' marking. In short, the Laz Cultural Movement mimics the nation state who constructs the national identity by defining the cultural realm through the categories like language, music, dance, folklore, architecture etc.

The Laz Cultural Movement did not turn into a mass movement itself as the expectations and perception of the people were rather different from those of the intellectuals. Still, we cannot underestimate its impact on Lazness as an outcome when we come to the 2000s, concurring with other determinants like music industry, multicultural discourse etc. The Laz Cultural Movement was not taken as a real political threat for the nation state probably because conventionally the Laz have been loyal to the state, due to the influence of the stereotype fixing the Laz as the objects of the jokes instead of being a subject of politics; they were not a big population throughout the country and also the Laz culture have been so invisible that there was nothing left to be afraid of except for a couple of young, exited, middle class, educated (wo)men.

Conversely, I think the Laz were setting an ideal example for a multicultural discourse, as an ethnic group having no political demands apart from 'singing their songs, dancing *horon*' when it was no longer plausible to insist on a conventional nationalist discourse at this neoliberal age. When we come to the 2000s, the ideal was so exaggerated that we face with an excessive visibility of the Laz in the public compared to its formerly invisible position.

The Laz as "Good" Citizens of Multicultural Turkey

In Turkey's praxis of multiculturalism, I suggest that the history and politics were highly suppressed by legitimizing the multi-lingual music. In the end, the communities who were allowed to perform their songs in their mother tongue were expected to be satisfied with the provision of the exclusive cultural policies so far. That roughly meant, in the hegemonic discourse, "don't tell me whatever I did to you in the history to assimilate you, and don't remind me of the pains I caused. Just sing your songs now and forget the past." Robert Stam criticizes this perspective by saying:

"I am not suggesting that multiculturalism is simply fun, a culinary delight where one wanders from a falafel one week to sushi next, with salsa dancing on Friday night and samba Saturday". He mentions that "any substantive multiculturalism has to recognize the political realities of injustice and inequality and the consequent existential realities of pain, anger and resentment, since the multiple cultures invoked by term 'multiculturalism' have not historically coexisted in relations of equality and mutual respect."[39]

Indeed, the majority of Laz were satisfied with this favour, unlike Kurds and Armenians who demanded that the state face up to the historical mistakes and the pain it caused. Moreover, Kurds were rather demanding about their cultural rights such as education in Kurdish. The majority of the Laz were already reluctant to position themselves as a *subaltern* group, and wished only to be visible in the public sphere apart from the previous common stereotype. To put it other words, the recognition of cultural difference was acceptable as long as it is positioned as higher than Kurds) but at the same time within the dominant Turkish culture. In practical terms, this means that they tended to define Lazness as a *subculture* group with distinct cultural characteristics but still within the larger culture.[40] At the end, I suggest that through musical performance the Laz present an *acceptable locality* that can be consumed.

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[39] Robert Stam, "Multiculturalism and the Neoconservatives," in *Dangerous Liaisons Gender and Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, Cultural Politics (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 200, cited in Melissa Bilal, "The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories About Being an Armenian in Turkey," (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004), 17.

[40] I differentiate the position of the Kurds, Armenians, Greeks who considered themselves as oppressed by the state while having distinct cultural characteristics without linking them to the dominant culture.

In short, despite the fact that the denial of the multicultural population in Turkey, the cultural policies has not been transformed to a real recognition and intention to keep alive those cultural differences considering the inefficient legal changes in the constitution. Moreover, claiming cultural rights in order to sustain cultural values is still controversial and has not gained its legitimacy yet in Turkey. Thus, we are far away from the *multicultural society* for the present in the lack of a legal and social reform.

The Cultural Performances which Transformed the Laz Identity from an Invisible to an Excessively Visible One

Even though a number of private media channels having a Black Sea concept flourished on TV and radio, the concept did not include the Laz language due to the presence of a nationalist broadcasting policy previously. On the other hand, pioneer performers of the Laz music with language in the national music market were Zuğaşi Berepe along with Birol Topaloğlu, and also Grup Yorum, Kardeş Türküler and Fuat Saka in 1990s. However, in the 2000s, the representation of the Laz music reached its peak with Kazım Koyuncu and the new founded bands following his style. So, a new musical genre appeared on the stage: *Black Sea Rock*.

For the Laz, former soloist of Zuğaşi Berepe band, Koyuncu became the symbol for transforming Lazness from an introverted position to one that is extroverted by introducing the Laz (language, music, etc.) to the non-Laz community. In other words, many people in Turkey found out about the existence of the Laz community and its distinct culture through Kazım Koyuncu as opposed to the incorrect Laz stereotype that was previously circulated. Kazım Koyuncu is commonly described as "the person who enabled the new generation of Laz to like the language and music"[41] and, more frequently, the person who presented Black Sea music[42] to a wider community through music market. His popularity was a turning point for the representation of the Laz obviously. Koyuncu's fame doubled and he was turned into a legend after his early death at the age of 33 in 2005 because of lung cancer.[43]

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[41] Ercan Çelik, "Koyuncu'dan Horona Davet," *Radikal Gazetesi*, 04 April, 2004.
[42] Hatice Tuncer, "Denizin Çocuğu Giderken Çernobil Sorumsuzluğuna İsyan Başlattı", *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 03 July, 2005.
[43] The way he died symbolized and was attached to the fate of people from the Black Sea who face cancer due to environmental poisons resulting from the Chernobyl accident.

For many, he played a crucial role in a perception change from *primitive, introverted, irritating*[44] Black Sea music to a *pleasant*, *modern* and *inviting* music.[45] I think he managed to do that by linking the *modern* with the *traditional* concept.[46] Once the perception of music changed from an unpleasant to a pleasant one, the sense of identity of the Laz and the Black Sea was inevitably changed and transformed to a 'desired' one. Here, we can obviously observe how performances are important to "mark or change" identity.[47]

When I evaluate the 'performance' as a whole, (from musicality to narrative discourses) I suggest that there are resistant challenging and mainstream aspects of Kazım Koyuncu as a phenomenon. On the one hand, he was opening up a space for the representation of an 'invisible' community, Laz through a new hybrid musical form.

On the other hand, he was not marginalized but became popular among different social groups. I arrive at this conclusion through several facts. First of all, he was Laz, but his Lazness was not 'demanding' apart from the recognition of the Laz language. Put it in other words, his cultural identity claim could be considered 'moderate'.

When I elaborate all those cultural performances, I come to this conclusion: obviously, the hegemony recognizes the ethnic groups as long as they do not demand cultural rights (like education in mother language) or push for facing the oppressive history etc. but just performing songs *peacefully today in Turkey*. This opposition obviously marks the Laz as the *acceptable* citizens while marking the others as *Others*.

However, I believe that social peace in Turkey could be constructed only when there are no hierarchical scales between ethnic groups. So, just like Turks; the Laz, Kurds, Circassians Armenians, etc. should be able to foster their culture without fear of being stigmatized.

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[44] "Kazım Koyuncu'ya Üzülüyoruz", Rock'n Roll Kültür Mecmuası, 27 May, 2005.
[45] Atasoy, Aslı. "Viya: Müsekkin Niyetine." Radikal Gazetesi, 28 August, 2001.
[46] I would like to emphasize here that I do not accept those concepts as taken for granted. For example, when we look at İsmail Türüt, his music is rather mixture of modern and traditional too using organ, electro-*bağlama* etc. But this hybridity do not cause to a 'modern' context now but maybe in the 1980s.
[47] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 46.

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CHAPTER 6

THE RUMS – OR GREEK-ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS – IN TURKEY

Aude Aylin de Tapia

Introduction

The meaning of the word *Rum* (from *Roimaios*, subject of the Eastern Roman Empire) evolved through the Ottoman period up to its current meaning from a religious sense (the Rums being Orthodox Christians of Oriental rite) to an ethno-linguistic, or even national connotation (the Rums being considered as ethnically Greek and linguistically Greek-speaking). It is from the 1870s that this semantic shift was confirmed. The millet-i Rum still counted among its faithful Arab- and Turkish-speaking communities, but in the eyes of the Constantinopolitan elites of the millet, confession was no longer enough: language, traditions and ethnicity were now essential components of the Rum identity.[1]

[1] Regarding the evolution of the Rum identity in the nineteenth century, see Aude Aylin Tapia (de), "Orthodox Christians and Muslims of Cappadocia: Intercommunal Relations in an Ottoman Rural Context (1839-1923)" (PhD (unpublished) EHESS and Boğaziçi University, 2016); Kemal Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruitty of Nation and State in the Ottoman Era," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. B. Braude and B. Lewis (New York: 1982); Dimitrios Stamatopoulos, "From Millets to Minorities in the 19th-Century Ottoman Empire: An Ambiguous Modernization," in *Citizenship in Historical Perspective*, ed. S. G. Ellis, G. Hálfdanarson, and A.K. Isaacs (Pisa: Pisa UP, 2006); Gerasimos Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor, Confession, Community, and Ethnicity in the Nineteenth Century* (Kent: Kent State UP, 1992); Sia Anagnostopoulou, "Les communautés grecques d'Asie Mineure, 1897-1919: aspects de l'évolution d'une "communauté nationale" au sein d'un Empire" (PhD EHESS, 1994); Paraskevas Konortas, "From Ta'ife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. D. Gondicas and C. Issawi (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1999); Foti Benlisoy and Stefo Benlisoy, "Reading the Identity of "Karamanli" Through the Pages of Anatol," in *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Books*, ed. M. Kappler and E. Balta, Turcologica (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010).. About the

In fact, several Patriarchates shared jurisdiction over the Orthodox Christians in the late Ottoman Empire. First, the (Ecumenical) Patriarchate of Constantinople, the first autocephalous jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church, extended its authority over the Balkans and Western and Central Anatolia. In demographic terms, it had the largest number of faithful, including Greeks but also Bulgarians, Serbians, or Romanians.[2] This patriarch was considered by the Ottoman authorities as the legitimate leader of millet. Second, Southeastern Anatolia and Syria were under the jurisdiction of the Arab-speaking Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. Third, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Sinai depended on the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem. If the latter was Hellenophone, the majority of its clergy and faithful were Arab-speakers. And finally, the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa extended its jurisdiction over Egypt and Africa.

Only Orthodox Rums depending on the Patriarchates of Constantinople and of Antioch are still settled inside boundaries of today's Turkey. All are Turkish citizens and observe oriental rites. The Turkish state administratively integrates them in a single category of *Rum Ortodoks*.[3] In addition, it can also be mentioned the Catholic Greeks, who depend on the Vatican even though they do not observe the Latin rite, self-identify as the *Romaiokatholiko;* they follow the oriental rite but recognize the supremacy of the Pape. Most of the faithful of the Greek Catholic church of oriental rite – construction of the late nineteenth century – emigrated from Turkey at the foundation of the Republic. In 1998, they were no more than 45 living in Istanbul.[4]

As for most non-Muslim communities of Turkey, the end of the Ottoman Empire was the beginning of an important and quite constant demographic decline, a consequence of emigration due to various reasons, mostly political and economic. While, in the early 1900s, about 160,000 Rums lived in

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meaning and uses of the term "Rum", see Samim Akgönül, "Rum nedir? Kim der, kime der, niye der?," in *Rum olma, Rum kalmak*, ed. Hakan Yücel (Istanbul: Istos, 2016).

[2]Daniela Kalkandjieva, "Pre-Modern Orthodoxy: Church Features and Transformations," *Etudes balkaniques* 2010, no. 4 (2010): 188.

[3]Paul Dumont and Méropi Anastassiadou, *Une mémoire pour la Ville: La communauté grecque d'Istanbul en 2003* (Istanbul: Institut français d'études anatoliennes, 2003), 6.

[4]Catholic Rums are not the object of this chapter, which focuses mainly on Orthodox Rums depending on the Patriarchate of Constantinople. For detailed study, see Elçin Macar, *İstanbul'un Yok Olmuş İki Cemaati. Doğu Ritli Katolik Rumlar ve Bulgarlar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002).

Istanbul;[5] in 1927, there were no more than 100.000; in 1945, this figure felt to 76,844; 67,550 in 1955; and 47,207 in 1965. Even though census do no more include religious belonging since 1965, estimations allow to think that less than 7,000 Rums remained in the city in 1978 and that only 2,000, maybe 2,500 Rums live in Istanbul currently (this figure does not include temporary residents who live abroad (mainly in Greece) but spend several months in Istanbul each year.[6]

The Rums in the Ottoman Empire

Early Centuries

In early Ottoman centuries, the term "*Rum*" defined all the Orthodox Christians following the Byzantine rite without regard of the differences in their ethnic, cultural and historical backgrounds. The fall of the Byzantine Empire and especially the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 broke the Byzantine unity between the state and the church by depriving the Orthodox church in the Balkans and Anatolia from its previous status of official church of the state. At the same time, the Orthodox population of these territories who formerly belonged to the *"political majority*", was henceforth one of the dominated groups, on the same terms as the Jewish or the Armenian population. In 1453, the Sultan, Mehmed II, as a new ruler of Constantinople, did not need the Orthodox church as a source for his legitimacy as did the Byzantine Emperor. Quite the reverse, he even had the power to guarantee the existence of the Orthodox church. Being conscious about the necessity to secure the loyalty of Christian subjects of the empire, Mehmed II and after him, all the Ottoman sultan, preserved the Patriarchate of Constantinople as the head of the Orthodox Christian community, called in the Ottoman context *millet-i Rum*. In that context, Patriarchs became, besides their spiritual and religious leading, “lay administrators obliged to organize law-courts and fiscal services and to give directives on secular politics” that concerned their faithful.[7] On the other hand, several churches disappeared, being integrated to the Patriarchate of

[5]Cem Behar, *Osmanli Imparatorlugu'nun ve Türkiye'nin nüfusu, 1500-1927* (Ankara: T.C. Basbakanlik Devlet Istatistik Enstitüsü, 1996), 55.
[6]Paul Dumont and Méropi Anastassiadou, *Une mémoire pour la Ville: La communauté grecque d’Istanbul en 2003*, 7-8.
[7]Steven Runciman, *The Orthodox Churches and the Secular State* (Auckland University Press, 1971), 29.

Constantinople as it was the case for the Bulgarian church already entered under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1393.[8]

During the following centuries of Ottoman rule, Rum communities of the empire remained quite autonomous vis-à-vis the Ottoman state, the Patriarchate overseeing the management of juridical, economic, social, and religious issues within the community but also collecting taxes for its own administration as well as on behalf of the state. Nevertheless, in the territories of current Turkey, the Rum communities demographically declined, especially in rural areas, due to Islamization and persecution but mostly to economic conditions.[9] On the eve of the nineteenth century, main concentrations were in Istanbul and Izmir. In rural areas, Rums were mostly settled on the Asia minor coast and Aegean and Mediterranean islands but also in the regions of Cappadocia (central Anatolia) and Pontus (on the Black Sea Coast) while the region of Konya where Rums formerly settled had lost almost all its communities before the end of the eighteenth century. The urbanization trend intensified in the nineteenth century to such an extent that, for instance, in Cappadocia, numerous villages had lost their Rum population sometimes several decades before the exchange of population.[10]

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[8]The Bulgarian Patriarchate of Tarnovo in 1393 and its flock placed under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Bulgarians succeeded in restoring their church freedom in 1870, more than 4 centuries later thanks to a Sultan decree for the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate.

[9] On the first centuries of Ottoman rules (until the eighteenth century), see for instance Ronald C. Jennings, "Urban Population in Anatolia in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of Kayseri, Karaman, Amasya, Trabzon, and Erzurum," *IJMES* 7, no. 1 (1976); Suraiya Faroqhi, *Men of Modest Substance: House Owners and House Property in Seventeenth-Century Ankara and Kayseri* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987); Suraiya Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts, and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520-1650* (Cambridge UP, 1984); Suraiya Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century "Greater Istanbul" as Reflected in the Kadi Registers of Eyüp," *Turcica* 30 (1998); Robert Mantran, "Foreign Merchants and the Minorities in Istanbul during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman empire: the functioning of a plural society*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982); Evangelia Balta, "Tracing the Presence of Rum Orthodox in Cappadocia. The evidence of Tapu Tahrirs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries," in *Between Religion and Language. Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. E. Balta and M. Ölmez (Istanbul: Eren, 2011).

[10] Regarding Rum communities inf Cappadocia in the nineteenth century, see Aude Aylin Tapia (de), "Orthodox Christians and Muslims of Cappadocia."

The *Millet-i Rum* in the Late Ottoman Empire

The *millet* as religious community is traditionally described as a structure that adapted to new historical circumstances. In the course of the nineteenth century, the religious meaning of the millet is doubled by a national definition. In Greek, two words are mainly used in the nineteenth century to define the Orthodox community. On one hand, the *koinotis* is the local community (generally one or several neighboring parishes).[11] On the other hand, the *genos*, meaning the community of the "Christian brothers" is rooted in kinship relations, but was used in the nineteenth century as the equivalent of *millet* in the sense of nation.[12]

It is during the Tanzimat (1839-1874) that the meaning of the name *Rum* evolved and that the status of the *millet-i rum* was institutionalized and codified according to a confessional basis. In 1856, the Ottoman state recognized for the first time after 1453 the Patriarch of Constantinople as the leader of the millet and with it the supremacy of the Greek-speaking element over non-hellenophone orthodox churches.

In 1862, at the request of the Ottoman state, the millet-i Rum became the first of three historical millets (Rum, Armenian and Jewish) to set up a new basic text (Genikoi Kanonismoi, General Regulations) codifying the administration of millet. It set up two committees: first, the Holy Synod (twelve metropolitans of the Patriarchate of Constantinople), which deals with religious affairs; second, the Permanent Joint National Council (eight lay people and four priests of the Holy Synod), which deals with civil affairs (management of schools, hospitals, internal disputes).

The establishment of the National Council marked the beginning of the rise of laypeople in the administration of the millet. Nevertheless, the high clergy maintained important prerogatives and the Patriarch of Constantinople continued to be considered by the Ottoman State as the head of millet. Locally, the community (in Greek κοινότης/koinotis, a village or district with one or more parishes) was, in theory, administered by two assemblies: the epitropies (or demogeronties, councils of elders) that managed places of worship and other properties related to parishes, and the ephorias that supervised the functioning of schools.[13] In small and medium-sized communities, particularly in rural

[11]Méropi Anastassiadou, *Les Grecs d'Istanbul au XIXe siècle. Histoire socioculturelle de la communauté de Péra* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 122.

[12]Maria Couroucli, "Génos, ethnos. Nation et Etat-nation," *Identités, Nations, Globalisation* 26, no. 287-299 (Nov. 2000 2003): 289.

[13]Méropi Anastassiadou, *Les Grecs d'Istanbul*, 122-23. For a detailed study of the internal organization of the communities, see also Ayşe Ozil, *Orthodox Christians in*

areas, these different assemblies merge into a single committee (ephoro-epitropi).[14] In the most populous communities, a central euphoria of six elected members oversees committees and ephoria.

Following the advent of Abdülhamid II in 1876, the millet-i rum did not change much in terms of its internal organization, except for a gradual strengthening of the place of laypeople in its institutions.[15] On the political front, the first constitutional period (1876-1878), halted by the return to absolutism, was about to change the situation of non-Muslims, the Great Assembly (*Meclis-i mebusan*) having to count deputies representing each of the millets. Faced with tensions related in particular to the Cretan question (revolt of 1866-67 and 1878, insurrection of 1897 at the origin of the Greco-Turkish war, union of Crete with Greece in 1908 and anti-Greek boycott in Turkey) but also in view of the internal changes in millet, the relatively tolerant atmosphere of Tanzimat is transformed into a mistrust of the state vis-à-vis the Rums.[16]

In 1908, the Young Turks Revolution marked the return of the constitutional monarchy. The Sultan proclaimed the holding of elections during which each ethnic group must be represented. This new situation gave Rum communities, especially in cities, the opportunity to translate their socio-economic influence on the political scene since the millet could claim 24 seats of deputies.[17] However, the attempt to create an Ottoman nation quickly gave way, within the Young Turks government, to a Turkish nationalism in which non-Muslims of the Empire were more and more openly excluded.

A Renaissance in an Identity in-Betwixt: Hellenism *versus* Ottomanism *versus* Turkish Nationalism

The nineteenth century was also a time of renaissance for the Rum population of the Empire in all the political, socio-economic, cultural, educational, artistic and philanthropic dynamics. The independence of Greece (1830) and the

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the Late Ottoman Empire: A Study of Communal Relations in Anatolia (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

[14]Méropi Anastassiadou, *Les Grecs d'Istanbul*, 122-23.

[15]Michel Bruneau, *De l'Asie Mineure à la Turquie. Minorités, homogénéisation ethno-nationale, diasporas* (Paris: CNRS, 2015).

[16]Selim Deringil, *The Well-protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 105.

[17]Catherine Boura, "The Greek millet in Turkish politics : Greeks in the Ottoman parliament (1908-1918)," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Philip Issawi (Darwin Press, 1999).

beginning of the Tanzimat (1839) marked the beginning and the exchange of Greek-Turkish population (1923) the end of this renaissance. Inside the millet, hesitation over the two constituent components of millet, Orthodoxy and Hellenism, opened the way for many debates and works among elites in search of identity. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Greek historian Constantin Paparrigopoulos took up and developed the notion of the Great Idea (Megali Idea) first expressed before the Greek National Assembly by the deputy Ioannis Kolettis in 1844. Under the pen of Paparrigopoulos, the Megali Idea traces a direct historical line between the territories of the Hellenistic era and the Ottoman territories claimed by Greece "to free the subjugated brothers".[18] The Rum communities were considered as the heirs of the ancient cities of Asia Minor and the Megali Idea aimed the (re-)Hellenization of the Rums on the cultural and linguistic level. However, the project was not seen in the same way in Athens and Istanbul. If Hellene and Rum recognized each other in the same Greek identity (mainly defined by religion and language), the two capitals had different visions of Hellenism: in Athens, the Antiquity, the unity and homogeneity of the nation were emphasized; in Constantinople, the Byzantine tradition and the multicultural character of Rum society were more readily highlighted. In Anatolia, the process was more firmly rooted in the Constantinopolitan logic than in the Athenian one, passing through a reinforcement of the hellenophony rather than the idea of belonging to the Hellenic nation.[19] Nevertheless, the Hellenization piloted from Istanbul from the years 1870 laid the linguistic bases which would allow the Greek nationalists to claim the regions where the Christians spoke Greek.

It is in this bipolar context that the small and medium-sized bourgeoisie of coastal cities turned to Greece, resorting more and more regularly to the protection of Greece while traditional rural society remained in line with the religious definition of millet. Faced with Athenian interferences in the millet business, some of the intellectuals - some of whom were seated in the Ottoman Assembly from 1908 to 1912 - clearly displayed their reluctance. Pavlos Karolidis, deputy of Izmir, defender of Hellenization, considers that this project must be led by the Rums and that Greece does not have to intervene. Others, such as Emmanouil Emmanouilidis, defend the project of an Ottoman citizenship through an "Ottomanization" of non-Muslims.[20]

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[18]Michel Bruneau, *De l'Asie Mineure à la Turquie*.
[19]Méropi Anastassiadou, *Les Grecs d'Istanbul*, 382.
[20]Vangelis Kechriotis, "On the margins of national historiography: The Greek Ittihatçı Emmanouil Emmanouilidis – opportunist or Ottoman patriot?," in *Untold Histories of*

There was also a handful of Turkish-speaking Rums (commonly known as Karamanlis) that Turkish nationalism seemed to interest. In 1921, the Pope Pavlos Karahisarithis and a group of 72 Turkish-speaking clerics form the General Congregation of the Anatolian Turkish Orthodox (Umum Anadolu Türk Ortodoksları Cemaatleri) in Kayseri. asserted that the Anatolian Orthodox were Turks. On September 21, 1922, the congregation proclaimed the creation of an independent Orthodox Turkish Patriarchate whose Karahisarithis, supported by the Committee Union and Progress, became, in January 1923, the first patriarch under the name of Papa Eftim. Only a minority swore allegiance to Papa Eftim and the movement failed to anchor among the Karamanlisin in the few months , before the officialization of the exchange of populations. Despite being kept in Istanbul, the Turkish Independent Church is today a church without followers.

Except this late proclamation of the "Turkness" of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Anatolians and effort led by Papa Eftim (1920s) joined by a limited number of clerics and laymen, Turkish nationalism did not attract Anatolian Rums more than Greek nationalism. Especially after 1908, many Rums stayed in an in-betwixt situation between ethnicized notions of Turkness and Greekness and began to be considered as foreigners by Muslim locals and consequently to feel like strangers in their own land.[21] For many of the Turkish-speaking Rum communities, it was in response to the Turkish nationalization of Anatolian Muslims, rather than under the influence of Athens, that they finally defined themselves as ethnically Greek. After 1923, deported to Greece, the same Turkish-speaking Rums were seen as foreigners in Greece, their new homeland… *Twice a stranger*…[22]

Education, a Pillar for a Regenerated *Millet*

From the 1850s, the immigration of the Rums from the provinces to the main cities of the empire (in particular Istanbul and Izmir) – a movement that already existed in previous decades – intensified. These economic migrants, leaving rural areas in crisis in the face of the penetration of Western products on the Ottoman market, integrated quite easily within the urban environment. This

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the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries, ed. Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann, and S. Aksin Somel (London: Routledge, 2011); Catherine Boura, "The Greek millet in Turkish politics : Greeks in the Ottoman parliament (1908-1918)."

[21]Sophia Anastasiadi-Manousaki, *Μνήμες Καππαδοκίας* [Memories from Cappadocia] (Αθήνα: ΚΜΣ, 2002).

[22]Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions That Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009).

migration is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the great educational project. Initially, through education, the aim was to integrate the numerous migrants from rural origin to the urban community, to eradicate illiteracy but also to teach religion and to maintain a sense of belonging to the "Rum nation", by working to the cultural hegemony of the Hellenic element within the *millet*.[23] Probably motivated, in part, by the competition of Catholic and Protestant missionaries who settled and created schools throughout the empire, the educational movement, coordinated and supervised by the Patriarchate spread rapidly throughout the empire.[24] New school curricula were prepared, textbooks published, collections of popular traditions collected and edited, etc. The education of boys, but also of girls, from primary to secondary school (and even for the best in high school and university) was being democratized thanks to investments and fundraising within the millet as well as within the diaspora settled in Greece, Europe, or the United States. Among the main actors at the head of this project were the Greek literary Syllogue of Constantinople *(Ο εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος/O en Konstantinoupoli ellinikos Philologikos Syllogos)*, created in 1861, which was also the main Rum association of the empire, and the Central Educational Committee of the Patriarchate set up in 1873.[25]

Moreover from the 1860s onwards, many philanthropic- and education-oriented voluntary associations were created to teach the values of the emerging middle class to lower social strata and to create social cohesion within the Rum community.[26] Beyond large cities, associations of compatriots bringing together migrants according to their city or village of origin became the pillars of the densification of the school network by financing the creation of institutions in their community of origin in Epirus, Thrace, on the Aegean shores, in the Pontus, or in Cappadocia.[27] The movement took on such proportions that, in the

[23]Méropi Anastassiadou, "Greek Orthodox Immigrants and Modes of Integration within the Urban Society of Istanbul (1850-1923)," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 161-62.
[24]Stavros Th. Anestidis, "Saint Augustin visite la Cappadoce des Pères orthodoxes," in *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. E. Balta and M. Ölmez (Istanbul: Eren, 2011), 277.
[25]George A. Vassiadis, *The Syllogos Movement of Constantinople and Ottoman Greek Education 1861-1923* (Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 2007).
[26]Stefo Benlisoy, "Education in the Orthodox Community of Nevsehir during the Nineteenth Century" (PhD Boğaziçi University, 2010), 28-29.
[27]Méropi Anastassiadou, "Greek Orthodox Immigrants," 161-62.

1900s, even the smallest rural communities of Anatolia owned a school, or at least a classroom.[28]

In Greece, the interest in the education of Anatolian Rums began in the second half of the century and was strengthened by the foundation of the Society for the Propagation of Greek Letters in 1869 under the leadership of Paparrigopoulos, known as one of the main promoters of the *Megali Idea*.[29] Greek consuls in the Ottoman Empire had among their main missions to observe and support local education, but the lack of representatives of the Greek State before the 1900s minimized the role of Athens even though its emergence as the secular, ideological, and cultural center of Hellenism, incited the Patriarchate of Constantinople to seek to maintain its centrality and spiritual leadership over Orthodox communities and to characterize itself as the most essential cement for the ethnic-religious identity.

Social, Cultural and Artistic Renaissance

Piloted from Istanbul by the *millet's* authorities and leading Rum families (in particular Phanariotes, businessmen and intellectual elites), the development of the Rum educational network goes hand in hand with the organization of charitable activities, the creation of orphanages, hospitals, and other social and cultural structures whose purpose was to *contribute to the construction of a regenerated society*.[30]

A literary, musical, or architectural large-scale movement participated in this regeneration.[31] Urban and rural communities built new churches, schools, and

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[28]Méropi Anastassiadou, *Les Grecs d'Istanbul*.

[29]Konstantinos Th. Dimaras, *Κωνσταντίνος Παπαρρηγόπουλος: Η Εποχή του - Η Ζωή του - Το Εργο του* (Athens: MIET, 1986), 241; Socrates D. Petmezas, "From privileged outcasts to power players: the 'Romanic' redefinition of the hellenic nation in the mid-nineteenth century," in *The making of Modern Greece*, ed. R. Beaton and D. Ricks (London: Ashgate), 133.

[30]Méropi Anastassiadou, *Les Grecs d'Istanbul*.

[31]Johann Strauss, "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003/01/01 2003), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14752620306881; Johann Strauss, "Romanlar ah! O Romanlar! Les débuts de la lecture moderne dans l'Empire ottoman," *Turcica* 26 (1994); Johann Strauss, "The Millets and the Ottoman Language. The Contribution of Ottoman Greeks to Ottoman Letters (19th-20th centuries)," *Die Welt des Islams* 35, no. 2 (1995); Johann Strauss, "Les voies de la transmission du savoir dans un milieu cosmopolite. Lettrés et savants à Istanbul au XIXe siècle," in *Les Intellectuels en Orient musulman, statut et fonction*, ed. F. Sanagustin (Le Caire: IFAO, 1998); Merih Erol, *Greek Orthodox Music in Ottoman Istanbul: Nation and Community in the Era of Reform* (Indiana UP, 2016).

other public and private buildings. Book production developed rapidly, in Greek as well as Karamanli-Turkish (i.e., Turkish written in Greek characters and used by a large part of Anatolian Rums). In the second half of the nineteenth century, in parallel with the growing influence of laymen and the development of the school network and interest in the sciences, religious books were supplemented by more and more scientific works in history, geography, literature, law, but also dictionaries, grammar, mathematics, or accounting textbooks. Published by the Patriarchate printing house, by Catholic and Protestant Bible societies and by private printers, mainly Armenians and Rums, these works found their place in school libraries and private homes. The novels of Eugène Sue and Alexandre Dumas but especially those of Xavier de Montépin are translated and published in volumes or serialized in the Greek and Karamanli press (as well as in the other languages spoken in the empire).[32]

Regarding the press, daily and monthly newspapers and literary and scientific journals were published in Izmir and Istanbul, but it is difficult to measure how much this production in Greek and Karamanli-Turkish circulated in the provincial Rum communities. Do we read newspapers and novels in the peasant families on the Aegean side as in the families of the Istanbul bourgeoisie? Probably not. Nevertheless, the diffusion effort in the different social strata of the millet was real.[33] The lists of subscribers printed at the end of many books indeed show that the publications were bought and sent to the four corners of the empire, to take place in the private libraries and in the schools of the communities.[34]

The exchange of population between Greece and Turkey, decided in Lausanne and formalized in the Convention of January 30, 1923, putt an end to the Rum presence in Anatolia, leaving the renaissance unfinished. However, the end of this renaissance in the Ottoman context, the departure for Greece and the integration, often difficult, for the Rums in their new homeland, gave birth to new cultural and artistic movements in Greece.[35]

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[32]Johann Strauss, "Romanlar ah! O Romanlar!."; Aude Aylin Tapia (de), "De la Porteuse de Pain (1884) à l'Etmekçi Hatun (1885); Un roman populaire français chez les Karamanlis," in *Cultural Encounters in the Turkish-Speaking Communities of the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. E. Balta and M. Ölmez (Istanbul: Isis, 2014).
[33]Johann Strauss, "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?."
[34]Aude Aylin Tapia (de), "De la Porteuse de Pain."
[35]Renée Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean, An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (Oxford: Hirschon, 2003).

The Rum Community in Republican Turkey

The Exchange of Populations of 1923 and the First Republican Years

In 1923, at the International Conference of Lausanne, it was decided to exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. The two countries, under the auspices of Western powers, signed a convention to exchange their populations on a religious basis: about 1.5 million Rums were deported from Anatolia and sent to Greece; conversely, about 400,000 Muslims were forced to leave Greece and settle in Turkey. Several exceptions were made. In Greece, Muslims living in western Thrace were exempted from the exchange. On the Turkish side, among Rums depending on the Patriarchate of Constantinople, those living in Istanbul[36] and two Aegean islands (Bozcaada/Tenedos and Gökçeada/Imbros[37]) were kept outside the scope this decision, as well as the Rums of eastern Turkey, who were under the spiritual authority of the Patriarchate of Antioch. If the latter remained outside the clause of the Treaty of Lausanne, Rums of Istanbul and Aegean islands, like their Muslim counterparts in western Thrace, were officially protected by clauses 37 to 45 of the Treaty, which gave them rights, i.e., absolute equality with other citizens of the country and additional rights, mostly religious and linguistic, protecting them from disappearance or assimilation.[38] These rights, however, were a double-edged sword. On one hand, they gave the possibility to the Rum community the ability to maintain its own culture, education, press, on the other hand, they were one of the reasons why the Rums, as other non-Muslims, in the Turkish society, are observed with mistrust, considered as strangers – if not foreign agents – in their own country.

Despite these rights, the political and social situation remained delicate for those who in Turkey. In fact, the first decades of the Republic were a relatively peaceful time for the Rum minority, who even prospered, continuing in a way the renaissance aborted by the exchange of populations. However, the Rums, as well as members of the other non-Muslim communities endured restrictions rapidly after the creation of the republic. From 1925, the Turkish government

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[36] For detail studies of the Rums of Istanbul in Republican Turkey , see the collective books Foti Benlisoy, Anna Maria Aslanoğlu, and Haris Rigas, *İstanbul Rumları: bugün ve yarın* (Istanbul: Istos, 2012).

[37] On Rum population of Gökçeada and Bozcaada, see Münüsoğlu, "Ötekinin Üçüncü Hali: İmroz'da Otantiklik ve Turizm," in *Rum Olmak Rum Kalmak*, ed. Hakan Yücel (Istanbul: İstos, 2016); Hasan Münüsoğlu, "Kültürel Bellek Bağlamında İmrozlu Kimliği Üzerine Etnografik Bir İnceleme" (PhD Ankara University, 2017).

[38]Samim Akgönül, *Vers une nouvelle donne dans les relations gréco-turques ?* (Istanbul: Institut français d'études anatoliennes, 2001), 15.

compelled the representatives of the minorities to renounce to the positive rights they had according to the clauses of Lausanne, while Turkification of the society, of its economy, and its policy was clearly to the disadvantage of non-Mulim minorities.[39] However, it is during the World War II larger difficulties began for the Rums, who were observed by the state and the (Muslim) public opinion as an extension of the Greek state in Turkey. Even though Turkey remained neutral, the war context created a climate of mistrust towards non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. In 1941, Rums began to be enrolled not in military corps but in work camps while the next year was imposed the *varlik vergisi* (wealth tax), that almost exclusively hit non-Muslim citizens until its abandonment in 1944. These years certainly caused the loss of confidence of the Rums of Istanbul concerning their future in Turkey.[40]

The Pogroms of 6-7 September 1955 and Following Wages of Emigration

In 1950, the military and political crisis in Cyprus. In September 1954, Turkish public opinion and press begrudged the Patriarch of Constantinople for his silence in the Cyprus crisis.[41] One year later, The announcement of a bomb attack on the Turkish Consulate in Salonika, the former home of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on 6 September 1955, gave rise to the pogroms of 6-7 September 1955 that prompted the departure of Rums, but still at a limited extent. Massive wages of emigration from Turkey occurred about one decade later. In the following years indeed, the everyday situation of the Rums was closely related to the events in Cyprus and more generally to the diplomatic tensions between Greece and Turkey.

In 1964, the expulsion of Greeks (with Greek citizenship)[42] from Turkey by the decision of the government led to the massive emigration of Rums (with Turkish citizenship) from Istanbul, and from the islands of Gökçeada and Bozcaada. While in 1960, Turkey counted about 106,000 Rums, in 1965, about

[39]Paul Dumont and Méropi Anastassiadou, *Une mémoire pour la Ville: La communauté grecque d'Istanbul en 2003*, 10; Samim Akgönül, *Vers une nouvelle donne dans les relations gréco-turques ?*, 81-82.

[40]Samim Akgönül, *Vers une nouvelle donne dans les relations gréco-turques ?*, 17; Ayhan Aktar, ""Tax me to the end of my life": anatomy of an anti-minority tax legislation (1942-3)," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Philip Issawi (Darwin Press, 1999).

[41]Samim Akgönül, *Vers une nouvelle donne dans les relations gréco-turques ?*, 17.

[42]In 1930, a treaty signed between Greece and Turkey had allowed to Greek citizens who were originated from Istanbul to come back and settled in the city. Samim Akgönül, *Vers une nouvelle donne dans les relations gréco-turques ?*, 18.

30,000 of them had left the country.[43] The year of 1964, maybe more than 1955, have been experienced by the Rums of Turkey as the main initiating event to the emigration.[44] Since that date, demographic decline of the Rum community of Turkey progresses with ups and downs.[45]

The Rum Minority in the Twenty-First Century

Aging but still socially and economically active minority, the Rum community of Turkey, despite its small number, succeeds in maintaining the social, cultural, and religious life of the community, sometimes in a way that can appear disproportionate in the light of the limited number of the members: the Rum Orthodox Church still keeps 70 parishes in Istanbul (according to the administrative sharing established in 1876); a dozen of philanthropic associations are still active inside the community; three of the eleven Rum schools settled in Istanbul during the Ottoman years, (*Megali tou Genous Scholi*, *Zappeion*, and *Zografeion*), which potentially can welcome a total of 2,000 pupils, maintain their educative activities for no more than 200 students.[46] It remains to be said that the Rum community of Istanbul benefits from the arrival of Arab-speaking Orthodox Christians who left Hatay to settle in Istanbul.[47] These eastern Rums previously depended on the autocephalous Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. However, the difficulty of the later, whose see is in Damas, in administering its faithful settled on the Turkish side of the border, led to an agreement in the mid-1990s with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which took over the administration of these eastern worshippers who, once settled in Istanbul and integrated in social and cultural networks of

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[43]Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek–Turkish Relations 1918–1974* (Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1992), 291.

[44] Regarding the expulsions of 1964, see Ceren Sözeri, "Kıbrıs Meselesinin Rehineleri: Basının Gözüyle 1964 Sürgünleri," in *Rum Olmak Rum Kalmak*, ed. Hakan Yücel (Istanbul: Istos, 2016); Yorgos Katsanos, "Türk ve Yunan Basınında 1964 Sürgünü," in *Rum Olmak Rum Kalmak*, ed. Hakan Yücel (Istanbul: Istos, 2016).

[45]Samim Akgönül, *Vers une nouvelle donne dans les relations gréco-turques ?*, 20.

[46]See Paul Dumont and Méropi Anastassiadou, *Une mémoire pour la Ville: La communauté grecque d'Istanbul en 2003*, 28-39. The other eight schools have not been officially closed but "inactivated" in the between 1984 and 2003, implying their possible reactivation in the future. The Halki Seminary is for instance currently the object of negotiations for its reopening after having been closed in 1971. In fact, the building still officially hosts a boys' high school but has neither students nor teachers.

[47] Regarding the settlement of Rums from the Hatay region in Istanbul, see Simeon Yılmaz, "Antakyalı Rum Ortodoksların İstanbul'daki Bugünğ ve Yarın," in *İstanbul Rumları Bugün ve Yarın*, ed. Foti Benlisoy, Anna Maria Aslanoğlu, and Raris Rigas (Istanbul: Istos, 2012).

the Istanbul Rum community, tend to abandon Arab language in favor or Greek.[48]

Occasional as well as more long-term crisises punctuate the last decade (closing of minority schools in Greece and in Turkey; case of the Halki Seminary; issues of property and restauration of the Prinkipo Greek Orthodox Orphanage; re-conversion into a mosque of the Hagia Sophia church of Trabzon – which was a museum since 1961 – in 2013; debates in Turkish public opinion about the re-conversion of the Hagia Sophia Museum of Istanbul into a mosque, etc.). In fact, ups and downs in the relations between the community and the Turkish state appear quite obviously cadenced by the general attitude of state representatives vis-à-vis non-Muslim minorities, as well as by diplomatic relations with Greece – especially around the issue of Cyprus. On the one hand, the 2000's decade was a period of relative resurgence and appeasement for Orthodox Christians in Turkey. The earthquake in Turkey and the solidarity showed and the help given by Greece and Greek public opinion warmed the diplomatic relations between the two countries and opened the way to a period of friendship.[49] Later, the economic crisis in Greece and the relative atmosphere of openness vis-à-vis non-Muslim minorities as well as Europe incited Greek citizens – especially young adults to settle and work in Istanbul. In 2002 and 2008, two new laws about the property status of pious foundations (vakf) gave the possibility to Greeks from Greece and Rums to officially acquire private property of real estate formerly registered as vakf created by Rums in the Ottoman period.[50] The 2000s were also a time of good entente between the Turkish government and the Patriarchate of Istanbul: as proof, the numerous abandoned Orthodox churches throughout Anatolia that underwent restauration supported by Turkish public funds (especially in the region of Cappadocia, Aegean and Black Sea) and inaugurated by the Patriarch.[51]

On the other hand, in the 2010s (and especially after 2013), the reappearance of tensions in internal and external Turkish policy and the increase of nationalist

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[48]Paul Dumont and Méropi Anastassiadou, *Une mémoire pour la Ville: La communauté grecque d'Istanbul en 2003*, 39-40.

[49] Duygu Çanakçı and Birol Caymaz, "Kollektif Belleğin Işığında Günümüzde İstanbul Rumları," *Alternatif Politika* 6, no. 2 (2014): 311.

[50] Duygu Çanakçı and Birol Caymaz, "Kollektif Belleğin Işığında Günümüzde İstanbul Rumları," 92. For a detailed study on the status of minorities' real estate, see Mustafa Çağatay, "Geçmişten Günümüze Azınlık Vakıflarının Mal Edinmeleri Sorunu," *TBB Dergisi* 96 (2011).

[51]Aude Aylin Tapia (de), "La Cappadoce chrétienne ottomane: un patrimoine (volontairement) oublié?," *EJTS* 20 (2015), http://ejts.revues.org/4934.

and religious identity discourses and hate speeches towards minorities putted an end to this movement. Moreover, diplomatic relations with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus and the conflation in the political discourses of Turkish representatives between Greeks (in Turkish "Yunan") and the Rums of Turkey have repercussions on the members of the Rum community. The term Rum is indeed often used by Turkish politicians to designate the Greek Cypriots and their government (and more rarely Greeks of Greece and Athens' government), as it was the case for instance in a discourse of the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in August 2019, in the context of the international crises about the search of oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean by Turkish vessels.[52] As a result, the general atmosphere of the 2010s in Turkey led Greek citizens living in Turkey, and to a lesser extent young Rums, mostly students, to leave the country. As for the last Rums still settled in Istanbul, a part of them expresses the wish to stay, despite difficulties, in order to maintain the historical presence of their community in the former capital, to keep alive their cultural heritage and the collective memory *in situ.*

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[52] "Erdogan stresses Turkey's determination to continue activities in East Med," *Ekathimerini.com* ([online]), 26.08.2019 2019, http://www.ekathimerini.com/243892/article/ekathimerini/news/erdogan-stresses-turkeys-determination-to-continue-activities-in-east-med; "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Doğu Akdeniz'de arama çalışmalarına aynı kararlılıkla devam edeceğiz," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 22.08.2019 2019, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-dogu-akdenizde-arama-calismalarina-ayni-kararlilikla-devam-edecegiz/1562606.

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CHAPTER 7

THE CIRCASSIANS OF TURKEY: OTHERS FROM OUTSIDE

Erdoğan Boz

The People and the Country

The term Circassian is an exonym used to refer to the people who self-designate themselves as *Adygha* [/ɑ:dəɣɑ/] and are autochthonous to the Northwestern section of the Caucasus region, which is part of today's Russian Federation. The origin of the Circassians is unknown unless their history is related to the southern branch of the paleo-Caucasian people.[1] Despite this obscurity, they are usually associated with ancient groups living on the Black Sea coasts of the Caucasus. Some of the earliest references to the land and the people living there can be found in ancient Greek writers such as Scylacis, Herodotus, and Strabonis. Herodotus in *Histories* mentions the names of a few peoples like the *Sindi*[2] and the *Meoti*[3] who lived across the Cimmerian Bosporus. Two other ancient peoples considered to be among the proto-Circassian groups are *Kerketae*[4] and *Zygoi*[5] mentioned by Scylacis and Strabonis.

Not only the origin of the people but also the origin of the word *Circassian* is unclear. While it is not easy to establish when the word Circassian came into use, it is possible to trace it back to a thirteenth-century manuscript, *Ystoria Mongolarum* [*History of the Mongols*] by Carpini. In this manuscript, there are two words, *Kergis* and *Yrchasi,* used to refer to the people who are interpreted

[1]Tibor Halasi-Kun, "The Caucasus: An Ethno-Historical Survey," *Studia Caucasica*, no. 1 (1963), 1–47, 45.

[2]Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-grc1, 4.28.

[3]Herodotus, *The Histories*.: http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-grc1, 4.123.

[4]Caryandensis Scylacis, *Periplus*, ed. Isaacus Vossius, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Apud Ioh. & Cornel. Blaev, 1639), 30; Strabonis, *Geographica*, ed. Augustus Meineke, vol. 2 (Leipzig: B. G. Teubneri, 1877), 691.

[5]Strabonis, *Geographica*, 691.

to be the Circassians in later reprints and translations of the same work[6] along with the works of some modern scholars.[7] On the other hand, there are claims of earlier uses of the term in Asiatic languages including Turkish and Mongolian, the earliest one being in *The Secret History of the Mongolians* in 1240. The word *Sergesut*, in the Mongolian language, in this book was later translated as *Circassian* [*Çerkes* in Turkish].[8]

Schiltberger, who lived between 1381 and 1440 serving a number masters including Sultan Bayazid of the Ottomans and the Mongolian ruler Timur, mentions the *Sygun* tribe, who were called *Istcharkas* by Turks.[9] The name of this tribe living on the coasts of the Black Sea and selling their own children and the children they kidnapped from others to the Muslims was interpreted as *Tcherkessen* in later reprints and translations.[10] One hundred and fifty years after Schiltberger, an Italian traveler Giorgio Interiano in his work *La Vita, Et Sito de Zychi, Chiamati Ciarcassi* [*The Life and the Lands of the Zychi, Called Circassians*] wrote that the people who called themselves *Adiga* were called *Ciarcassi* by the Tartars and Turks[11] and it is only after Interiano when we start seeing words like *Circassian*, *Circassi*, *Tscherkess*, *Tsherkess,* and *Czerkasi,* which are all counterparts of the work Circassian in different European languages. On the other hand, a sixteenth-century writer, Remmal Hodja, who served the Crimean Khan Sahib Geray as a physician between 1532 and 1551, and who later wrote a historical account of the events he witnessed, gives detailed information on the relations of the Crimeans and the *Çerakise* [plural of

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[6]See, C. Raymond Beazley, ed., *The Texts and Versions of John de Plano Carpini and William de Rubruquis, as Printed for the First Time by Hakluyt in 1598, Together with Some Shorter Pieces* (Londra: Hakluyt Society, 1903).

[7]See, e.g., Norman Luxembourg, *Rusların Kafkasya'yi İşgalinde İngiliz Politikası ve İmam Şamil*, trans. Sedat Özden (İstanbul: Kayıhan Yayınları, 1998), 77.

[8]Ahmet Temir, ed., *Moğolların Gizli Tarihi: (Yazılışı 1240)*, 5th print, Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu 13 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016), 185; Igor de Rachewiltz, trans., *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2015), http://cedar.wwu.edu/cedarbooks/4, 230; Urgunge Onon, ed., *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Life and Times of Chinggis Khan* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 253.

[9]Johannes Schiltberger, "Reisebuch" (1558), http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg216, 72v.

[10]Johannes Schiltberger, *Reisen Des Johannes Schiltberger Aus München in Europa, Asia Und Afrika von 1394 Bis 1427*, ed. Karl Friedrich Neumann (München: Auf kosten des herausgebers, 1859), 177.

[11]Giorgio Interiano, *La Vita et Sito de Zychi, Chiamati Ciarcassi* (Venedik: Aldo Manuzio, 1502), A iii.

Çerkes], which shows us that the name *Çerkes* was already in use at least in the first half of the fourteenth century in the east.

When it came to the eighteenth century, the word Circassian, along with different alternative spellings in various languages, came into widespread use to denote the Adygha people. Güldenstädt in his notes of expeditions to the Caucasus in 1772–73 states that the people who call themselves *Adigi* are called *Tscherkkas* by Turks and Tatars, *Tscherkessiani* by Georgians, *Tschkerkessy* by Russians, *Tschkerkassian* by Germans and *Kasach* by Ossetians.[12] Soon after Güldenstädt, Jacob Reineggs, in his *Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus* [*General Historical–Topographical Description of the Caucasus*] asks whether the Circassians are "Strabon's Kerketae or Plinius's Cercetae?" and answers the questions by saying that these words were transformed into *Tscherkess* [Circassian] afterwards.[13]

Although we do not know the exact origin of the Circassian people or the name *Circassian*, there is one thing which is not doubtful: the Circassians were inhabiting the whole area from the Caucasus mountain range in the south to the Kuban River in the north, and from the Black Sea in the west to the Sunja River in the east until the Russian conquest of the region in the nineteenth century. This piece of land, called *Khakw* [/xɑkʷ/], meaning "homeland" in the Circassian language, is the historical homeland of the Circassians. According to Evliya Çelebi, a renowned seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler, the lands between the Sea of Azov and the Baksan River were called Circassia [*Çerkezistan*] and the Circassians were surrounded by the Crimeans and Nogays in the north, Abhazians and Georgians in the south and the Dagestanians in the east.[14]

The Language

The Circassian language, *Adyghabza* [/ɑːdəɣɑbzæ/], is a member of the Northwest Caucasian (NWC) language family along with two other affiliates, Abkhaz–Abaza and Ubykh, the latter of which is an extinct language since its last competent speaker, Tevfik Esenç, died in Turkey in 1991. Although the

[12]Johann Anton Güldenstädt, *Reisen Durch Russland Und Im Caucasischen Gebürge*, ed. Peter Simon Pallas (St. Petersburg: bey der Kayserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1787), 466.

[13]Jacob Reineggs, *Allgemeine Historisch-Topographische Beschreibung Des Kaukasus* (Gotha ve St. Petersburg: Gerstenberg und Dittmar, 1796), 243.

[14]Evliya Çelebi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: 7. Kitap*, ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004).

NWC languages are usually classified under a bigger Caucasian language group, the relation between NWC and the other two sub-families, Northeast Caucasian and South Caucasian, is unsettled,[15] which leaves Circassian and Abkhaz–Abaza as isolated languages.

Apart from the fact that the relation between the three separate sub-families is controversial, all the Caucasian languages are well known for their phonological and grammatical complexities in the field of linguistics. They have a highly inflectional verbal system, which allows a complex syntax and word formation processes by use of prefixes, suffixes and infixes. The phonological system is also quite complicated with a relatively big number of consonants and a limited number of vowels.[16] In particular, the *Shapsugh* dialect spoken in Düzce province of Turkey includes 56 consonants, with only 3 vowels.[17] The *Kabardian* dialect on the other hand involves 48 consonants and allegedly 2 vowels.[18]

Although the Circassian language had been documented since the seventeenth century,[19] it remained unliterary until the twentieth century. The first attempts to develop a writing system for the language started in the second half of the nineteenth century, using Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic and Persian scripts. In the 1850s, a textbook and a grammar book were published in Tbilisi by a Circassian intellectual using a self-developed alphabet based mainly on the Arabic script. However, it was only in the second decade of the twentieth century when a systematic written form based on the Latin script was settled, and finally in the 1930s, the Cyrillic alphabet, which is still used by the Circassians all over the world, was adopted.[20] Today there are two literary forms of the Circassian language in the Russian Federation, one based on the *Chamgwy* dialect of west Circassian and one on the *Kabardian* dialect of east Circassian.

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[15]Henricus Joannes Smeets, *Studies in West Circassian Phonology and Morphology* (Leiden: Hakuchi Press, 1984), 39.

[16]See, e.g., Henricus Joannes Smeets, *Studies in West Circassian Phonology and Morphology*; Aert Henrik Kuipers, "Typologically Salient Features of Some Northwest Caucasian Languages," *Studia Caucasica*, no. 3 (1976), 101–27.

[17]Smeets, *Studies in West Circassian Phonology and Morphology*.

[18]John Colarusso, *A Grammar of the Kabardian Language* (Calgary, Alberta, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 1992), xix.

[19]See, Evliya Çelebi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: 7. Kitap*; Johann Anton Güldenstädt, *Reisen Durch Russland Und Im Caucasischen Gebürge*.

[20]Murat Topçu, "Çerkes-Adığe Yazısının Tarihçesi," *Nart İki Aylık Düşün ve Kültür Dergisi*, September-October 2006.

There were also some attempts in the Ottoman Empire to write and teach in the Circassian language starting from the end of the nineteenth century. An Ottoman Circassian intellectual, Ahmed Cavid Pasha, composed an alphabet based on the Arabic script and started collecting the oral folklore of the Circassians as early as 1897. Various Latin-based alphabets were also developed later and publications including a journal called *Ğuaze* [*The Guide*] and various books were published using these alphabets.[21] In the first two decades of the twentieth century, there were two Circassian schools, the first of which was active between 1910 and 1914 and the latter one between 1920 and 1923, teaching the Circassian language as a part of their curriculum.[22] However, all these efforts had to stop after 1923 with the foundation of the Turkish Republic until the second millennium when publications in minority languages were re-allowed. Today, Circassian is endangered in Turkey with only a few thousand speakers,[23] who are unable to transmit the language to the new generations.

Social Organization

Circassians traditionally consisted of quasi-feudal tribal organizations called *tlapq* [/ɬɒpʼqʼ/] which were further divided into subgroups called *tlʼaqwa* [/ɬʼɑːqʷɑ/]. Evliya Çelebi mentions 40 tribal organizations that lived in villages of various sizes, each of which were ruled by a princely noble.[24] Two centuries later, Leonti Yakovlevich Lyulye (1823–1862), who served in the Russian army during a part of the Russian–Caucasian War as an interpreter and an officer, states that they consisted of 10 tribes including *Kabardians*, *Beslenai*, *Mahosh*, *Chamgwy*, *Zhana*, *Hatukai*, *Bzhedugh*, *Abzah*, *Shapsugh*, *Nathuadj*.[25] Today, the general belief among Circassians is that there are 12 Circassian tribes, each of which are represented with a star in the Circassian flag. Whatever the number of the tribes, the Circassians were known to have a stratified social system with

[21]Topçu, "Çerkes-Adığe Yazısının Tarihçesi."
[22]Ayşenur Doğan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Çerkes Muhacirlerin Eğitim Faaliyetleri Ve Ğuaze Gazetesinde Eğitime Dair Yazılar," *Vakanüvis - Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (March 23, 2019), 142–65, https://doi.org/10.24186/vakanuvis.540688.
[23]David M. Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 22nd ed. (Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2019), http://www.ethnologue.com.
[24]Evliya Çelebi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: 7. Kitap*, 608-609.
[25]Leonti Yakovlevich Lyulye, *The Russian-Circassian Dictionary, or Adighe, with the Brief Grammar of This Last Language, Approved by the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences* (Odessa: City Printing House, 1846), 5.

four major classes within each tribe: *ptschy* [/pɐɑ/], *warq* [/wɑrq/], *tl'qatl'* [/ɬ'ɑ:qʷɑɬ'/], *and ptschytl'* [/pɐɑɬ'/].

This class system was important in all aspects of socio-political life organized according to *Adygha khabza* [/ɑ:dəɣɑ xɑ:bzɑ/], the Circassian tradition. The whole territory of Circassia was divided between the aristocratic *ptschy* kin groups and they were ruled by a *Ptschy-tkhamada,* the tribal chief who was the eldest male in that kin group. The *warq* was the ruling class who exerted control over a territory which was owned by the *ptschy*. While the *tl'qotl'* were the free peasants who had to carry out some duties against their *warq* and *ptschy*, the last group, *ptschytl'* were literally slaves who did not have the freedom to change neither their territory nor their owners.

The Population

The total population of the Circassians is not easy to estimate because of two major reasons. First, no countries where Circassians live, except the Russian Federation, provide statistics neither regarding the ethnicity nor the mother language of their citizens. The second challenge is that Circassians are quite mixed with many other ethnic groups of Caucasian origin in almost all the countries where they live in the diaspora under the general name of Circassian, which seemingly means Caucasian in this sense. However, there are still important data regarding the demography.

In the Russian Federation, there are 718,727 Circassians classified under four different national entities which are *Adygha*, *Kabardian*, *Cherkess*, and *Shapsugh*. This population is mainly concentrated in their titular republics respectively, with an exception of the *Shapsughs*. The numbers of Circassians living in these republics are 106,699 in the Republic of Adygea, 492,928 in Kabardino–Balkaria, 56,466 in Karachai–Cherkessia. The Shapsugh mainly live within the territory of today's Krasnodar Krai in a few Circassian villages which were once a part of the former Shapsugh District in the Soviet Union until 1945.[26]

There is a relatively big population of Circassians in Turkey; however, the exact number cannot be estimated due to the aforementioned difficulties. Yet, there are various approximations changing between a few hundred thousand and a few million. There are approximately 900 villages[27] inhabited by several Caucasian peoples, whether they constitute the whole population of the village

[26]All data regarding the population in the Russian Federation is taken from https://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/perepis_itogi1612.htm.
[27]http://www.circassiancenter.com/cc-turkiye/arastirma/0500-cerkeskoyleri.htm.

or only a part of it. Nearly 600 of these are inhabited by Circassians while the population of the rest is a mixture of different Caucasian groups including Circassians in some cases.[28] Another set of data which can be useful in estimating the population may be the national censuses of Turkey from 1927 to 1965, when the first and second languages of the citizens were surveyed. Although it is generally accepted that the results of these censuses do not reveal the accurate ethnic composition of the country, they show that Circassian was (and probably is) the second mostly spoken minority language in Turkey. According to the data, the number of Circassian speakers, whether as a first or a second language, was 95,901 (0.704 percent of the total population) in 1927. It was counted as 106,960 in 1965 with only 10 percent increase while the total population of Turkey increased more than double the amount in 1927, which means that the relative number of Circassians was halved (fell down to 0.34 percent) in 40 years.[29]

According to a survey carried out by a research company in 2006, the percentage of the Circassians in the total population of Turkey was about 0.19 percent, which meant only about 132,000 in the total population (69,729,967 in 2006) were Circassian ethnics.[30] According to the *Federation of Caucasian Associations* [*Kafkas Dernekleri Federasyonu*—KAFFED], a leading Caucasian organization in Turkey, claims that 7–8 percent of the population of Turkey is Circassian, used as a blanket term to designate all the people with a Caucasian ancestry while the majority is Circassians, which means that there should be some 6 million Circassians[31] in the country. The number according to the prominent figures of another umbrella organization, the *Federation of Circassian Associations* [*Çerkes Dernekleri Federasyonu*—ÇERKES-FED], is also 5–6 million.[32] According to *Ethnologue* there are 1,316,000 Circassians in Turkey which seems to be more realistic although it is not possible to verify this figure either.[33]

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[28]http://www.angelfire.com/ks3/hamedey/n_fus.htm.

[29]Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye nüfus sayımlarında azınlıklar* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 2000).

[30]Konda Araştırma, "Toplumsal Yapı Araştırması 2006: Biz Kimiz?" (KONDA, January 2, 2008), http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2006_09_KONDA_Toplumsal_Yapi.pdf.

[31]Cahit Aslan et al., *Biz Çerkesler* (Ankara: Kafkas Dernekleri Federasyonu, 2005).

[32]Murat Özden, *Çerkes Siyasallaşmasının Öncüleri* (İstanbul: Apra Yayıncılık, 2018), 85.

[33]Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*.

Two other countries in the Middle East with a relatively big number of Circassians are Syria and Jordan. The population of Circassians in Syria was estimated to be around 100,000[34] before the Syrian civil war escalated in 2012. However, a great portion of this population ended up in Turkey or other neighboring countries such as Lebanon or Jordan. There is also a non-negligible population is Jordan while it is equally difficult to give an accurate number: the estimations are between 44,280 and 125,000.[35] There are also some 4,000 Circassians in Israel who have relatively more cultural rights than all their fellows in the other Middle Eastern countries.[36]

Genocide: The Unending Ordeal of the Circassians

Russian–Circassian Relations and the Conquest of the Caucasus by Russia

According to the medieval Russian historiography, Mystislav, the Prince of *Tmutarakan*, attacked the *Cassogis* of the Caucasus, and on the demand of *Rededia*, the Cassogian Prince, two princes fought a duel instead of going into war with their armies. According to the legend, *Mystislav*, whose prayers were heard by the gods, defeated Rededia and stabed him to death with his dagger.[37] While it is impossible to know how precisely the legend reflected reality, Tmutarakan, which was the capital of Chernigov Princedom founded by Mystislav, became an important center for the expansion of the Russian political and commercial impacts to the southeast[38] and there started an unending series of wars and alliances between Russians and the Caucasian peoples. Even though we cannot specify clearly who exactly the name *Cassogi* refers to, the encounter between Mystislav and Rededia can be regarded as the starting point of the known relations between Russians and the peoples of the Caucasus, including the Circassians.[39]

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[34]ORSAM, "Suriye Çerkesleri" (Ankara, 2012).

[35]Nour Abu Assab, "Narratives of Ethnicity and Nationalism: A Case Study of Circassians in Jordan" (PhD Dissertation, University of Warwick, 2011), 39, http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/50794/1/WRAP_THESIS_Abu-Assab_2011.pdf.

[36]Chen Bram, "21. Yüzyılda Çerkesler: İsrail'deki Adigelerin Durumundan Alınacak Dersler," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Çerkesler: Kimlik, Kültür ve Siyaset"*, ed. Sevda Alankuş and Esra Oktay Arı (Ankara: Kaf-Dav Yayınları, 2014), 407–17, 408.

[37]Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Serbowitz-Wetzor, eds., *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), 134.

[38]George Vernadsky and Dzambulat Dzanty, "The Ossetian Tale of Iry Dada and Mstislav," *The Journal of American Folklore* 69, no. 273 (1956): 216–35, 216.

[39]İsmail Berkok, *Tarihte Kafkasya* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1958), 338.

A second important occasion in Russo–Circassian relations is when a delegation was sent to the first Tsar of Russia, Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible), by the *Beslenai* tribe of the Circassians to ask for his patronage against the Crimean Khanate in 1552. Shortly after, in 1553, this delegation returned back to Circassia along with an envoy of the Tsar, which meant that Ivan IV accepted the request of the Circassians for patronage against Crimeans. Later a covenant was made between the Kabardian tribe of the Circassians and Russia in 1557, and four years later these relations were tightened with the marriage of Maria, the daughter of a Kabardian noble, Temriko, to Tsar Ivan IV. This alliance was mainly the result of the Kabardians' quest for support against the Crimean Khanate due to the fact that the Circassians, especially the Kabardians along with two other west Circassian tribes, *Zhana* and *Beslenai*, were the biggest sources of slaves for the Crimeans. This alliance continued until 1571 when Russia decided to expand its territories to the east because of the deep economic crisis it faced.[40]

When the Circassians who were formerly affiliated with the Russian Tsar declared their non-alignment in 1601, the character of the relations between Russia and the Circassians started to change fundamentally. In 1604–05, Russia started its first raids on the Caucasus from two points including Dagestan and *Shetqala*, a former Circassian settlement which was within the borders of Stavropol Kray (Russia) today. However, these raids were stopped by the Chechens in the east and the *Kabardians* in the west. In 1613, reinforcing the fortress which had been built previously on the banks of the Terek River, Russia set up a military headquarters in the region. The relations which continued until the end of eighteenth century in serious of mutual offences and periods of concord took on a new dimension with the Russian conquest of Crimea in 1783 and the unceasing battles between Russia and the Caucasian peoples started.[41]

Until 1816, Russia could not intensify its attempts to conquest the Caucasus due to the Ottoman–Russian and French–Russian wars which prevented Russia from dispatching large–numbers of troops to the region. After this period, characterized by important triumphs of the Caucasians, Russia started advancing deep into the region.[42] After the "Treaty of Edirne" (1829), which

[40]Aytek Namitok, "The 'Voluntary' Adherence of Kabarda (Eastern Circassia) to Russia.," *Caucasian Review* 2 (1956), 16–33, 23.
[41]N. Berzeg, *Çerkes Sürgünü (Gerçek, Tarihi ve Politik Nedenleriyle)* (Ankara: Takav Matbaacılık, 1996), 28.
[42]For a detailed account, see, Ali Kasumov and Hasan Kasumov, *Çerkes Soykırımı: Çerkeslerin XIX. Yüzyıl Kurtuluş Savaşı Tarihi*, trans. Orhan Uravelli (Ankara: Kaf-Der,

was signed between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, leaving the Caucasian coastline of the Black Sea to Russia permanently, Russia hastened its efforts to occupy western Circassia.[43] Seeing the threats of British interference with the situation along with the fierce resistance of the Circassians against their dominance, Russia decided to complete the conquest of the whole region as soon as possible[44] with ruthless violence. As result of all these efforts of Russia to conquest Circassian lands from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the 1870s, the Circassians lost a large portion of their population. As a consequence of the advance which was salient in the *Kabardian* territory in the beginning,[45] the population of the *Kabardians* which was about 300,000 in the 1790s dramatically fell down to 35,000 to the end of 1820s.[46] All the other western Circassian tribes lost about 80–90 percent of their population in the next fifty years either in the military raids of the Russian army or during the exile, forced mass migration, of the remaining population to the Ottoman lands. The number of Circassians who were driven out of their lands appears differently in various works. Berje, taking the Russian official records into consideration, gives 493,294 for the number of the Circassians who were forced to the Ottoman lands between 1858 and 1866[47] while the modern Turkish historian Kemal Karpat calculates some 3 million between 1856 and 1876.[48] Whatever the exact numbers, a vast majority of the Circassians were either killed or forced to leave their native lands in the second half of the nineteenth century, which the Circassians call the "Circassian Genocide" today.

Following the last battles between the Russian troops and a small group of Circassian forces in Qbaada Meadows near *Sasha*, which is now known as Sochi, a parade and a banquet was held on June 2, 1864. At this ceremony, Grand Prince Mikhail of Russia made a toast to the Kuban Cossacks and handed out medals for their victory over Circassians.[49] This date points the end of the Russian–Circassian wars according to Russian official historiography while it

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1995), N. Berzeg, *Çerkes Sürgünü (Gerçek, Tarihi ve Politik Nedenleriyle)*.

[43]Walter Richmond, *Çerkes Soykırımı*. Translated by Erdoğan Boz. Ankara: Koyusiyah Yayıncılık, 2018, 45.

[44]Ibid., 63.

[45]Kasumov and Kasumov, *Çerkes Soykırımı: Çerkeslerin XIX. Yüzyıl Kurtuluş Savaşı Tarihi*, 8.

[46]Richmond, *Çerkes Soykırımı*, 37.

[47]Adolf Berje, "Vselenye Gortsev S Kavkaza," *Russkaya Starina*, no. 33 (1882), 161–176, 167.

[48]Kemal H Karpat, *Osmanlı nüfusu: 1830-1914*, trans. Bahar Tırnakçı (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2010).

[49]Richmond, *Çerkes Soykırımı*, 116.

symbolizes the Circassian Genocide for the Circassians themselves. Today, May 21 is accepted and commemorated as the day of the Circassian Genocide among the Circassians.

The Circassians in the Ottoman

Relations between the Circassians and the Ottomans started long before the forced migration of the Circassians to the Ottoman lands in the nineteenth century. These relations continued as a part of the slave trade across the Middle East, North Africa and continental Europe. This slave trade was an important part of the Caucasian peoples' relations with the world, because the region was one of the main sources of slaves during this time and trade was mainly controlled by the Crimean Khanate.

The relations that existed between the Crimean Khanate and the Circassians for a long time since the Golden Horde[50] took a new dimension after 1475 when Crimea fell under Ottoman control[51] and became a territory of dispute between the Russian and the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning, the policies followed Sultan Mehmed II of the Ottomans regarding the Caucasus. It was built using the resources of the Black Sea region for the protection and construction of Istanbul. During this period, the whole Black Sea coast of Anatolia, the coasts of the Caucasus, Kafa (Crimea), Azov and Menkub were conquered,[52] and fortresses were erected on the Black Sea shores of the Circassian lands.[53] Forces were deployed in Anapa, Koba and Taman in 1479 by Cezeri Kasım Pasha, the Governor of the Kocaeli *sandjak*[54] constructed a fortress on each location, which was the first physical contact between the Ottomans and the Circassians in Circassia.

One of the main reasons for the Ottomans turning to the Caucasus was to acquire valuable slaves and soldiers they required. The decreasing availability of slave resources in Europe due to the Austrian resistance against the Ottomans made them search for new sources. Thus, they turned their face to the Caucasus over Crimea, whose aristocracy depended economically on slave trade from the sixteenth century. While a big portion of the slaves were traded to the Ottomans,

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[50]Berkok, *Tarihte Kafkasya*.
[51]Sadık Müfit Bilge, *Osmanlı Çağı'nda Kafkasya 1454 - 1829: tarih, toplum, ekonomi* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2012), 44.
[52]Bilge, *Osmanlı Çağı'nda Kafkasya 1454 - 1829*, 33.
[53]İbn Kemal, *Tevârîẖ-i Âl-i Oṣmân: VII. defter*, ed. Ahmet Uğur (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 385-386.
[54]İbn Kemal, *Tevârîẖ-i Âl-i Oṣmân*, 467-468.

the remaining small part was used by the Crimean aristocracy.[55] The fortresses build in Circassia along the coastline of the Black Sea shores close to Crimea and to the eastern shores of the Black Sea in the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries were mainly serving as centers to regulate the slave trade rather than protection or military control.[56] These fortresses were not welcomed by the native Circassians and were attached frequently.

While it is generally accepted in Turkish historiography that the Circassians during all this period were subject to the Crimean Khanate and thereby the Ottomans, only a few of the Circassian tribes accepted Ottoman dominance. What is more, some of them even allied with Russia against the Ottomans.[57]

When Kanshavuk, the leader of the *Zhana* tribe, failed to undertake his pledge to send 500 slaves to Sahip Giray, the Crimean Khan, and 1000 slaves to the Ottoman Sultan in 1530, Crimeans raided an attack on Circassia in 1539 and they captured 50,000 slaves that year, and 50,000–60,000 more in the following few years.[58] This incident was followed by a long period of battles and mutual raids between Crimeans, supported by the Ottomans, and the Circassians.[59]

As this massive slave trade continued until 1774 when Crimea fell under Russian control, there is no doubt that the number of the Circassian slaves in the Ottoman Empire reached a great number.[60] This provides us with the perspective to accept that the main characteristic of the relations of the Ottomans with Circassia, over which the Ottoman Empire always claimed rights, was the slave trade at least until the nineteenth century.

Because the Ottomans lost Crimea in the nineteenth century, they started seeking new opportunities on the Black Sea shores and rebuilt or reinforced the old fortresses on the coastline. From a report by the Ottoman chief admiral Gazi Hasan Pasha and Ali Pasha of Canik who travelled through the Circassian coastline after the Treaty of *Kuchuk Kaynarji* in 1774, it is understood that the aim of these efforts was to find a way to continue the flow of labor force and

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[55]Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlılar: Fütuhat, Imparatorluk, Avrupa Ile Ilişkiler*, (İstanbul: Timaş, 2010), 177-178.
[56]Ibid., 179.
[57]Abdullah Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri, 1856-1876*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 30.
[58]İnalcık, *Osmanlılar*, 180.
[59]M. Sadık Bilge, *Osmalı Devleti ve Kafkasya: Osmanlı Varlığı Döneminde Kafkasya'nın Siyasî-Askerî Tarihi ve Idarî Taksimâtı*, (1454-1829) (İstanbul: Eren, 2005), 44-58.
[60]Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Etrafındaki Dünya*, Kitap Yayınevi (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2010), 215.

warriors acquired by Ottomans from this region. In this report, it was stated that 80,000 people would be recruited by converting the Circassians into Islam.[61]

The forced migration of the Circassians by Russia was desirable by the Ottomans in the nineteenth century. The Ottomans, who lost their sources of slaves, concubines and warriors in Europe nearly 200 years ago tried to meet the need of labor from the Caucasus through Crimea but eventually lost this source in the nineteenth century. Considering this, it is quite reasonable to think that the Ottomans did not try to stop the human flow from Circassia for about 50 years in the nineteenth century despite all the financial and social difficulties it was experiencing. The Ottoman economy was mostly dependent on agriculture, and nearly 50 percent of the arable lands were not cultivated,[62] which meant that the Circassians would be useful in agricultural production. Besides, Caucasian migrants, most of whom were Circassians and desperate enemies of the Russians, were willing to fight against Russia in voluntary military units.[63]

While the Circassians were transferred to the Balkans were settled in big groups to control the unrest of the Christian minorities and to create a balance between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations in the region. They were scattered across Turkish villages in Anatolia.[64] The aim was to prevent Circassians from forming a separate community. In this way, the Circassian social structure would be dissolved and they would be assimilated into the dominant group.[65] While these newcomers tried to be assimilated within the dominant Turkish population, the differences between migrants with different ethnic origins such as Dagestani, Circassian, Abkhaz and Chechen were sought to be eliminated by mixing them together.

Accordingly, there had been an important number of Circassians in the Ottoman Empire since the sixteenth century and some of them were in the palace. While there were Circassians among the administrative elites, their number was low compared to the Albanians, the Greeks and the Macedonians until the seventeenth century.[66] From the seventeenth century, the balance between the administrative elites started to change and the Circassians started to gain power. There appeared a division in the patterns of ethnic solidarity within

[61]Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri, 1856-1876*, 37.
[62]Karpat, *Osmanlı nüfusu*, 115.
[63]Ibid, 54.
[64]Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası, 1913-1918* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 48.
[65]Karpat, *Osmanlı nüfusu*.
[66]Faroqhi, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Etrafındaki Dünya*, 26.

the Ottoman Empire: between the Albanians and the Bosnians on the one hand, and the Abkhaz, the Circassians and the Georgians on the other.[67]

Some Circassians who were taken into the palace as slaves were later appointed to high posts in time.[68] Consequently, the Circassian elite, who started to be educated and acquired important positions in the royal bureaucracy, specifically in the army, started creating a Circassian identity having close ties with the state administration. Thus, slavery was an important element of the Circassian identity until the end of the nineteenth century.

The Circassian Enlightenment in the Ottoman

In 1882, during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, a group of Circassians wrote a proposed work for the purpose of "writing a perfect Circassian history" and the proposed work to be published in 1883. The proposed work included detailed information on the Circassian history which why it was written. According to the proposal, the Circassians were ill reputed due to the fact that slave trade, thievery and pillage of the Circassians along with their nervous temperament which was written in previous literature; thus, it became an obligation for Circassian notables to write the "perfect" Circassian history. This Circassian history was planned to be in line with the official Ottoman–Islamic historiographic understanding, and the main underlying motive was to "correct" the European centered historical narrative regarding the Circassians.[69] According to the plan, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, French, English and German works were to be examined as well as referencing Circassian notables and intellectuals who were still alive.[70] Moreover, this initiative to write a history was not the first according to a letter published in *Ğuaze* written by Süleyman Tevfik addressing a Circassian intellectual, Yusuf İzzet Met.[71] Consequently, there was an increasing interest in the Circassian history during the said period. However, the initiative was postponed when Sultan Abdul Hamid banned history and philosophy lessons. Publications regarding history started to be

[67]Metin Ibrahim Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 3 (1974), 233–39, 237.
[68]Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 235.
[69]Mustafa Oral, "Sultan II. Abdülhamit Dönemi'nde Bir 'Çerkes Tarihi' Yazılması Girişimi," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7, no. 16–17 (2008),71–88.
[70]İzzet Aydemir, *Göç (Kuzey Kafkasyalıların Göç Tarihi)* (Ankara: Gelişim Matbaası, 1988), 183.
[71]Süleyman Tevfik, "Azizim İzzet Beyefendi," *Ğuaze*, Nisan 1911, 4.

strictly audited and the initiative was hampered. The writing of the history book could not be completed.[72]

Yusuf Akçura starts his well-known article *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* [*Three Modes of Politics*] saying that there were three political ideals affected by the West. The first of these, that is *Ottomanism*, aimed at forming an Ottoman nation by uniting different ethnicities subject to the Ottoman state; the second one, called *Islamism*, aimed at achieving an Islamic unity by uniting all Muslims; and the last one, *Turkism*, aimed at creating a Turkish nation based on racial characteristics of the ethnic Turks.[73] The Circassians, as a part of the Ottoman Empire, carried out various organizational activities through different associations beginning in the nineteenth century and thrived in the Ottoman state, of which they considered themselves a component.

According to the regulations of the *Circassian Union and Solidarity Association* [*Çerkes İttihat ve Teavün Cemiyeti*—ÇİTC], which was founded in İstanbul in 1908 and usually regarded as the first Circassian association in the Ottoman Empire, the Association "served auspicious purposes such as the development of the Circassians with regard to education, trade and agriculture and preserving the national traditions considered nice by everybody and conformable to the laws".[74] The Association started publishing its official journal *Ğuaze* in 1911, and continued until 1914. Another periodical which was published by some members of ÇİTC was *Diyane* [*Our Mother*], addressing the Circassian women but it couldn't be continued after the first issue.

Unlike the aforementioned organization whose members are also known to have taken active role in the Turkish Liberation War lead by Mustafa Kemal, the *Association for Protecting the Rights of Near Eastern Circassians* [*Şark-ı Karib Çerkesleri Temini Hukuk Cemiyeti*-ŞKÇTHC], which was founded by the members of the *Circassian Congress* [*Çerkes Kongresi*] held in İzmir in 1921, took sides with the states that occupied Anatolia and continued its activities under the auspices of the Greek Army.[75] The aim of this Association, whose ideology was Circassian nationalism, was to disseminate the idea of Circassian union in Anatolia.[76] The founders of this association, who were severely against

[72]Oral, "Sultan II. Abdülhamit Dönemi'nde Bir 'Çerkes Tarihi' Yazılması Girişimi."
[73]Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Lotus Yayınevi, 2008).
[74]Sefer E. Berzeg, *Gurbetteki Kafkasya'dan Belgeler* (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası, 1985), 5. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
[75]Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de siyasal partiler*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 3 vols. (İstanbul: İleteşim Yayınları, 2008), 584.
[76]Sedat Bingöl, *150'likler Meselesi: Bir İhanetin Anatomisi*, 18 (İstanbul: Bengi Yayınları, 2010), 80.

the foundation of a new state based on Turkish nationalism, accused the high rank Circassians in İstanbul and the Circassians who were acting together with the Ankara government of having forgotten their Circassianness being assimilated into Turkishness.[77] ŞKÇTHC, along with the issue of Cherkess Ethem, which had a direct negative impact on the discourse of Circassianness, turned out to be an organization which indirectly had a negative impact on the discourse of Circassianness in Turkey. While all the initiatives and organizations which are thought to be "counter"-Ottoman or -Turkish are easily negated, the ones which are thought to be in close relation with the *Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress* [*Osmanlı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*] or the Kemalist movement thereafter are credited in the literature created by the Circassians.

Çerkes Ethem, who contributed enormously to the Turkish War of Liberation with his *Kuva-yı Seyyare* [*Militia Forces*] in western Anatolia, later fell into conflict with the Ankara Government and had to leave the country in 1921, surrendering to the Greek forces after Mustafa Kemal's telegram to the Headquarters of the Western Front stating that the acts of Ethem Bey were treason. He was then added to the list of 150s, who were a group of "traitors" sent to exile with a resolution of the Grand National Assembly taken on April 16, 1924.[78]

The aforementioned developments regarding the ŞKÇTHC and Çerkes Ethem have had an important impact on the identification of the Circassians in modern Turkey and the impact is indisputably negative. In May and June 1923, the Circassian residents of 44 villages in the towns of Manyas and Gönen, located in Western Anatolia, were forced to migrate as a punishment for being "traitors" and supporters of the Sultan.[79] This was the first forced relocation and deterritorialization of a local population by the new state of Turkey.

The Circassians in Modern Turkey

Instrumentalizing the Circassians in the Cold War

The period dominated by the *Republican People's Party* [*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*—CHP] from the establishment of the Republic until the 1950s was characterized by the creation of a Turkish nation. During this period, the Circassians, just like all the other minorities, were subject to a policy of serious assimilation and repression. Nearly two years after the proclamation of the

[77]Emin Karaca, *150'likler*, 2nd ed., Kurtuluş Savaşı Kütüphanesi (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 2007), 80.
[78]Ibid.
[79]Mehmet Fetgeri Şoenü, *Çerkes Meselesi* (İstanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1993).

Republic, the use of the name *Circassian* was forbidden in a statement under the title of "*Movements attempting to disintegrate the Turkish union*" issued by the Ministry of National Education on December 8, 1925.[80] Therefore, this period is regarded as a period of silence during which any attempts to organize were suspended. However, such an argument does not seem to reflect the whole truth as the activities of the Circassians continued in two different paths during the period. Characterized by their anti-Soviet and anti-communist ideology, they fed on two different sources. The first one was an anti-Soviet national movement that developed within an international context outside Turkey, whereas the second one was trying to sustain the pan-Turkish movement in Turkey.

The *Union of Caucasian Mountaineers* [*Kafkasya Dağlı Halklar Birliği*—KDHB], founded by the former political cadres of the North Caucasus Republic in 1923, and the *Caucasian Mountain People's Party* [*Kafkasya Dağlı Halklar Partisi*—KDHP], established as a continuation of the Republic in 1926, were the institutional representatives of the Caucasian national movement. The KDHP was also part of a political movement called the *Prometheus Movement* [PM], whose aim was to liberate the nations dominated by the Soviet Russia. According to Turan, the Prometheus movement was a political movement formed by political refugees belonging to a wide array of non-Russian or non-Slav ethnic groups from Crimea, the Caucasus and Central Asia. This organization aimed at changing some aspects of the *status quo* between 1926 and 1940. North Caucasians, thereby the Circassians, were represented by KDHB within the Prometheus Movement[81] and the discourses created by the cadres of KDHP were disseminated through periodicals and other publications issued in various European towns. We know that these periodicals were effective among the Circassians in Turkey both because some articles sent from Turkey appeared in them and that they were later banned with a resolution of the Cabinet of Turkey.

It was in 1946 when the Circassians were reenabled to take part in a formal organization in Turkey under the name of the *Friendly Hand Solidarity Association* [*Dosteli Yardımlaşma Derneği*—DYD]. This association was

[80]Sami Nabi Özerdim, *Atatürk Devrimi Kronolojisi* (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınevi, 1966), 72.

[81]M. Aydın Turan, "'Promethe Hareketi'nde Kuzey Kafkasya Mültecileri Kafkasya Dağlıları Halk Partisi," in Birleşik Kafkasya idealine adanan ömür: M. Aydın Turan söyleşileri, konfransaları, makaleleri, çevirileri, hikayeleri ve şiirleri, ed. Nail Sönmez and Orhan Doğbay (Kafkas Vakfı Yayınları, 2018), 279-310, 284.

founded by a group of Caucasian, Crimean and Turkistanian origin. However, it split into two, resulting in two different associations called the *Caucasian Cultural Association* [*Kafkas Kültür Derneği*—KKD] and the *North Caucasian Turkish Cultural and Solidarity Association* [*Kuzey Kafkasya Türk Kültür ve Yardım Derneği*—KKTKYD].

KKTKYD, was founded by people most of whom were political refugees from the Caucasus after the dissolution of the North Caucasian Republic.[82] Virtually all of them had contact with the Caucasian political refugees in Europe. This association formed the basis for organizational discourse of *United Caucasianism* [*Birleşik Kafkasyacılık*]. It gradually fell under direct (Turkish) state control after it joined the *Federation of Turkish Migrant and Refugee Association* [*Türk Göçmen ve Mülteci Dernekleri Federasyonu*] in 1954 and became a pan-Turkist, anti-communist operative instrument with the financial support it started to receive from the government in 1962.[83] A leading figure of the present *United Caucasianist* movement, Doğbay (2018) makes a criticism of this period by saying:

It is the "Cold War" situation which give the period its characteristics. It was a misfortune that our organizations had to live in the manipulating, encompassing, and limiting baneful atmosphere of the winds of "Cold War". Cadres of the organizations engaged in unnecessary relations during this unfortunate period when slogans were respected rather than thoughts. It is offending to see in their publications that our organizations became crude materials of different "Cold War"-oriented political lanes.[84]

However, the composition and the ideology of the organization started to change in the late 1980s following a long period of inactivity after the military coup of September 12, 1980. The organization renamed itself as *North Caucasian Cultural and Solidarity Association* [*Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür ve Yardım Derneği*—KKKYD] which was a sign of the break from Turkish nationalism. Soon after, in 1993, there came a more radical step, breaking all organizational ties with the old *United Caucasianist* cadres and changing the

[82]Yasin Çelikkıran, "Kuzey Kafkasyalıların Kültürel Örgütlenme Çalışmaları," *Kafdağı*, Haziran-Temmuz 1991, 8.
[83]Alexandre Toumarkine, "Kafkas ve Balkan Göçmen Dernekleri: Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik," in *Türkiye'de sivil toplum ve milliyetçilik*, ed. Fransız Anadolu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 425–50, 426.
[84] Doğbay, Duğ Orhan. "Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti'nin 100. Yılına Girerken," *Mizağe Siyasi, Politik Kültürel Düşünce Dergisi*, (2), 22-26, 23.

name of the organization into the *United Caucasian Association* (*Birleşik Kafkasya Derneği*). But, the anti-Communist, anti-Russian disposition of the organization continued with a stress on North Caucasian nationalism.[85]

Returnism and Culturalism

After the foundation of KKTKYD by cadres who left DYD, the organization changed its name into *Kafkas Kültür Derneği* and became a Circassian association heavily involved in cultural activities unlike KKTKYD which had a political agenda. In the following decades, it became a reference organization which many later Circassian organizations based themselves on. While KKD was also a heavily anti-communist, anti-Soviet organization, its cultural orientation paved the way to important transformations in itself. An important aberration from the original ideology was the emergence of a so-called "supra-political"[86] current, "returnism", which later was able to spread throughout Turkey among Circassians, organizing mainly in *Ankara North Caucasian Cultural Association* [*Ankara Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Derneği* —AKKKD] in the 1970s.

AKKKD was founded in 1961 by Mustafa Zihni Hızal, with a similar ideological background as the cadres of KKTKYD and he was also active in the *Association of Turkish Nationalists* [*Türk Milliyetçiler Derneği*]. He was also the secretary general of the *North Caucasian National Centre* [*Kuzey Kafkasya Milli Merkezi*] which was an operative anti-Soviet organization of the Cold War period.[87] However, important changes occurred within AKKKD and the discourse of the Association started to change:

In 1962, my late father founded the North Caucasian Cultural Association in Ankara with courage, zeal and initiative. When he saw that many denied their signatures in fear and converted into an atheist, leftist, Russophilist mentality in the atmosphere of the coup, he took refuge in the God and turned back to his own friends.[88]

This change was actually the starting point of the process which led to the formation of "returnism", which supported the idea that the only real solution to

[85]"KKKD Manifestosu," *Yedi Yıldız*, January 1994.
[86]Nart Savsur, "Çerkes Toplumu Üzerine Notlar: Çerkes Milli Sorunu ve Çözüm Yolları," *Yamçı*, May 1977.
[87]Ahmet Hazer Hızal, "Mustafa Zihni Hızal (1919 – 1964)," January 2012, http://www.kocaeliaydinlarocagi.org.tr/Yazi.aspx?ID=3168.
[88]Ibid.

the problems of the Circassians was going back to the "homeland" which was in the Caucasus. Today, this ideal is represented by KAFFED, which was founded in 2003 mostly as an outcome of the long-term efforts of "returnists". It is now an umbrella organization of Caucasian Associations with 55 members which makes it the biggest organization of the Circassians not only in the Circassian diaspora.[89]

Instrumentalizing the Circassians during the So-called "Democratization" Process

The beginning of the AKP period was characterized with its willingness to engage in democratization efforts in harmony with the European Union, which had an important impact on both religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey. This process actually started in 1999 when Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate state by the Helsinki European Council. [90] Turkey had already amended the relevant articles in the Constitution to release the restrictions on the public use minority languages in 2001, and changed the laws banning the use of minority languages in TV-radio broadcasting and education in August 2002 before AKP came into power in November 2002.[91]

The developments and the governmental acts of the AKP since the beginning of its government indicates that the role attributed to the "harmless" and "harmonious" minorities such as the Lazs and the Circassians was quite different from the Kurds who demanded their cultural, linguistic and political rights. This brought about the discussion of minority rights within the framework of the Kurdish question in general. For the AKP, democratization was a functional tool in overcoming the obstacles it encountered in national politics. [92] One of the most outstanding features of the AKP period with regard to the Circassians is their instrumentalization in the process of so called "democratization" of Turkey.

In June 2004, when the *Turkish Radio and Television Corporation* [*Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu*—TRT] started broadcasting in minority languages

[89]For more information, see, www.kaffed.org.
[90]https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1_en.htm.
[91]Sezin Öney, "'De Facto Rights': Language Rights in Turkey – from Active Repression to Passive Denial," in *Dominated Languages in the 21st Century: Papers from the International Conference on Minority Languages XIV*, ed. Barbara Schrammel-Leber, Christina Korb, and Jelena Filipović, Grazer Plurilingualismus Studien 01 (Graz: Grazer Linguistische Monographien, 2015), 12–37.
[92]Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 1. baskı, Tarih Dizisi 86 (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014).

including Zaza and Kurmanji dialects of Kurdish, Arabic, Bosnian, and Circassian, the implementation was criticized specifically by the Laz for excluding the minorities out of the decision process, and the limitation of the broadcasts with these languages. In 2009, the introduction of a TV channel broadcasting in Kurdish, TRT 6 (later TRT Kurdî), was perceived as an investment for the upcoming elections[93] and again drew the reaction of the Laz and the Circassians this time.[94] A few years later, the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, criticized the demands for the right of education in mother languages by referring to the Circassians publicly demanding a TV channel and education in Circassian language: "Look, the Circassians have started now!"[95]

One of two important interrelated organizations that emerged during the period of the AKP is *Federation of Circassian Associations* [*Çerkes Dernekleri Federasyonu*—Çerkes-Fed], another umbrella organization with fifteen member organizations. Starting as an initiative called the *Initiative for the Rights of the Circassians* [*Çerkes Hakları İnisiyatifi*—ÇHİ], the organization gathered hundreds and sometimes thousands of people in several towns to demand for the cultural rights of the Circassians. However, the Federation was criticized by heavily by different Circassian circles for having illegitimate ties with the government because of the personal relations of its founders had with some prominent figures in the AKP. This does not seem to be an unfair critique as the chairman of Çerkes-Fed was an active member of the party and he applied to stand as candidate in the parliamentary election in 2015. Another similar case was the candidacy of the chairman of Kaf-fed for municipal council membership of a metropolitan district of Ankara.

The Circassians Involved in International Activism

The year 2003 saw the foundation of a Circassian youth organization which would become one of the most effective Circassian organizations ever in the political field between the years 2005–2015. The *Caucasus Forum* [*Kafkasya Forumu*—KF], founded by a small group of young Caucasians, used two separate events to mobilize the Circassian youth, which later expanded among the community as a whole. The first event was the contemplation of the Russian administration to merge the Republic of Adygea with Krasnodar Krai. It was KF

[93]https://t24.com.tr/haber/vatandas-acilimlari-samimi-bulmadi,28294
[94]https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/cerkezler-de-yayin-istedi-10706499;
https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/lazlar-da-tv-istiyor-1046285.
[95]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNycp_17cF4.

who took the advantage of the discontent among the Circassians and the reluctance of Kaf-Fed, the biggest and the most reputed Circassian organization.

The second event was the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, the so-called last capital of the Circassians. KF did not lose time to take action against the decision the International Olympic Committee made on July 4, 2007 regarding games to take place in the city in 2014. In the next seven years, KF gained a big popularity and reputation among Circassians.[96] However, KF lost its popularity swiftly after the Olympic Games in February 2014 and almost stopped its activities when an important number of activists, some of whom were the founders, declared that they were leaving the KF to give their place to newcomers.[97]

Afterwards

The Circassians are one of the ethnic groups in Turkey, numbering at least a few hundred thousand, scattered throughout the country. They are the descendants of the people who were forced to leave their lands after the colonization of their ancestral homeland, Circassia, which was once situated in the Northwestern Caucasus by the Russian Empire in the second half of nineteenth century. Fully integrated into the Ottoman and modern Turkish socio-political system, they were partially able to sustain their ethnic identity as a separate group for more than 150 years, keeping ties with their cognates living in Russia and many other countries mainly in the Middle East, including Syria, Jordan, and Israel.

Being concentrated in eastern and southern Marmara region and along a line from the province of Samsun in the north to Hatay in the south, they were resident mostly in numerous small towns and villages before many of these settlements were depopulated with the dramatic change in the demographic distribution of the population of Turkey in favor of urbanization. They are now an important part of the urban setting of Turkey with a relatively high population with their cultural and political organizations, including associations, foundations, business unions, journals and monthly newspapers, and even a recent political party.

[96]Zeynel Abidin Besleney, *The Circassian Diaspora in Turkey: A Political History*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (London: Routledge, 2014).

[97]For the declaration, see, https://web.archive.org/web/20150708144148/http://www.caucasusforum.org/tr/kamuoyuna-duyuru/.

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CHAPTER 8

MOLOKANS IN KARS: FROM SOVIET SPYING TO OUR BEAUTIFUL OLD NEIGHBORS

Çakır Ceyhan Suvari

Introduction

Molokans are Russian-speaking ethno-religious communities. Although they speak Russian and identify themselves as Christians, they are religiously different from Orthodox Russians. Molokanism was born as a peasant movement, and it followed a distinct path from other Middle Age peasant movements. The provocations behind the emergence of the Molokan movement were essentially parallel with those of prior and contemporary movements; however, the Molokans (meaning *milk drinkers*) did something extraordinary—they did not carry radical aspirations, such as seizing power, but rather remained silent even in the face of massacres and exiles. The most notable resistance strategy employed by the Molokan people was pacifism. They followed the antiviolence example of Jesus as a fundamental doctrine and adopted a pacifist worldview. As a manifestation of this, religious rules prohibited symbols of violence such as arms, weapons, and even the wearing of military uniforms. It was sufficient for the Molokans to sustain their collective life and to maintain a certain amount of autonomy and freedom. They even accepted life in exile in hopes that they would be able to attain such ideals. The Tsardom of Russia sent them to exile in Kars and its surrounding areas.

Since the beginning of this exile in Kars, the Molokans have been an interesting society to observe and study for academics, neighbors (local Muslim people), and government officials due to their unique belief and social system. While there are no longer any Molokans in Kars they still occupy a place in the memory of the people. Many who lived among them remember feelings of respect. Therefore, why did they leave Kars? Even though many people in Kars still remember them positively, why did the Molokans have to go? In this article I will focus on the relations between the Molokans, the local people of Kars, and

[1]The city is located in north-east Turkey.

the state. This paper aims to reveal some underlying reason for the Molokan people's desertion of Kars.

Emergence of Molokan Faith

The Molokan faith was constructed in contrast to the official Orthodox Church. According to Breyfogle,[2] Molokanism is the native religion of the Russians. According to him, the Molokan religion is quite different from contemporary Western Protestant movements. The Molokans were first mentioned in the Russian written record during the middle of the eighteenth century. In particular, the records mentioned the Molokans in the Tambov and Voronezh regions in southern Russia.[3] This was the result of the Molokan movement gaining a broad base in the countryside in the eighteenth century. This century was also a period in which Russia accelerated Westernization. The Westernization project was introduced as an intervention in the Russian peasant's lifestyle, which included religious beliefs and economic engagement. Because it was not only the religious institutions and practices that were changed by Westernization, but also the peasant economy based on community solidarity was turned upside down. This initially led to a clash between Russian peasants and the official church rather than with tsarism. The social resistance that emerged as a result of all these was supported by folk religious ideology. In turn, the gap between the Russian peasantry and the Tsar's Orthodox Church deepened. Such peasant communities do not see their way of life as merely a property of the material world. According to them, their lifestyles are spiritual and blessed. This includes the perception that almost all activities are considered sacred. Therefore, any kind of innovation imposed from outside means to change the world of meaning formed by the group. This situation is inevitably resisted by the society. Indeed, Cohen[4] argues that the possibility of change is perceived by the community as something ominous, as if change inevitably means loss, because that which is feared is usually the loss of a way of life.

Molokanism, which developed under the conditions outlined above, was separated from its predecessors, the Doukhobors, who addressed the upper

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[2]Nicholas B. Breyfogle, "Prayer and the Politics of Place: Molokan Church Bulding Tsarist Law, and the Quest for a Public Sphere in Late Imperial Russia", *Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia,* ed. Mark D. Steinberg and Heather
J. Coleman (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), 224.

[3]Breyfogle, "Prayer and the Politics of Place," 224.

[4]Anthony P. Cohen, *Topluluğun Simgesel Kuruluşu,* trans. Mehmet Küçük (Ankara: Dost Yayınevi, 1999), 124.

classes and the citizens. Molokanism emerged as a sect that only attracted the attention of the peasant class. The founder of the sect was Semon Uklein, a tailor Uklein, along with his father-in-law, began discussing the books and their Jesus which inspired the belief of the Doukhobors in 1760. As a result of the discussions Uklein, together with seventy of his followers, left the Doukhobors and established a separate sect known as the Dukhovnye Khristianye (Spiritual Christians) or as the Molokans.[5]

Uklein revised the principles of the Doukhobor belief and, among them, accepted the principles he believed to be true, and eliminated the principles he thought were wrong. Among those excluded were principles directly related to religious practice, such as the abolition of baptism, icon worship, and formal church organization. On the other hand, new principles were adopted according to the ideal of social equality, such as rejecting status differences and opposing material wealth. Therefore, as Muranaka states, values such as bratsvo (fraternity) and obshchestvo (partnership / sharing) are central to Molokanism.[6]

The most important finding that demonstrates the importance of social equality in Molokanism is the lack of clergy. In Molokanism, there are community leaders called presvitery.[7] However, the presviterys are not considered experts with religious professions nor do they have various privileges as would clergy. The Molokan belief rejects the clerical hierarchy like all the practices of the official Orthodox Church.[8] According to the Molokans, anyone who is intelligent, honest and respected in society can manage rituals in the role of a presvitery.

Although the Molokan and Doukhobor sects reject all the doctrines and practices of the Orthodox Church,[9] in contrast to the Doukhobors, in which the pantheist belief is effective, there is an absolute concept of God independent of people and nature in Molokans. In this respect, Molokanism seems to be closer to ascetic movements, that devote entire lives to the path of God, unlike other sects fed by mysticism.[10] Molokans believe that pacifism is at the basis of faith and in

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[5]Therese Adams Muranaka, *The Russian Molokan Colony at Guadalupe. Baja California. Continuity and Change in a Sectrarian Community*, A Dissertation Submitted of the Faculty of the Department of Anthropology (The University of Arizona, 1992), 38-39.
[6]Muranaka, *The Russian Molokan Colony,* 39
[7]Roman Lunkin, Anton Prokofyev, "Molokans and Dukhobors: Living Sources of Russian Protestantism." *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 28/1 (2000): 85.
[8]Breyfogle, "Prayer and the Politics of Place," 228.
[9]Lunkin, Prokofyev, "Molokans and Dukhobors," 86.
[10]Andreas Buss, *The Russian Orthodox Tradition and Modernity* (Boston: Brill, 2003) 85.

order to achieve personal perfection work / labor is sanctified as the supreme virtue.[11]

Molokans and Doukhobors differ more on the basis of how social class differences are viewed in the religious community rather than on the theological differences. Molokanism developed as a peasant-based movement, unlike the bourgeoisie of the Doukhobors. Molokans peculiar communal mentality contrasts starkly with the single institutional leader in Doukhobor religious practice. The nature of the Molokans faith is much more collaborative than that of the Doukhobors. Collective worship and preaching by the presvitery from the Old Testament have an integral place in the lives of the Molokans.[12]

As soon as Molokanism emerged, it was subjected to pressure from religious and secular authorities. This suppressed their belief practices into secrecy. Even while they were secretly gathering for worship, they would also take communion from the Orthodox Church and buried their dead in Orthodox ritual.[13] Particularly during the reign of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-55), the pressure on the Molokans and other sects increased.[14] This oppression and exile reinforced the Molokans to stubbornly cling to their beliefs that protected their faith. For this reason, this peasant class originated movement evolved into a new ethnic identity.

On the other hand, Molokan identity, like all cultural identities, has a heterogeneous structure. As a matter of fact, in-group contradictions and conflicts triggered by these contradictions have been divided into different branches since the first years of Molokanism: the Subbotniks, which are very similar to Judaism, the Postoyanyies who refused all kinds of enthusiasm in their rituals, and the Pryguns (spiritual jumpers) who jumped with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in their rituals are among the movements that emerged from Molokanism.[15]

Molokans From Kars

The Molokans, which were subjected to oppression and massacre by the tsarist, began being exiled during the period of Nikola II. One of the places of exile was the Kars region, which was under Russian possession at the time. The Molokans settled in Kars between the years 1880-1881 establishing 35 villages.[16]

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[11]Muranaka, *The Russian Molokan Colony,* 39.
[12]Lunkin, Prokofyev, "Molokans and Dukhobors," 86.
[13]Lunkin, Prokofyev, "Molokans and Dukhobors," 85.
[14]Buss, *The Russian Orthodox Tradition,* 85.
[15]Muranaka, *The Russian Molokan Colony,* 39-40.
[16]Servet Somuncuoğlu, *Don Kazakları* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2004), 99. Orhan

However, Kars was given to Turkey after the Gyumri Treaty was signed in 1920.[17] In parallel with the Treaty, it is known that most of the Molokans returned to Russia. Those who did not want to go migrate to Russia were considered legal citizens of the Republic of Turkey.[18] These people who decided to stay, remained in Kars until 1962, settling in the Yalınçayır, Atçılar, and Çalkavur villages.[19]

The Molokans that remained in Kars during the Republican period did not migrate to the ancestral lands (Russia) due to religious concerns.[20] However, in 1962 they left Turkey due to similar concerns and resettled in Russia, the US, Canada, and Mexico. According to the census conducted in 1960, the number of those remaining Molokans in Turkey are said to be over 1,500. Six hundred and ninety-three individuals of this population lived in Yalınçayır, 626 in Atçılar, and 200 in Çalkavur. Several families lived in neighboring provinces due to work.[21]

Some Turkish researchers argue that Molokans left Turkey due to intermarriage related issues.[22] These researchers say that marriage among the same descendants is forbidden by Molokans. They claim that Molokans migrated from Turkey because there were no marriage opportunities for their offspring. However, it is my suspicion that the marriage issue is disproportionately represented. The fact that the Muslim majority has exerted both psychological and physical pressure on the Molokans should be recognized among the factors causing migration.

Indeed, the 1950s was a period of increased pressure on non-Muslims in Turkey. The events of September 6-7[23] that occurred during the same period constituted the last link of this process. It is still said that in Kars, some people disturbed the Molokans to obtain their land and property. According to Karagöz,[24] these and similar practices were consciously implemented to intimidate the Molokans and enable them to go to the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, the

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Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı* (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Basımevi 1971), 26.

[17]İlber Ortaylı, *Çarlık Rusyası Döneminde Kars* (İstanbul: Ed. Fak. Matbaası, 1978), 343.

[18]Somuncuoğlu, *Don Kazakları,* 99.

[19]Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı,* 18.

[20]Z. F. Fındıkoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslâv Muhacirleri* (İstanbul: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1996) Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı*

[21]Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı,* 24.

[22]Fındıkoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslâv Muhacirleri.* Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı* Somuncuoğlu, *Don Kazakları.*

[23]September events were organized mob attacks directed primarily at Istanbul's Greek minority on 6–7 September 1955.

[24]Erkan Karagöz, *Kars ve Çevresinde Aydınlanma Hareketleri ve Sol Geleneğin Tarihse Kökenleri 1878-1921*(İstanbul: Asya Şafak Yayınları, 2005), 160-162.

following statements of Kazim Karabekir[25] reveal that the Molokans had more important problems than marriage:

Molokans did not go to military service even in the time of the Russians, men always bearded. Their animals are large, the carts take lots of goods, four wheels, big and solid. Agricultural tools are always the last system. Bloodshed was the greatest sin, even in the war. I used them for transport alone. They even objected. These peasants, started to Bolshevik organization with the encouragement and started to ruin their sincere lives.[26]

As a result of these events, the vast majority of those who migrated from the region went to Russia. However, some Molokans who thought their religious beliefs could not live in Russia migrated to the USA, Canada and Mexico.[27]

Changing Approaches about Molokans in Turkey

The Molokans have recently become of renewed interest in Turkey. There are plenty of articles and news published about them in various magazines and newspapers. However, when these sources are compared it is seen that they contain much repeating information. They all unanimously emphasize flawlessness of the Molokans community. Journalists and researchers go to former villages of Molokans to look for traces from them. However, what they find are merely a few old Molokan women who have married Muslims and changed their religion. The only thing they do is to report these women as the *last of the Molokans*. In summary, Molokans are mentioned as lost tribes in these articles, revered as a subject of praise and interest because they are no longer perceived as a threat to Turkey. Yet the same interest in existing ethnic groups still living in Turkey is not shown. Unlike the work done today, in the past Molokans were made scapegoats and accused of being *communist agents*. As we look at the works from the past to the present about Molokans we can see the transformation take place as the Molokans have been turned from scapegoat into perfect society.

The first academic study on Molokans was made by Türkdoğan[28] in Turkey. Türkdoğan prepared his doctoral dissertation entitled *Social Structure of*

[25]Kazım Karabekir was a Turkish general and politician. He was the commander of the Eastern Army of the Ottoman at the end of World War I.
[26]Karagöz, *Kars ve Çevresinde Aydınlanma Hareketleri,* 168.
[27]Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı.* Somuncuoğlu, *Don Kazakları.*
[28]Orhan Türkdoğan, "Molokanların Toplumsal Yapısı." (PhD diss., Atatütürk University 1962).

Molokans - Socio-Economic Research of a Russian Group in Three Villages of Kars Province (1877-1962). Later, he published his thesis as a book entitled *The Social Structure of Molokans.*[29] Türkdoğan, in his book titled *Ethnic Sociology,*[30] mentioned Molokans once more. Finally, in 2005, he published another book about Molokans entitled *An Ethnic Group in Kars - Social Structure of Molokans*.[31]

Türkdoğan's studies provide detailed ethnographic information about the Molokans in Kars. However, Türkdoğan considers identity as a static and unchanging phenomenon and therefore ignores the dynamics that build Molokan ethnic identity. At the same time, Molokan identity is often humiliated in comparison to Muslim Turkish identity in his works. He even complained that the Molokans did not have *Islamic morality*. For example, he interprets the pragolga[32] tradition of Molokans as *immorality* or even *animalistic* activity:

...Molokan children were informed by the school that the pragolga tradition was an animalistic activity, but this did not produce a positive result... They did not participate in such activities because of fear only during the school period. However, when they were disconnected from the school, they attended these entertainments again...[33]

On the other hand, Türkdoğan's studies show an effort to prove that the Molokans lived *smoothly* and *peaceful* in the region. Türkdoğan believes that the people of the region and the state are as tolerant as possible to the Molokans. Türkdoğan's main concern is why Molokans were unable to be fully integrated into Turkish society. He claims that this is due to the closed nature of the Molokan–society which he lays responsibility on the elder generation. He proceeds to offer advice to teachers in Molokan villages on how to assimilate them:

...Teachers in the villages of Molokan should provide education and training without leaving any conflict, provided that they apply to systematic and

[29]Türkdoğan, *Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı.*
[30]Orhan Türkdoğan, *Etnik Sosyoloji-Türk Etnik Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınlar 1999).
[31]Orhan Türkdoğan, *Kars'ta Bir Etnik Grup- Molokanlar'ın Toplumsal Yapısı* (İstanbul IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2005).
[32]Pragolga, with the consent of their parents, is a picnic party organized after the Sunday ceremony to meet single young people.
[33]Türkdoğan, "Molokanların Toplumsal Yapısı." 158.

methodical working methods. Because it is useful to point out the positive behavior of the Molokan community towards the teacher here. It should only be believed that after all this, cultural assimilation can be achieved...[34]

Türkdoğan states that the Molokans lived in peace together with the people of Kars for about 80 years.[35] They were respected in terms of their beliefs and values, and sometimes even intermarried with Muslim people. Despite all these positive conditions, he believes that the migration of the Molokans in 1962 was due only to the marital problem,[36] and by their own free and independent decisions. However, the explanation found in the conclusion of his thesis reveals that the Molokans were indeed not living in mutual respect and peace with the surrounding Turkish community:

Settled in an intense area of traditional Turkish and Russian enmity, the Molokans could not save themselves from the negative reactions of those around them at almost every stage of their lives. Therefore, despite their opposition to the communist system and Russian oppression, their ethnic origin could not keep them away from this historical hatred. The hatred of the people to the Russians has become identical on the Molokans...[37]

Fındıkoğlu followed after Türkdoğan, in his research on the Molokans. His work was published under the title *Slavic Immigrants in Turkey- 1961-62 The Return to Russia of the Molokans and the Cossacks in Turkey.*[38] In his study Fındıkoğlu focuses on reasons for the emigration of Cossacks who lived in Balıkesir and Akşehir as well as Molokans to Russia. According to Fındıkoğlu they emigrated from Turkey due to longing for their homeland, exogamy rules and Soviet propaganda.[39] In particular he believed that Soviet propaganda played an important role:

[34]Türkdoğan, "Molokanların Toplumsal Yapısı." 160.
[35]Türkdoğan, *Kars'ta Bir Etnik Grup*, 18-19).
[36]Türkdoğan, *Kars'ta Bir Etnik Grup*, 7-9.
[37]Türkdoğan, "Molokanların Toplumsal Yapısı." 168.
[38]Fındıkoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslâv Muhacirleri,* 35-37.
[39]Fındıkoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslâv Muhacirleri,*89.

...Some printed documents from the Soviet Consulate of Istanbul were circulating from hand to hand, and even some Cossacks who were working in İstanbul sent lots of money to be distributed to Kazakh villages...[40]

Karagöz, who conducted a study on Molokans, also mentions the Bolshevism sympathy among Molokans and even the admiration of Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) (Karagöz 2005, 157-170). However, Karagöz provides more consistent and realistic information, unlike Fındıkoğlu and Türkdoğan. According to him, the increasing state pressure on the Molokans starting from Kazım Karabekir[41] and the contradictions between the Muslim people of the region and the Molokans triggered the emigration. Karagöz gives detailed historical information about the Molokans in Kars in his book *Enlightenment Movements and Historical Origins of the Left Tradition 1878-1921 in Kars and Around*.

Somuncuoğlu also conducted a study on Molokans.[42] Somuncuoğlu, like Fındıkoğlu[43] focused on the migration adventures of Molokans and Cossacks. In his work, Don Kazakları[44] (*Don Cossacks*), Somuncuoğlu focused on what the Cossacks and Molokans experienced during and after the migration.

In Turkey, researchers working on Molokans are often unable to free themselves from the influence of their ideological gaze. The first of these was prepared from a nationalist perspective (Türkdoğan and Fındıkoğlu), and these studies have shown Molokans as Soviet agents. Even these studies claimed that Molokans have some immoral and animalistic traditions (as in the case of Türkdoğan). On the other hand, there are studies of socialist world view researchers. In contrast to nationalist writers, Molokans are glorified by socialist researchers. An example of this view was written by Düz, entitled *The Lost Color of Anatolia: Religious Anarchists: Molokans.*[45] Düz, explains some of the ideas and practices in the Molokan faith system with left arguments and defines Molokans as religious anarchists. For instance, Düz declares the Molokans to be conscientious objectors because of the opposition to violence and anti-war in their faith:

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[40]Fındıkoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslâv Muhacirleri,* 89.
[41]Kazım Karabekir (1881-1948) was a Turkish General, who served as the commander of the Eastern Region, including Kars and its surroundings, where the Molokans live.
[42]Somuncuoğlu, *Don Kazakları.*
[43]Fındıkoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslâv Muhacirleri.*
[44]Somuncuoğlu, *Don Kazakları.*
[45]F. Tekin Düz, "Anadolu'nun Yiten Rengi Dindar Anarşistler: Molokanlar," *Esmer* Volume 37 (2008): 28-29.

They are anti-war. They see military service as a kind of tyranny. They are conscientious objectors for refusing military service. So much so that they avoided even carrying military equipment.[46]

According to him, it is no coincidence that Molokans live in villages. Düz says that Molokans prefer villages to escape the unhappiness created by modernity over human beings:

They rejected technology, they loved nature. According to them, all kinds of heavy industry and technology are the factors that complicate the life... They knew that in order to avoid the deep unhappiness and alienation that plagued modern society, it was necessary to stay away from the city and live with nature.[47]

Finally, Düz invites all humanity to become Molokan to protect the world from wars, poverty and the destruction of nature.[48]

Conclusion

Both economic and religious factors play a role in the separation of the Molokans from the Orthodox Church. Peasant lifestyle is largely reflected in their religion. Therefore, unlike the official Orthodox Church, old Russian pagan motifs can be seen in the Molokan religious practice. On the other hand, agriculture and animal husbandry are blessed by Molokans.

Molokans were oppressed by Tsarists because of their different beliefs and anti-modernization attitudes, and they were declared heretical by the Orthodox Church. Despite all these pressures, the Molokans did not give up their beliefs and lifestyles and therefore were put into exile by Tsarists. A group of these Molokans were sent to the Kars region. Kars was under Russian rule until 1921. When the Russians left Kars after the Soviet Revolution, most of the Molokans emigrated to Russia and other countries with the remaining Molokans leaving Turkey in 1962.

The opinions of both Muslim neighbors and researchers on Molokans vary widely. As shown in the above studies, the Molokans were described as either scapegoats who cooperated with the enemies (Soviet agents) or as supreme and virtuous people with a worldview to save humanity. The first approach interprets the changes in Molokan identity as degeneration. According to the second

[46]Düz, "Anadolu'nun Yiten Rengi," 28.
[47]Düz, "Anadolu'nun Yiten Rengi," 29.
[48]Düz, "Anadolu'nun Yiten Rengi," 29.

approach, Molokanism is an ideology that is free of internal and external contradictions and can be a model for humanity. There was a more negative and incriminating approach to Molokans before, but nowadays it has been replaced by a more positive view in Turkey. Unfortunately, this is largely due to the fact that this minority group no longer exists in Turkey to pose a threat to the dominant culture.

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CHAPTER 9

TRAGIC MEMORIES ENCOUNTERING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH-EASTERN ANATOLIA: THE CASE OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

Benedetta Panchetti
and
Marcello Mollica

Introduction

The Assyrians are a Christian ethnic group who speak dialects derived from ancient Aramaic. For centuries, they have lived among Kurdish communities in the border regions of modern Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Chaldeans, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic Christians and members of the Assyrian Church of the East are the main Assyrian denominations.[1] Sanders argues that, regardless of them being Syriac, Assyrian or Chaldean, their culture resisted assimilation for centuries, even after a number of persecutions, and their common language was a main glue for group cohesion.[2] However, as Sarguis suggests, they do not always speak with a single voice, often diverging even within the same Christian denomination. He takes, for instance, the case of the Chaldeans: one group claims an ethnicity entirely on its own and different from the 'Assyrians'; another group identify themselves as 'Christian Arabs'; a third group insist they are entirely 'Assyrian'. However, despite all differences and frictions they share a common destiny of discrimination and massacres.[3]

[1] Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans, The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Perseus, 2015), 178-179.
[2] Joannes C.J. Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians In Eastern Turkey and Iran: Their Last Homeland Re-Charted* (Kasteel Hernen: A.A.Brediusstichting, 1999).
[3] Francis Sarguis, Book Reviews of Joannes C.J. Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians In Eastern Turkey and Iran: Their Last Homeland Re-Charted* (Kasteel Hernen: A.A.Brediusstichting, 1999), *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 14, no.1, 83-85.

This reached the peak after the Ottoman Empire entry in the First World War. The Assyrians were accused of collaboration with the Entente Powers - France, United Kingdom and Russia - and, therefore, targeted by the Young Turks regime.[4] Thousands of Assyrian Christians were killed in the course of the war[5] and it was only from the 1980s that the silence upon their massacre was broken.[6]

In this chapter, we focus on the Assyrian Church of the East in what is modern Turkey. The Assyrian Church of the East belongs to one of the oldest denominations within Christianity, as its origin traces back to the Patriarchate of Antioch, who sent missionaries there through the city of Edessa in the III century.[7] The name 'Assyrian' derives from the name of their capital city, Assur.[8] Their reign and Church identity arose in Assyria, that is, Upper Mesopotamia and North-western Persia. All those territories were on the Roman- Parthian border and, once the territory was conquered by the Sasanian dynasty and the Roman Empire split into two political entities, those territories became the Sasanian - Byzantine eastern border.[9] Such a topographical uncertainty was to shape the history and the destiny of all Assyrian communities for the time being.

The *Assyrian* Church of the East and Its Identity: A Glorious Past

To better understand and underline the Assyrians' presence in the contemporary Turkey it is necessary to focus on their origins and history in the Anatolian region, marked by persecutions, violence and unsafe coexistence with other non-Christian groups.

Joseph Yacoub, one of the most influential contemporary scholars on Assyrian studies, points out that once: "there were a nation and an Assyro-

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[4] Hannibal Travis, "Native Christians Massacred: The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians During World War I", *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 1, no.3 (Winter 2006): 327-372.

[5] Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 179.

[6] Joseph Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?: 1915: le génocide assyro-chaldéo-syriaque* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2014), 36.

[7] Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: an illustrated history of Assyrian Christianity*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006); Philip B. Najim, "Le Chiese gemelle d'Oriente: la Chiesa assira e la Chiesa caldea", *Credere oggi,* no. 147 (May-June 2005), 37.

[8] Archaeological site in contemporary Iraq, on the western bank of the Tigris, in al-Shirqat District, Saladin Governorate.

[9] Aldo Ferrari, *Popoli e chiese dell'Oriente cristiano* (Rome: Lavoro, 2007), 102-104, 151.

Chaldean-Syrian people [dwelling] in historical Mesopotamia, between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates, whose history goes back more than 5,000 years."[10]

At a theological level, the Assyrian Church of the East was also known as the 'Nestorian Church' for it accepted the Christological doctrine affirmed by Nestorius, a monk from Antioch who was Patriarch of Constantinople from 428 to 431. In 431, during the Council of Ephesus, he was accused of heresy having spread a theological doctrine about the nature of Christ, which stated that in Christ there are two different and separate persons, human and divine, united by a union of love but not joined. From this descended that the Virgin Mary was not recognized by the Nestorians as the 'Mother of God', but only the 'Mother of Christ.'[11]

A group of bishops, living in the Sassanid Empire, a strong enemy of the Roman Empire, did not attend the Council of Ephesus and supported the spread of the Nestorian doctrine across their territory. Then, at the Councils of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410) and Marktaba of Tayayè (424), the participant bishops proclaimed the separation of the Assyrian Church of the East from the rest of Christianity. However, the separation was mostly due to political reasons, to mark their independence from both the Byzantine Empire and the Patriarchate of Antioch.[12] Assyrian bishops hoped that then Sassanian king, Yazdegard I, would interrupt the anti-Christian persecutions of his predecessors.[13] Indeed, Sassanian sovereigns' attitudes towards Christians had temporarily changed under the reign of Shapur II (309-379),[14] but since then, another long series of persecutions had begun.[15]

It was however after the Arab conquest (637-642) that the confrontation with the Byzantine Empire resumed. Despite relations between Christians and that the new rulers were good to them, they were the first to experience the conversion to Islam and to sign treaties with Islamic leaders.[16] Under Sassanid and Abbasid dominations, the Assyrian Church of East prospered, even if Christians were considered *dhimmi* [protected], that is, second-class people as

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[10] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 14.
[11] Gerald O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2013), 114, 243.
[12] O'Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology,*72.
[13] Jean- Pierre Valognes, *Vie et mort des chrétiens d'Orient dés origines à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 410.
[14] Herman G. B. Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens: chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turquie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 14-15.
[15] Baumer, *The Church of the East*, 66.
[16] Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens,* 22-23.

the Quran itself proclaimed for non-Muslim subjects a Muslim domination, and forced them to pay the jizyah, a per head tax. All Christian males were entitled to keep their religious affiliation.[17]

The members of the Assyrian Church of the East retreated from the cities of Mesopotamia in the XV century and divided into two major social groups. The first consisted of farmers living in the valleys between Mosul (today in Iraq) and the lakes of Van (today in Turkey) and Urmia (today in Iran). The second settled in the mountains of Kurdistan.[18] Indeed, it was a small, almost inaccessible island, surrounded by Islamic lands.

This era of relative tranquillity ended with the Mongolian conquest, which inaugurated a new period of persecutions, which continued until the XX century. At the beginning of the XIV century, besides the Patriarchal metropolis, there were 27 archdioceses, with each Metropolitan See subdivided into 6 to 12 dioceses, all under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. According to Baumer,[19] approximately 7-8 million Christians lived in the 27 Metropolitan Sees.

The Tamerlane large-scale persecutions of 1370-1405 reduced the number of Christians in historical Persia, pushing the survivors towards present Iraqi Kurdistan, the border region of contemporary Eastern Turkey and the Hakkari Mountains. Therefore, the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East was compelled to settle his See in the remote village of Kochanes (today Konak), in the mountain range of Hakkiari (north of Hakkari), near the river Grand Zab.[20]

Moreover, from 1552, the Assyrian Church of the East saw the appearance of faithful, priests and even bishops who accepted the religious authority of the Roman Pontiff. They founded the socalled Chaldean Catholic Church[21] - today the largest Christian community in Iraq, with a Patriarchal See in Baghdad. In the XIX century, under the influence of missionaries, Protestants churches appeared.[22]

Baumer argues that the West discovered this Church only in 1820, when the Assyrian Church of the East asked for political help experiencing troubles and difficult coexistence with the Kurds who lived in the Hakkari region. However,

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[17] Baumer, *The Church of the East,* 4.
[18] Ibid., 6.
[19] Ibid., 4.
[20] Edward G. Farrugia, *Dizionario enciclopedico dell'Oriente cristiano* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2000), 82-83.
[21] Kristian Girling, *The Chaldean Catholic Church: Modern History, Ecclesiology and Church- State Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).
[22] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 16.

Kurdish tribes opposed such an interference and killed some European missionaries,[23] and despite the British government asking Istanbul to intervene, the Turkish authorities let Kurdish irregular forces massacre Assyrians on the Hakkari mountains and, once the violence ended, even forbade Christians to rebuild their churches. In 1876, Russia declared itself ready to cooperate with Great Britain to help the members of the Assyrian Church of the East, but this time it was London that refused the offer for it had already signed a military alliance with the Ottoman Empire against Russia.[24] Indeed, Assyrians living in the Ottoman Empire were seen as a 'fifth column' of the Tzar. After the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, members of the Assyrian Church of the East lived a more secure life in Urmia and in Iran while in the Ottoman Empire anti-Christian policies increased. Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on November 1, 1914. Simultaneously, an attack against Christians[25] in Eastern Anatolia began, much worse than what experienced in 1895-96 in Diyarbakir city and its *vilayet* (Ottoman province) and in 1909 in Adana.[26]

In the last century, the Assyrian Church of the East has also suffered from internal disputes. The most important followed events involving Patriarch Shimun XXI Eshai, who had escaped to the United States of America in 1940. The Iraqi government had exiled him in 1933 as a consequence of his political leading role in the Assyrian international and national fight to build an Assyrian independent state in portions of ancient Assyria, that was also Iraqi territory. In 1964, Patriarch Shimun built a new Patriarchal See in Chicago and approved a number of liturgical changes (such as the adoption of the Gregorian calendar) causing a split in the Assyrian Church of the East. However, the schism of 1964 followed above all controversies over the methods of election of the Patriarch. Since mid-XV century, it is not the Synod of bishops that elects the Patriarch, but the office is handed down in the same family, along an uncle-nephew axis, since the Patriarch is obliged to celibacy.[27] Sometimes, the Patriarch took office at an unsuitable age, e.g., Patriarch She'on XII who succeeded his uncle in 1920 at the age of 12.[28] For the patriarchy to remain within the same family, specific rules have even been added for the future patriarch (e.g., he and his mother

[23] Baumer, *The Church of the East,* 254.
[24] Sargon G. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the 20th Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
[25] Baumer, *The Church of the East,* 260.
[26] Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans,* 178-179.
[27] Valognes, *Vie et mort des chrétiens d'Orient,* 415.
[28] Raymond Janin, *Les églises orientales et les rites orientaux* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1997), 420.

cannot eat meat). Even for the Bishops the appointment is handed down from uncle to nephew in a small number of families, despite that it should be formally up to the Diocese congregation to choose their bishop.[29] The schism of 1964 originated from the refusal of a group of Assyrian bishops from Iraq, Syria and India to accept the appointment of a member of the Simoun family to patriarchal dignity. (Even the schism of 1552, from which the Chaldean Catholic Church was born, was caused by similar reasons.[30]) The 1964 schism originated the independent Ancient Church of the East, whose Patriarchal See is in Baghdad, Iraq, and their current Patriarch is Addai II Giwargis, has been in office since 1972. The Assyrian communities in the Middle East and in the diaspora have long-since advocated for reunification, particularly in response to the 2014-2015 attacks launched against them in Iraq and Syria by Islamist groups, including the Islamic State. Since that time, relations between the churches have improved on every level. At the time of writing, this Church has 4 dioceses in the Middle East: Patriarchal Archdiocese of Baghdad and Basra, the Archdiocese of Kirkuk, the Archdiocese of Nineveh (Mosul) and Northern Iraq, the Archdiocese of Syria. Five additional dioceses were erected in diasporic settings.

Since his election on September 18, 2015, Mar Gewargis III is the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East and his See is still in Chicago. Bishops are also in Baghdad and Hassake (Rojova) and in other 12 dioceses worldwide (two are in Middle- Eastern countries: the diocese of Syria and the diocese of Iran). The Chaldean Catholic Church has a Patriarch in Baghdad and also bishops in Arbil (Regional Government of Kurdistan), Aleppo (Syria), Diyarbakir - Metropolitan of Amid (Turkey) and Istanbul.[31]

It was only in 1994 and 1998 that the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of East lifted the anathemas they had declared against one another. In 1994, the Assyrian Church of the East stipulated a 'common Christological declaration' with the Roman Catholic Church. It recognized that the theological errors on the nature of Christ and Mary's motherhood were induced by erroneous translations from the Greek into the Syriac and vice versa of the theological terms used by the two Churches.[32] At the same time, Pope

[29] Baumer, *The Church of the East.*
[30] Najim, "Le chiese gemelle d'Oriente", 44.
[31] Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens,* 185-188.
[32] The text is online at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/angelus/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19941113.html; see also http://www.vatican.va/holy_

John Paul II defined this Church as 'the Church of the martyrs' and stressed that no other Church had suffered so many persecutions because of the faith as the Assyrian Church.[33]

At a liturgical level, the language is still Syriac, an Eastern Aramaic dialect, although people are no longer able to understand it. Consequently, it is correct to enlist the Assyrian Church of the East as part of the Syriac Christianity, along with the Chaldean Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Syriac Catholic Church and the Maronite Church. However, it does diverge from them on a doctrinal level.[34]

On a community level, Syriac-speaking Christian diaspora stand often for a pure ethnically 'Assyrian' society, which naturally brings with it the perception of a geographical 'homeland'. However, some Turkish scholars argue that definitions such as 'Assyrians', 'Chaldeans' and 'Aramaeans', that is, people who inhabited the region since the I century, do not apply today anymore because of the various differences between them.[35] Thus Syriac-speaking Christian groups are using a 'synthesised' identity to claim that they are the

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father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1994/november/documents/hf_jpii_spe_19941111_dichiarazione-cristologica_it.html.The Assyrian Church of the East rejects, for instance, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854 (see on this Edward D. O'Connor, *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), while it includes the sacraments of the 'sign of the cross' and the 'holy leaven', which commemorates the tradition according to which Saint John the Apostle soaked in the bloody cost of the crucified Jesus Christ a portion of the bread blessed by Jesus Christ himself on Holy Thursday (see on this Najim, "Le Chiese gemelle d'Oriente", 49). Nevertheless, from 2001 the faithful of the two Churches can communicate with each other during the Masses of other peoples' rites (see Baumer, *The Church of the East*).

[33] Baumer, *The Church of the East.*

[34] The Syriac Orthodox Church, in fact, condemned the Nestorian doctrine and recognised the Council of Ephesus theological declaration on the double nature in one person of Christ (that is, against the conclusions reached at the Council of Chalcedon in 451). The Maronite Church, on the contrary, remained faithful to the Council of Chalcedon and it is nowadays among the Eastern Churches in communion with the Pope of Rome, as well as the Syriac Catholic Church, also united under the Pope of Rome's authority (O'Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology,* 215). As those churches accepted the Council of Ephesus Christological doctrine, they are known as belonging to the Syro-Antiochian or West-Syriac rite. However, the Chaldean Church, despite reunited under the authority of the Pope of Rome in 1552, is still considered part of the East-Syriac rite.

[35] Bulent Ozdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War* (Dunbeath: Whittles Publishing, 2013), 3-5.

inheritors of Assur and Babylon civilizations. In other words, these groups base their definition of their identity upon ethnic origin, rather than upon a Church.

As recently argued by professor Joseph Yacoub,[36] even though Assyrians are currently divided into the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church, they share a common 'Assyrian' identity. This belonging is stronger than their religious difference over their loyalty to the Roman Pope. They share a common language and a common history and, before the massacres suffered between the XIX and the XX centuries, used to live in the same villages. While speaking of the period of the massacres, Yacoub affirmed that the term Assyro-Chaldean, above all by reference to the Assyrian massacres, is both culturally and historically correct. His position was recently supported by Mgr. Noël Farman, Delegate of the Chaldean Patriarch Raphael Sako, who affirmed that Assyrians and Chaldeans are "part of the same population."[37] We should also notice that in contemporary Turkey, there is at least a section of the Syriac-Orthodox Church that consider itself as being 'Assyrian'. Indeed, the only 'Assyrian' Member of Parliament in the Turkish Parliament, Erol Dora, is a Syriac- Orthodox.

Scholars such as Aburish[38] and Brock[39] have however put the emphasis on the 'Syrians' as an ethnic and linguistic endogenous group that differs from its geographical neighbours, that is, Kurds, Arabs, Turks, Armenians, and Persians on both religious and linguistic grounds. What follows will however concentrate on the Assyrian Church of the East and will consider their contemporary life in Turkey by reference to demographic changes, increasing migration and an aggressive ethno-religious fundamentalism.

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[36] Joseph Yacoub, *Discorso in occasione della pubblicazione enciclopedica sulla Questione Caldea e Assira* (Rome: Pontifical Institute, November 9, 2019).

[37] Noel Farman, "Discorso in occasione della pubblicazione enciclopedica sulla Questione Caldea e Assira". November, 92019, Pontifical Institute, Rome, accessed March 20, 2020, https://www.orientchurch.va/images/Traduction_discours_P._Farman_corretta.pdf. The public speech was given on November 9, 2019, at a conference organized at the Pontificio Istituto Orientale in Rome for the book launch of Georges-Henri Ruyssen, *La Questione Caldea e Assira 1908-1938. Documenti dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), dell'Archivio della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali (ACO) e dell'Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato, Sezioni per i Rapporti con gli Stati (SS.RR.SS.)* (Rome: Valore italiano editore, 2019).

[38] Said K. Aburish, *The Forgotten Faithful. The Christians of the Holy Land* (London: Quartet Books, 1993).

[39] Sebastian P. Brock and David G. K. Taylor *The Hidden Pearl: The Heirs of the Ancient Aramaic Heritage* (Rome: Trans World Film Festival, 2001).

Sayfo

Joseph Yacoub argues that the Assyro-Chaldeans have been victims of physical, cultural, religious and territorial *genocide;* this is known among Assyrians with the word *sayfo*, which derives from the word 'seyf', which means 'sword' in both Syriac and Arabic. In Yacoub's terms the *genocide* was of a 'geopolitical' nature.[40] He puts the number of Assyro-Chaldean-Syrians of all religious denominations killed by Turkish force, irregular Kurdish and other ethnicities forces at more than 250,000, that is, more than half of the entire Assyrian population.[41] They were victims of massacres mostly caused by the pro-Russian, pro-English and anti-Turkish stance taken by their leaders, who hoped for the support of the European powers to be recognized as having the right to a territory.[42] Thus when, in the spring of 1915, the Ottoman Empire had to face invasion on three fronts (Dardanelles, Caucasus and Mesopotamia), the Young Turks unleashed unprecedented violence against their Christian subjects,[43] under the program sent by the Ministry of Interior, Talat Pasha to local provincial governors, via some secret telegrams. The Ministry, also a prominent leader of the ruling Committee of Union and Progress, planned the "purge" against Christians with the cooperation of the Ministry of War, Enver Pasha, but local perpetrators were largely private citizens and volunteers, led by strong anti-Christian and anti-Assyrian hate due to both political and religious reasons. If the latter could be understood in reference to the idea of "jihad" as a violent fight against all non-Muslims, the former needs to be placed into the 1914-15 local and international context to be understood.[44]

Following the 'October 1917' revolution against the Tzar in the Russian Empire and the setting up of the new Bolshevik government, new Russian rulers rejected all previous international policies implemented by Tsarist politicians to support at a political and military level Assyrians and other Christian Ottoman subjects against the Ottomans.[45] The two years-long wartime (1915-17) caused

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[40] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 18-19.
[41] Ibid., 23-24.
[42] Travis, "Native Christians Massacred", 334-338.
[43] Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 184.
[44] Stephan Astourian and Raymond Kévorkian, *Collective and State Violence in Turkey: The Construction of a National Identity from Empire to Nation-State* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020).
[45] Baumer, *The Church of the East*, 258.The author publishes an extract from a letter send by the Assyrian Patriarch to the Tzar on April 26, 1868, that is, half a century before the First Word War events. The Patriarch wrote: "the Kurds have forcibly taken possession of several of our churches and convents; they constantly abduct our virgins,

enormous bloodshed. However, if violence against Assyrians was not as large-scale planned as the one against Armenians, it was concentrated in some cities where the Assyrian community was numerous.[46] The massacres started on April 24, 1915 in Diyarbakır, then Assyrians were also killed in Mardin, Midyat, Nisibis, Jazireh and Seert.[47] The survivors were then forced to flee to the Russian-controlled Persian region of Urmia and Van and to Iraq, where the British mandated power granted them protection.[48]

Turkish scholars such as Bulent Ozdemir,[49] strongly reject the allegation often proffered against the Ottoman Empire of having promulgated a *fatwa* of *jihad* during the First World War. Such a promulgation could have justified the killing of infidels. Ozdemir submits that this is a misinterpretation for it was, on the contrary, a political manoeuvre against other Muslim countries. In other words, the *fatwa* could not be promulgated against the Christian subjects [here *dhimmi*] of the same State [here the Ottoman Empire] that declares the *jihad*. Such an approach would contrast Islamic law for the *fatwa* cannot be directed against its own subjects. After all, the Ottoman Empire was allied with the (Christian) German and Austrian empires. Concurrently, some researchers have interpreted the promulgation of the *fatwa* of *jihad* as a declaration meant to religiously justify the massacre against some Christian communities living in the Ottoman Empire.

The contemporary Turkish official stance has been echoed in the words of the incumbent Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on a statement he issued on April 23, 2014 when acting as Turkish Prime Minister. For the first time in Turkish history, a prominent State officer addressed the issue of mass killings of Armenians in Ottoman territory at the end of the First World War, in occasion of the day dedicated by Armenians to the remembrance of the Armenian genocide. Never using the word "genocide", he declared that:

It is indisputable that the last years of the Ottoman Empire were a difficult period, full of suffering for Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Armenian and millions of

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brides and women, forcing them to turn Muslim. For twenty years and more, the Turks have taken possession of the country, but they are worse than the Kurds. We beseech your Mightiness, for the sake of Jesus, His Baptism and Cross, either free us from such a state or procure us a remedy".

[46] David Gaunt, *Massacres, resistance, protectors: Muslim-Christian relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2006).

[47] Baumer, *The Church of the East,* 261.

[48] Janin, *Les églises orientales,* 410.

[49] Ozdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War,* 50.

other Ottoman citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin. Any conscientious, fair and humanistic approach to these issues requires an understanding of all the sufferings endured in this period, without discriminating as to religion or ethnicity. Certainly, neither constructing hierarchies of pain nor comparing and contrasting suffering carries any meaning for those who experienced this pain themselves […] Nevertheless, using the events of 1915 as an excuse for hostility against Turkey and turning this issue into a matter of political conflict is inadmissible. The incidents of the First World War are our shared pain. To evaluate this painful period of history through a perspective of just memory is a humane and scholarly responsibility. Millions of people of all religions and ethnicities lost their lives in the First World War.[50]

Beyond the terminological problems and the legitimacy of the definition of 'genocide,'[51] the issue is still fluid and the political and academic debate as ferocious as ever. It is indeed reproducing dynamics similar to the ones experienced by the same Holy See's attitudes towards Eastern Christians (Armenians, Assyrians) in the context of the First World War by reference to the violence used against them by the Ottoman Army. The Vatican position over the conflict evolved from struggling against the perpetrators to negotiation with the same perpetrators of violence,[52] being Ottoman troops or irregular Kurdish

[50] The official statement of the Prime Minister was issued in Turkish. Nevethless a unofficial English traslation is available at: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-prime-minister-mr_-recep-tayyip-erdo%C4%9Fan-published-a-message-on-the-events-of-1915_-23-april-2014.en.mfa

[51]Genocide was first recognised as a crime under international law in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/96-I). It was codified as an independent crime in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (art. 2). Accordingly, with this Convention, genocide means "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." The 'Assyrian genocide' was recognised as a 'genocide' in 2007 by the International Association of Genocide Scholars, which stated that "Ottoman campaign against Christian minorities of the Empire between 1914 and 1923 constituted a genocide against Armenians, Assyrians, and Pontian and Anatolian Greeks".

[52] Gabriel Fikri, "Le Vatican face au génocide des Arméniens et des Assyriens (Syriaques)," *La Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 111 no. 3-4 (2016), 605-629.

carrying out the massacres against the Assyrians, supported by some pan–Islamist and ultranationalist Turkish military groups.[53] As a testimony of such deathly attacks against members of the Assyrian Church of the East and Assyrian people as a whole, the village of Kochanes, which had hosted for half a millennium the Assyrian Church of the East Patriarchal See, was abandoned by Patriarch Shimun XXI Benjamin and his clergy in 1915. Since then, the village has never been inhabited again by Assyrian faithful and it is currently in a ruined state.[54]

However, Patriarch Shimun XXI Benjamin could not save neither his life nor the life of his clergy. Once he arrived in Persia, he was killed by a Kurdish military chief, Agha Simko, on March 16, 1918, near the city of Salmas, on the Iran-Turkey border, just after the Russian troops had left the provinces under their control in Persia.[55]

The Assyrians after *Sayfo* and the First World War

Following the events of the First World War, a large number of Assyro-Chaldeans moved from their ancestral lands to Syria and Lebanon, while others moved to the United States, Canada and northern European countries.[56] The war signalled a turning point for the development of the identity of these Christian communities, changed their lives and destroyed their society; social and religious hierarchies were disintegrated as well. According to Baumer, at the end of 1918, between 90,000 and 100,000 Assyrians had died and the Assyrian Church of the East had lost some 60-65% of his population.[57]

The massacres took place on a large area and under conditions and purposes similar to ones of the Armenians, that is, a Turkification of the country and an attempt to 'eradicate' non-Turkish ethnic groups and non-Muslim religious group.[58] Moreover, it was especially the Assyrian Church of the East, among all Middle Eastern Churches, that became *the* Church of the Diaspora: indeed, at the end of the war, the vast majority of the Assyrians who survived the war found refuge abroad. The United States hosted one of largest Assyrian community, above all in the city of Chicago.

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[53] Baumer, *The Church of the East,* 263.
[54] David Wilmshurst*, The martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East & West Publishing Limited, 2011).
[55] Hannibal Travis (ed.), *The Assyrian Genocide, Cultural and Political Legacies* (London: Routledge, 2018).
[56] Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens*, 149.
[57] Baumer, *The Church of the East.,* 264.
[58] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 18-19.

At the end of the First World War, the US President, Woodrow Wilson, was particularly interested in defending Christian minorities living in then new Turkish Republic, promising to push the Turkish Government to grant them rights as citizens and to protect them. The 12th point among his famous Fourteen Points statement stated:

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.[59]

Assyrian delegations were invited to attend the 1919 Paris Conference but Assyrian leaders failed to get the political support needed to create an Assyrian state.[60] Thus, when in August 1920 the Treaty of Sèvres was signed, Article 62 declared that:

The Scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made in the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.[61]

Consequently, with the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Assyro-Chaldean faithful already living within the borders of the new country were accepted as nationals. Those living outside, mostly in Iraq and Syria, then under the mandatory powers (UK and France), were not accepted. Thus, at the end of First World War, they found themselves living in refugee camps.[62] In addition, the new Turkish political leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, strongly opposed the Treaty of Sèvres.

The status of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey was internationally certified by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Articles 37-44 of the Treaty were specifically

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[59]Michael Beschloss, *Our Documents: 100 Milestone Documents from the National Archives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 149-151.

[60] Mirella Galletti, La politica italiana verso assiri e curdi (1920-1943), *Oriente Moderno*. *Nuova serie*, 20, no. 81 (2001): 149-82.

[61] For the full text of the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920), see: https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Peace_Treaty_of_S%C3%A8vres.

[62] Ozdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War,* 94.

dedicated to "the protection of non-Muslim minorities". Turkey had however become a unitary state where 'Turkish citizenship' was a legal concept encompassing all citizens, granting them equal rights and obligations, regardless of religion. Thus, theoretically, constitutional citizenship was a basic principle upon which the Turkish Republic had been founded.

It was since then that Syriac Assyrian political groups started being formed in various countries. The most famous between them: the Assyrian Democratic Organization (Syria, 1957) opposed Arab nationalism and aimed at being an independent Assyrian state; the Assyrian Universal Alliance (France, 1968) aimed at uniting all Assyrians; the Bet-Nahreyn Democratic Party (Iraq, 1974) aimed to found a state for all Assyrians in Iraq.[63]

The Never-Ending Issues of Numbers and Definitions

The Turkish scholar Ozdemir gives potential numbers of the Assyrian communities dwelling before 1914 in the Ottoman Empire: Ancient Church of the East, 150,000-200,000; Assyrian Church of the East, over 100,000; Chaldeans, 70,000-80,000; Syrian Christians - Catholic Syrian Christians, 40,000-50,000. In his theoretical frame aimed at contesting the number of casualties of the massacres perpetrated by the Ottomans against the Christian communities, the Assyrian communities' population would thus range between 500,000 and 250,000, plus small numbers of Protestant convert.[64] Concurrently, Travis affirms that, before the genocide, the Assyrians of the Ottoman Empire and Persia were about 600,000, and they were reduced by 275,000.[65] While in a memorandum produced on December 4, 1922, the Assyro-Chaldean National Council stated that the total death toll was unknown but about 275,000 'Assyro-Chaldeans' were estimated as having died between 1914 and 1918.[66]

In 1999, Sanders numbered some 170,000 followers of the Church of the East (including 1,000 in Malabar, India) and 170,000 followers of the Chaldean Church (not including however a larger number in Malabar).[67] In 2006, Baumer argued that only 1,000 Assyrians were still living in the Hakkari region and noted that *persecutions* were still going on against all Christian sects, and against the Assyrians in particular. He mentioned the murder of the Christian

[63] Ibid., 126-127.
[64] Ibid., 42-43.
[65] Travis, "Native Christians Massacred", 237-277.
[66] Joseph Yacoub, La *question assyro-chaldéenne, les puissances puissances européennes et la SDN* (*1908-1938*), PhD thesis, University of Lyon, 1985, 156.
[67] Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians*, 26.

mayor of the ancient Syriac village of Dayro Daslibo; the mayor was allegedly killed after his refusal to officially give to a Muslim family a lot of land belonging to a Christian woman who refused to convert into Islam.[68] Baumer put their number to about 400,000, half of them living in Western countries; meanwhile in Turkey they were 400-500 in the city of Mardin and 5,000 in the Tur Abdin area, where there were 25 Assyrian villages.[69] The population swelled up to 10,000 in the summer due to families arriving for vacation. Some recent figures put their number in Turkey between 25,000 (with approximately 18,000 in Istanbul)[70] and 28,000.[71]

A main role in the debate about numbers was surely played by their historical fragile relationship with the World Powers. The World Powers' interest towards the Assyrians has fluctuated between complete oblivion and short-term coming backs. At the end of the Second World War, the Assyrian community were, once again, forgotten, despite a number of United Nations (UN) calls.[72]

Indeed, from then, a wall of silence enveloped the Assyrian community, marked by massive migration to Western countries.[73] Suffice to mention here the case of the *pushee-makers* (Syrian Christian weavers of traditional silk cloth) which have almost disappeared from Diyarbakır some 35 years ago, following Syrian and Armenian migratory trajectories. Customers were used to buy *pushee* just made by Christians for a widespread belief that just Christians could make 'proper' *pushee*, while Muslims simply could not. The end of the production did not cause just an internal economic loss but also a cultural transformation that followed the itineraries dictated by the (new) world market.[74]

This change intersected the debate over the multiculturalist state discourse in Turkey. This experienced a transformation in the first decade of the new century, eventually leading to the official recognition of ethno-religious

[68] Baumer, *The Church of the East,* 277.
[69] Ibid., 277.
[70]https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2019/01/10/assyrian-community-thrives-again-in-southeastern-turkey.
[71]https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/10464/TU.
[72]See on this a letter sent by Patriarch Shimun in 1946 to the UN General Secretary, available at https://www.atour.com/Assyrian_Nation.shtml.
[73] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 34-35.
[74] Ahmet Taşğin and Marcello Mollica, "Disappearing Old Christian Professions in the Middle East: The Case of Diyarbakır Pushee-Makers", *Middle Eastern Studies,* 51 no.6 (2015), 922-931.

diversity. In 2001, the Turkish government invited Assyrians (here meaning all people belonging to both Assyrian Churches - Chaldean Catholic and Assyrian Church of the East - and Syriac Churches - Orthodox and Catholic) to return to Turkey. However, this mood did not last long and changed again after October 2004, when Turkey and the European Union (EU) started negotiations over the Turkish European membership. Endogenous and exogenous factors caused tensions between pro- and anti-EU groups, combining nationalism, militarism and Euroscepticism over the Assyrian issue: among the endogenous factors, there was the political fight between the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and other political parties during the 2007 presidential election, when the AKP won a landslide victory. Indeed, shortly after that election in October 2008 the government issued decree forbidding those who do not have Turkish citizenship to buy, sell or hold real property in Mardin and Hatay. The Assyrians were particularly affected by this decree because the majority of Assyrians, born in diaspora or even sons of Assyrians already born outside Turkey after the First World War do not hold Turkish citizenship. As a consequence, tens of thousands of Assyrians cannot claim their ancestral lands and homes. Among the exogenous factors that impacted the 'Assyrian question' we should also mention the so-called 'Mardin Raporu', a report commissioned in 2003 by the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission, led by an AKP MP, Mehmet Elkatmis, to investigate "the right of the Assyrians to education in their monasteries". The Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac Association focused its attention on this report and opened a debate at the Swedish Parliament over the Turkish future EU membership and its will to really implement Christian minorities' rights. The report stated that Assyrians were trying to return to their homes and to buy lands, thus endangering Turkish society. This controversy exemplified the extent to which the identity question of today's Syriac-speaking Christians has become politicised – mostly outside Turkey – often based on a one-sided interpretation of events.[75] Such issue played a relevant role into the pro-EU and anti-EU internal Turkish discourse, as among the criteria non-EU countries must respect in order to have their request to enter the EU there is the protection of minorities' rights. Those criteria, known as the 'Copenhagen criteria' were established in 1993 and enlisted a series of economic and political reforms any country have to implement to become an EU member.[76] EU concerns over

[75] Ozdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War,* 50.
[76]On the Copenhagen criteria, see https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en.

Turkish candidature focused primarily on the respect of minorities' rights.[77] However, the following 2011 general elections that consolidated the power of the AKP, the trend seems to be going on as proved by the last general elections in 2018 when the AKP got 52.59% of the total votes.

But besides the wider political picture, throughout contemporary Turkish history, Assyrians were also caught up in the conflict (above all in the fierce fights which went on from 1984 to 1999, but even after, e.g., in 2016-17 in the Nusaybin area in liaison with northern-Syrian clashes) between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The reason was that many Assyrian villages were also inhabited by Kurdish communities while the PKK considered the area part of the Kurdish territory. Assyrians suffered forced evictions, mass displacement and the burning of their homes and villages at least until 1999. In June 1994, the Assyrian Democratic Organization and the Human Rights Without Frontiers had even issued a joint audience at the Belgian Parliament listening some 200 Assyrian villages which were destroyed in eastern Turkey in the previous 30 years, plus 24 Assyrians who were assassinated in the country in the previous 4 years.[78]

Discussion

How does the ethno-cultural communities of the (mostly Eastern) Anatolian based Assyrian Church of the East live today in terms of constitutional law and public policies? Which role does it play in their contemporary lives their dramatic past? How do they live with the ethno-religious different neighbour communities?

Relations between Syriac-speaking Christian communities and Kurdish tribes have historically been marked by tension. However, for the Turkish scholar Ozdemir frictions were mostly caused by ethnic and economic reasons since the Patriarch or prominent Kurdish religious leaders often acted as mediators and the two communities engaged in inter- communal affairs.[79] For Baumer, the almost 'feudal' hierarchical structure of their Church contributed to an attitude of closure; such a closure was reinforced by the memory of several persecutions that had dramatically reduced Assyrian community's consistency.[80] Under the authority of the bishops, the clergy was composed of married men,

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[77] Mari Ailo, "*The effects of Turkish EU Membership on Assyrians and Other Minorities*" (BA Thesis, University of Twente, 2006), 34-42.
[78]See on this: https://minorityrights.org/minorities/assyrians/.
[79] Ozdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War,* 24-27.
[80] Baumer, *The Church of the East.*

who sometimes transmitted their offices to their sons or sons-in-law. Afterall, the Church admitted the possibility for widowed priests to contract marriage again for the marriage was not considered to be sacramental in nature, therefore divorce was always admitted.[81] This amplified the need for priests to exercise other work activities to maintain *their own* families and thus reduced the possibility of deepening theological studies.

Hermam Teule, argues that most Christians from Western Anatolia lived as *rayas* [class inferior in the Ottoman Empire society] under the protection of a Kurdish *agha* [lord]. The *aghas* demanded cattle, part of the harvest or money, and even forced Christian peasants to marry Muslims. With the modernization of Turkey, abuses did not cease, being indeed one of the variables used to explain early Christian mass exodus from Eastern Turkey.[82] Later, a major demand by minorities in Turkey was precisely to ensure that rights were granted on the basis of citizenship, not on ethnicity which would (*par default*) favour Sunni-Turkish.[83]

In the last decades, also thanks to the visibility of the diaspora in the West, there is a 'revitalization' of the community. Such a 'revitalization' begun in the 1980s, and according to Joseph Yacoub it concentrated more particularly on the 'genocide issue.'[84] Some projects of reconstruction of villages by the diaspora were implemented as well as return migration attempts.[85] It is here worth mentioning the case of Hassana (a village in the district of Silopi, Şirnak city-region), where Chaldean families originally migrated to Mechelen (Belgium), masters of a traditional hand-made textile (*şal şapic*), attempted in early 2008, through their trans-national networks and the support of their religious authorities to return to their original village.[86] Indeed, in 2013, the Turkish Government issued a temporary law that made possible for owners to buy back the farmland that has fallen into state ownership. However, despite in 2004 the Turkish Parliament adopting the 'Law on Compensation of Losses Resulting from Terrorist Acts', the law was far from being implemented. Meanwhile, the

[81] Najim, "Le chiese gemelle d'Oriente", 49.
[82] Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens,*150.
[83] Ayhan Kaya, "Multiculturalism and Minorities in Turkey", in *Challenging Multiculturalism. European Models of Diversity*, ed. Raymond Taras (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 311-313.
[84] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 245-246.
[85] Ibid., 259.
[86] Marcello Mollica, "The Trans-National Journey of a Textile Art, from Hassana to Mechelen and Its Return", *International Şırnak and Its Vicinity Symposium*, ed. Nesim Doru (Ankara: Şırnak University Press, 2010), 279-293.

area containing the Assyrian villages is still highly polluted with landmines, this being a serious concern regarding the inhabitants' security, let alone their return.

It was however on August 2, 2014, that the Orthodox Syriac Church of Antioch and all the East Patriarch, Mor Ignace Ephrem II Karim, announced his decision to commemorate the centenary of the *sayfo* in 2015, all over the world. This followed a resolution adopted by the Syriac synod held in Damascus on May 30, 2014: the motto was: *Do not forget*.[87] In recent years, the word *sayfo* has been used by Assyrians living abroad to characterize the events occurred in the Tur Abdin area in 1915. The term encapsulates the claim that during the Armenian deportation of 1915, a massacre was also perpetuated against the Syrian-Assyrian communities by Ottoman forces and Kurdish tribal paramilitary units.

This narrative fits with an old tradition that goes back to the fall of Nineveh, Babylon and the Aramaic kingdoms, 2,500 years ago. Since, the Assyro-Chaldeans have never been safe from persecution, which took a dramatic turn since Sassanid Empire. The massacres of 1915 had however much more recent Ottoman antecedents: in 1894-1896 under Sultan Abdul Hamid II; in 1909, in Adana, under the Young Turks.[88] In such an historically driven context, the massacres are never represented as isolated events.[89] Indeed, it seems that this historical reproduction had a major role in modern Assyrian historiography; any new attacks against the communities are immediately reconnected. Joseph Yacoub argues that scholars who wrote about the 1915 massacres made almost systematic parallels with previous sufferings endured by Assyrian communities.[90] These include: *The Death of a Nation: The Ever-Persecuted Assyrians or Nestorian Christians* written by the Assyrian Professor Abraham Yohannan published in 1916; *Shall this Nation die?*, written by the Abbey Joseph Naayem from Urfa in 1921; *The Flickering Light of Asia*: *Or the Assyrian Nation or Church* written by Reverend Joel Warda and published in 1924.

The dramatic history they refer to had a trans-national dimension. At the end of the British mandate on Iraq (l933), new massacres against the Assyrians were unleashed when they were accused, by the new Iraqi government, of collaborating with the former power. Assyrians were forced to flee: most of them left the Middle East to America, others took refuge in Syria. Some 3,000

[87] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 38.
[88] Ibid., 18-19.
[89] Ibid., 22.
[90] Ibid., 15.

people who were fleeing into Syrian territory were killed by the Iraqi government during the exodus.[91] Assyro-Chaldeans were thus deprived of places of memory and culture; hundreds of churches and convents were destroyed.[92] Persecutions continued not just outside Anatolia but well beyond 1915[93] and Islamization, and forced conversions to Islam were used as a means to eradicate fundamental traits of their identity.[94]

Writing in 2013, Kaya argues that the management of ethnocultural diversity in Turkey had undergone enormous changes in the last twenty years. He distinguishes between 'diversity as a phenomenon' and 'diversity as a discourse' and submits that the state and the Turkish ethnic groups have employed a 'discursive diversity.'[95] This comes after the prevailing discourse upon 'unity in diversity' within the European context which followed the EU Helsinki Summit of 10 and 11 December 1999. However, this has to be contrasted with rising Euroscepticism and parochialism by reference to the recognition of ethno-cultural and political claims of minority groups, such as Kurds, Alevis and Christians of various denominations. In such a frame, the situation with the Assyro-Chaldeans was complicated by the fact that they were implanted there from their origin and still dwelled not just in Eastern Turkey, but also in Iraq and Iran.[96] They had also tried to take advantage of the labour-market opportunities offered by European countries and thus settled in France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. The migration waves followed also the intensity and locations of the conflicts between the PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces in Eastern Turkey and, starting from the 1980s, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iraq pushed those who migrated to apply for political asylum. However, the Assyrian-Christians legal status and living conditions are different from one country to another.[97] Nevertheless, above all in the diaspora, they often claim a common ethnic belonging. As already mentioned, this is not a univocal position, however the issue had political resonance and attracted the attention of Turkish scholars.

Ozdemir, for instance, submits that up to the beginning of the XX century, members of the Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldean and Syrian Christian

[91] Janin, *Les églises orientales,* 410.
[92] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 24.
[93] Ibid., 27-28.
[94] Ibid., 191-192.
[95] Kaya, "Multiculturalism and Minorities in Turkey", 297.
[96] Teule, *Les Assyro-Chaldéens,* 149.
[97] Ibid., 149.

communities living within the Ottoman Empire were not concerned with their ethnic identity.[98] The variable affecting their approach to the identity issue was precisely the development of a Syrian-speaking diaspora; this is still very strong even if in recent years Syriac-speaking clerics have moved towards an accommodation with ethnic and cultural definitions. However, as a matter of fact, the Assyro-Chaldean-Syriac massacres or 'genocide', does lack visibility when compared to the Armenian genocide, product of structural inequalities. Once asked on the reason why they lack visibility, Joseph Yacoub gave a number of reasons: unlike the Armenians, the Assyro-Chaldeans lacked recognition as an independent community; they were separated from each other, distant from the decision centres; their population was predominantly rural; they lacked a proper territorial power, while the Armenians had an independent state (1918-1921) before being included in the former Soviet Union.[99] The Syrian communities' attempts to bring to the forth the debate about the massacres they went through has recently been met with strong opposition by the Turkish authorities. Abuna Yusuf, Syrian Orthodox parish priest of Diyarbakir received many threats. He was not just accused by Islamic fundamentalists of being like an American when the Americans were in Iraq, but was even arrested and charged under Article 312 of the Turkish Criminal Code for incitement of religious hatred (the charge was later dropped) when in an interview for a local newspaper, he said that the massacres happened to the Armenians in 1915 happened also to the Syrians.[100]

Another controversy arose in October 2011 when the Turkish National Education Ministry authorised the publication of a history schoolbook presenting Assyrians as traitors who rebelled against Turkey at the beginning of the First World War. Fourteen Assyrian organizations in Turkey replied to the Turkish Education Ministry portraying this kind of initiative as an example of how "distorted historical information regarding Assyrians" is aimed to plant hatred into the young generation's mindset and create enmity between the various ethnic groups in Turkey."[101]

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[98] Ozdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War*.
[99] Yacoub, *Qui s'en souviendra?*, 27-28.
[100]Marcello Mollica, "Understanding Determinants: Syrian Orthodox Christians and Security Related Issues in Diyarbakır", *Urban Anthropology*, 40, no. 1-2 (2011), 129-130.
[101] Soner Onder, "Minority Rights in Turkey: Quo Vadis, Assyrians?," *The Slow Disappearance of the Syriacs from Turkey: And of the Grounds of the Mor Gabriel Monastery,* ed. Pieter Omtzigt, Markus Tozman, and Andrea Tyndall (Munster: LIT Verlag, 2012), 104.

In another public appeal, fourteen Assyrian civil and religious organizations in Turkey, belonging to both the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syriac-Orthodox Church, such as the Monastery of Mor Gabriel and the Monastery of Hah, deny the claims, saying that Assyrians have been "always loyal and honest to the country."[102]

Nevertheless, for many the election of Erol Dora, the first 'Assyrian' MP at the 2011 Turkish political election was a political milestone. The election summarized the issue related to the cultural and religious meaning of the world 'Assyrian' as the MP portrayed himself as a 'Aramean' Turk~~ish~~, whose mother language was Aramaic and whose religious affiliation was Syriac-Orthodox.[103] He won his seat again in 2015 political election.

But are events like the election of an 'Assyrian' MP in the Turkish Parliament enough to contribute to help the Turkish public opinion with an opportunity to come to terms with a dramatic past?

Conclusion

The dominant official rhetoric within and without Turkey is still imbued with an implicit aggressive narrative against minorities which are *sic et simpliciter* conceptualized as capable of potentially weakening Turkish unity. Clearly, a major role is here still played by a strong anti-European discourse, which the recent war in Syria has contributed. As the fluid diplomatic alliances can easily manifest, Turkish incursions in Syrian territories, involving not just Kurdish lands but also historical Christian lands (Armenians, Syrian Orthodox, Chaldeans, etc.) have deepened the gap with Western powers. By extension, Assyrian and other Christian groups presently dwelling in Eastern Turkey have become part and parcel of a war fought, on the other side of the border, on ethno-religious lines. This adds to the frictions already caused by the increasingly widening political divide at the top of the Turkish state between partisans of a secular and emerging (moderate and less moderate) political-religious groups. This amplifies, while also intersects, a sort of new social divide between moderate Islamists and secular fundamentalists, which is cutting across ethno-religious lines and social *strata*. Such a divide is now entering

[102] Samuel Aktaş, "Report on the Imminent Problems Facing the Syriac Monastery of St. Gabriel, in Midyat Turkey", *AINA*, November, 2008, http://www.aina.org/reports/rotipftsmomg.pdf.

[103]Thomas Seibert, "Source of Hope for the Christian Minority", *Qantara*, June 15, 2011, https://en.qantara.de/content/the-syrian-orthodox-lawyer-erol-dora-source-of-hope-for-the-christian-minority.

villages, cities and cultural and sport centres, including university campuses, with their injunctions on code and dress behaviour. This is finally creating new frontiers within the same country, as the last local election of 2019 proved, not just between a more secularised West towards a more religiously oriented East, but also between urban and rural areas. It is in this multi-layered increasing friction, despite their being today almost insignificant in demographic terms in a country of more than 83 million people, that the Assyrian communities still see the reproduction of long-lasting dynamics of which they have been victims, while the victimizer has simply changed the name.

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CHAPTER 10

THE FORGOTTEN ARMENIANS: THE ARMENIANS IN TURKEY

Philip O. Hopkins

Introduction

Over 100 years later, the 1915 Armenian Genocide[1] continues to be a main contention point between Turkey and Armenia. Turkey denies it. Armenia swears by it. The 1915 Genocide plays an important role in the psyche of Armenians today. However, there is more to the Armenians in Turkey than the 1915 Genocide, and to concentrate solely on the 1915 Genocide when addressing the Armenians in Turkey is not only a disservice to Armenians, but also to Turks and to the history of Armenian/Turkish relations.

Armenia's boundaries have varied across the centuries with it being much larger than its current borders, including, at one time, incorporating parts of Turkey, Iran, and other countries. Within a multicultural environment, Armenian Christianity arose, a Christianity that allowed Armenia to gain a unique identity. Armenians believe their Christianity descended directly from the Apostles' teachings. Arriving possibly through Edessa in eastern Turkey,[2] the community where Assyrian Christianity thrived, and/or through Cappadocia in Turkey, where a Greco-Roman form of the faith was dominant,[3] Armenians adopted Christianity in 301 AD, the first nation to make Christianity a state religion. Armenians impacted Christian centers such as Edessa, translated

[1] There is a difference between 'Genocide' and 'genocide.' Genocide with an uppercase 'G' is the systematic and intentional destruction of a race or people group. Genocide with a lowercase 'g' is unintentional deaths/killings of a race or people as in actions resulting in war. In the case of the Armenians of Turkey, there is nothing unintentional about the killings and therefore the letter 'G' in term genocide with reference to what occurred to the Armenians in 1915 is always written in uppercase unless otherwise quoted.

[2] Cyril Toumanoff, "Christian Caucasia between Byzantium and Iran: New Light from Old Sources," *Traditio* 10 (1954), 126.

[3] Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia: From the Origins to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 35.

scientific and philosophical works,[4] and were advisors in the courts of rulers. By the High Middle Ages, Armenians had migrated to Cilicia in southwest Turkey.[5]

Beginning in 1530, the Safavids of Iran transported Armenians in Armenia proper and Nakhchevan to Iran, a period of transferences, often deadly, that lasted about 100 years.[6] As Iran overtook China as Europe's silk provider, Shah Abbas the Great needed trusted, competent partners. The Shah considered Muslim Iranians from the Turkmen aristocracy (the ones that had the majority of the silk trade) a threat to his rule and incompetent traders, Europeans preferred to trade with Christians, and Ottomans refused to trade with Muslim Iranians, so Armenians, known for their skilled artisanship, negotiating skills, and (ironically) dislike for Ottomans became this community. Armenians were exceptional businesspeople and already had these connections. The Shah gave the Armenians a monopoly on silk, which provided a land bridge from Iran to Europe, rendering maritime routes controlled by competing European nations superfluous.[7]

The connection between Armenia, Iran, and Turkey continues today, with significant influence also from Russia. This chapter will show that while there has been a complicated history with the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and with the Armenians in Turkey with constant, albeit varying, harassment since the 1800s, the Armenians have thrived even under the most difficult of circumstances. This paper is divided into three main sections: 1) the Armenian Genocide (Hamidian Massacres) before the 1915 Armenian Genocide; 2) Ottoman Armenians in and around the time of the 1915 Genocide; and 3) Armenians in Turkey after the 1915 Genocide.

The Armenian Genocide (Hamidian Massacres) Before the 1915 Armenian Genocide

The 1915 Armenian Genocide has been the starting and ending point of many conversations about the Ottoman Armenians. However, the Armenians before the 1915 Armenian Genocide played an important role in Ottoman state and

[4] Nigel Allan, "Christian Mesopotamia and Greek Medicine," *Herm* 145 (1988), 52.
[5] Robert Lee Wolff and Harry W. Hazard, eds., *A History of the Crusades*, *vol. 2: The Later Crusades, 1189–1311* (2nd ed.; Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 630–59.
[6] Vartan Gregorian, "Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan 1587–1722," *Iranian Studies* vol. 7, nos. 3/4 (1974), 664.
[7] Ibid., 669-70.

society. By around the 1400s, Armenia became part of the Ottoman Empire, a multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic empire. Muslim Ottomans permitted some minority religions to exist, like Armenian Christianity, under certain guidelines that included increased taxation, decreased political capability, and restrictions on their faith. These policies in effect made the Ottoman Armenians second class citizens with a clear differentiation between believer and non-believer, similar to the actions of Muslim rulers from earlier periods towards non-Muslim peoples.[8]

Nonetheless, the Ottoman Armenians flourished. The Ottoman Armenians often were well educated and wealthier than their Ottoman counterparts.[9] The Ottoman Armenians continued being trade partners with the Europeans as the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire were dissuaded from these types of occupations.[10] Often the Ottoman Armenians held governmental positions. By the time of the *Tanzimat*,[11] a period of reforms under the Ottoman Empire that began in the early to mid 1800s, an Armenian was head of the imperial mint.[12] Vahakn N Dadrian, in his 2002 paper, states that the Ottoman Armenians by this time already had a 'symbiotic relationship with Ottoman Muslims,' calling the Ottoman Armenians 'the loyal nation' of the Ottoman Empire; an indication that Ottoman Armenians, although subjugated, lived at least somewhat peacefully with the Turks and other population segments in Ottoman society.[13]

The *Tanzimat* introduced a period of liberal and secular amendments to traditional and Islamic laws that reformers in the Ottoman Empire thought would provide impartiality for disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups, especially Christian sects who had to pay additional taxes for not being Muslim. These changes were based on a type of modernization similar to that seen in

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[8] See: Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[9] "Armenian Genocide," 31 Oct 2019, https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/armenian-genocide, site editor, The History Channel: A&E Television, accessed on 24 March 2021.

[10] Ahsan I Butt, "The Ottoman Empire's Escalation from Reforms to the Armenian Genocide, 1908-1915," in *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy Against Separatists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 131.

[11] *Tanzimat* in Turkish means 'reorganization.'

[12] Roderic H Davidson, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 93.

[13] Vahakn N Dadrian, "The Armenian Question and the Wartime Fate of the Armenians As Documented By the Officials of the Ottoman Empire's World War I Allies: Germany and Austria-Hungary," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 35, no.1 (Feb 2002), 61.

Europe as the Ottoman Empire, including the military, lagged behind its European colleagues in strength and effectiveness.[14] Tax reform and non-Muslim local representation were key ideas to the *Tanzimat*.[15] Europeans were encouraged by what they saw in the Ottoman Empire and believed economic ties could be strengthened. The Ottomans that advanced the *Tanzimat* saw it as a way to counteract more drastic governmental changes that some factions desired. Non-Muslims believed the *Tanzimat* gave them greater parity with the majority population.[16]

While many of the Ottoman Armenians embraced the *Tanzimat* edicts, the *Tanzimat* laws did not accomplish their goals for the minority peoples in the Ottoman Empire as many of the decrees were either not enacted or carried out. For the Ottoman Armenians, there were still religious restrictions, including the prohibition to ring church bells during services. At times there were Ottoman-accepted forced conversions to Islam and sodomization of Armenian girls.[17] Tax reform did not hold, nor did local representation.[18] By 1870, the *Tanzimat* amendments had petered out. Mark L Movesian, Frederick A Whitney Professor of Contract Law at St John's University School of Law (NY), suggests the reason why the *Tanzimat* acts failed was because the idea of equality of non-Muslims with Muslims within a Muslim state was antithetical to traditional Muslim society and Islamic law.[19] Essentially, the *Tanzimat* directives had the opposite effect of their intended outcome: they led to a resurgence or promotion of long-established Muslim values in the Ottoman Empire.

By the mid 1870s there was a new Ottoman leader, Abdul Hamid II, who supported time-honored Islamic values. He was the sultan as well as the caliphate of all Sunnis in the Muslim world. Around the same time, Armenian nationalist movements arose that urged more freedoms for Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. While not widespread, they were gaining in popularity. The military losses against Christian Russia, the desire by some Armenians that Russia would be the sovereign for all of Armenia's land, and the Congress and

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[14] Wajig Kawtharani, "The Ottoman Tanzimat and the Constitution," *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies* (2013), 1

[15] Masayuki Ueno, "For the Fatherland and the State: Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat*," International Journal of the Middle East* vol. 45, no. 1 (Feb 2013), 96.

[16] Ibid., 2

[17] Davidson, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 115-16.

[18] Ueno, "For the Fatherland and the State: Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat," 100.

[19] Mark L Movesian, "Elusive Equality: The Armenian Genocide and the Failure of Ottoman Reform," *St John's Legal Studies Research Paper No. 1600745* (5 May 2010), 11-12.

Treaty of Berlin in 1878 where there was debate on how Armenians should be treated in the Ottoman Empire (with Ottoman Armenians sending their own representative), led Abdul Hamid to have apprehensions.

These concerns and Abdul Hamid's desire for a more Islamic state, led to a Genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Often called the Hamidian Massacres, this Genocide occurred in the mid 1890s (1894-96) during Abdul Hamid's reign. While scholars do not discuss this Genocide nearly as much as the 1915 Genocide, the Hamidian Massacres resulted in the deaths of thousands of Ottoman Armenians as well as Kurdish Alevis, Yezidis, Assyrians and other ethno-religious Others. The aim was to depopulate all non-Muslim peoples. Armenians in Sasun, Urfa, Diyarbakir, Istanbul, and other places in the Ottoman Empire were forced to convert to Islam or be killed – some burned alive – with villages being scorched by Ottoman authorities. A point to note, these killings and pillaging were not necessarily supported by the Ottoman Muslim on the street. Selim Deringil notes that certain Armenian areas escaped this persecution. There is also no documented evidence that Abdul Hamid himself ordered these exterminations.[20] Nonetheless, the Hamidian Massacres served as a 'dress rehearsal' for the 1915 Armenian Genocide,[21] a precursor of events that happened 20 years later.

Ottoman Armenians in and around the Time of the 1915 Armenian Genocide

The idea of an 'independent Armenia'[22] in the Ottoman Empire was not to be, and after the Hamidian Massacres, Movesian states, since the *Tanzimat* reforms (obviously) did not keep, many Armenians 'accept[ed] their lot.' However, there was a very small faction of Ottoman Armenians that grew resistant to Ottoman authorities and formed 'revolutionary cells' that wanted a self-governing Armenia.[23] Around this time, in 1908, a group called the Young Turks overthrew Abdul Hamid and came to power. Armenians, including the

[20] Selim Deringil, "The Armenian Question is Finally Closed: Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatolia During the Hamidian Massacres of 1895-1897," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 51, no. 2 (April 2009), 367-68.

[21] "Armenia", https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/armenia, site editor, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota, accessed 6 April 2021.

[22] Deringil, "The Armenian Question is Finally Closed," 367.

[23] Movesian, "Elusive Equality: The Armenian Genocide and the Failure of Ottoman Reform," 14

Armenian revolutionaries,[24] were initially welcoming to the Young Turks as a more constitutional government was formed, and the Young Turks were initially welcoming to the Ottoman Armenians.

However, the Young Turks became intensely nationalistic. They wanted to 'Ottomanize' the whole country by empowering the Ottoman state and by consolidating the Muslim population. Non-Muslim peoples in the Ottoman Empire were considered a menace.[25] The Young Turks' attitude changed toward the Ottoman Armenians beginning in 1912 with the loss of the Balkan Wars. By the end of the Balkan Wars, the Young Turks lost almost one half of the Ottoman Empire's land and one quarter of its population, including Bulgaria, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which decreased the Christian population significantly within the Ottoman Empire's borders.[26] There was fear among the Young Turks, especially with the Ottoman Armenians wanting their own country, that more land could be lost. Loyalty to the state and xenophobia became increasingly vital attributes.

Soon after the Balkan Wars, World War I occurred. The Ottoman Empire sided with the Axis and declared war against all Christian peoples who were not their supporters,[27] while the Armenians backed the Russians who aligned with the Allies. Armenians aided the Russian military in the Caucasus which only increased the Young Turks' suspicions. The Ottoman armed forces saw the Armenians as a danger, believing them to be collaborators against the Ottoman cause. The Armenians' desire to form a sovereign state, the resistance from Armenian revolutionaries, Europe's desire to aid Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire, and Armenia's historic lands encompassing parts of the Ottoman and Persian Empires[28] provided the Ottoman government reasons ultimately to target Armenians in all parts of the Ottoman Empire – even though the Ottoman Armenians were not a homogenous people group – through a massive plan to murder and extradite them, though the Armenians in Istanbul after the initial outbreak seemed to fare better than the rest of the Ottoman

[24] Ahsan I Butt, "The Ottoman Empire's Escalation from Reforms to the Armenian Genocide, 1908-1915," in *Secession and Security: Explaining States Strategy Against Separatists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 133.
[25] "Armenian Genocide."
[26] Butt, "The Ottoman Empire's Escalation from Reforms to the Armenian Genocide," 137.
[27] "Armenian Genocide."
[28] Ayla Gol, "Imagining the Turkish Nation Through 'Othering' Armenians," *Nations and Nationalism* vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), 131.

Armenians. Historian Bernard Lewis explains the Turkish thought behind the Genocide:

For the Turks, the Armenian movement was the deadliest of all threats. From the conquered lands of the Serbs, Bulgars, Albanians, and Greeks, they could, however reluctantly, withdraw, abandoning distant provinces and bringing the Imperial frontier nearer home. But the Armenians, stretching across Turkey-in-Asia from the Caucasian frontier to the Mediterranean coast, lay in the very heart of the Turkish homeland—and to renounce these lands would have meant not the truncation, but the dissolution of the Turkish state. Turkish and Armenian villages, inextricably mixed, had for centuries lived in neighborly association. Now a desperate struggle between them began—a struggle between two nations for the possession of a single homeland, that ended with the terrible holocaust of 1915, when a million and a half Armenians perished.[29]

The Ottoman Armenians, as Ayla Gol writes became, 'the first "others."'[30] Historian Ronald Suny states what happened a bit more bluntly to the Ottoman Armenians: 'During World War I, faced with the Russian Army, the Young Turks decided to disarm, uproot, transport, and eliminate the Armenians in eastern Anatolia. This policy was equivalent to the murder of a people, to [a] genocide.'[31] Indeed, this was a key overarching geopolitical catalyst to the 1915 Armenian Genocide, how the increasingly nationalist, and dying, Ottoman Empire viewed the Russian Empire – also decaying and dying – regarding its intentions for the Christian peoples of the region, most notably the Armenians.

The 1915 Armenian Genocide is credited to have begun on 24 April 1915 when the Ottoman authorities murdered hundreds of the Armenia intelligentsia in Istanbul.[32] The History Channel explains the 1915 Armenian Genocide graphically and succinctly:

After that, ordinary Armenians were turned out of their homes and sent on death marches through the Mesopotamian desert without food or water.

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[29] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 356.
[30] Ayla Gol, "Imagining the Turkish Nation Through 'Othering' Armenians," 121.
[31] Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 105.
[32] Butt, "The Ottoman Empire's Escalation from Reforms to the Armenian Genocide," 127.

Frequently, the marchers were stripped naked and forced to walk under the scorching sun until they dropped dead. People who stopped to rest were shot. At the same time, the Young Turks created a "Special Organization," which in turn organized "killing squads" or "butcher battalions" to carry out, as one officer put it, "the liquidation of the Christian elements." These killing squads were often made up of murderers and other ex-convicts. They drowned people in rivers, threw them off cliffs, crucified them and burned them alive. In short order, the Turkish countryside was littered with Armenian corpses.

Records show that during this "Turkification" campaign, government squads also kidnapped children, converted them to Islam and gave them to Turkish families. In some places, they raped women and forced them to join Turkish "harems" or serve as slaves. Muslim families moved into the homes of deported Armenians and seized their property.

Though reports vary, most sources agree that there were about 2 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the massacre. In 1922, when the genocide was over, there were just 388,000 Armenians remaining in the Ottoman Empire.[33]

Parallels can be made to what happened with the Armenians who were deported to Iran during the time of Shah Abbas the Great as many Armenians in both cases died because of the travel in the harsh climate, but there seems to be a bit of a distinction, at least in motive as Shah Abbas the Great brought Armenians into Iran (instead of ejecting them) and incorporated Armenians into Iranian society instead of intentionally murdering them. The methods the Ottomans used in the 1915 Armenian Genocide were copied by the Nazis in World War II.[34] Adolf Hitler reportedly stated, 'Who today remembers the Armenian extermination,'[35] using the slogan as means of motivation for the Jewish Holocaust.

[33] "Armenian Genocide."
[34] "Armenia."
[35] Kevork B Bardakjian, "Hitler's 'Armenian-Extermination' Remark, True or False?," *New York Times* (6 July 1985): section 1, page 20, https://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/06/opinion/l-hitler-s-armenian-extermination-remark-true-or-false-03469.html, accessed on 7 April 2021, explains that there should be no doubt as to whether or not Hitler is the author of the quote as records indeed show that indeed Hitler was 'inspired' by the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

The 1915 Armenian Genocide did not happen in a vacuum. The international community was aware of what occurred. Reports from embassies, Christian missionaries, and other non-governmental aid organizations flowed from the Ottoman Empire to places like the United States and Europe. According to the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program at the University of Minnesota, over $100 million was raised by people in the United States to help the millions of Armenian refugees; many Armenians also were adopted. However, while there were a couple trials for those accused of participating in the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the international community did not punish or jail anyone.[36]

Currently, only a few countries officially recognize what occurred in 1915 as Genocide. The United States until recently was not one of those countries that identified at a federal level what transpired as Genocide. President Joe Biden amended the federal position on 24 April 2021 when he named what happened to the Armenians as 'Genocide.' Biden stated:

Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring …The American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today.[37]

Almost all the American states also call what happened as Genocide. Only two countries deny what happened as Genocide, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Turkey sees any attribution of the 1915 events as Genocide as against the law; pro-Turkish groups have sued organizations that promote the 1915 Armenian Genocide as Genocide, including at least one American University.[38]

Armenians in Turkey After the 1915 Genocide

The numbers of Muslims have increased in the area now called Turkey since the 1915 Armenian Genocide from 80 percent in 1913 to 97.5 percent in 1924[39] to

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[36] "Armenia."

[37] "Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day," 24 April 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/24/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-armenian-remembrance-day/, site editor, The White House, accessed on 19 April 2021.

[38] Ibid. The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies states: 'The University of Minnesota itself was sued by a pro-Turkish American organization which questioned the authenticity of materials found on the Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies website. In 2011, this suit was also dismissed.'

[39] Caglar, Ketder, ed., *Turkiyede Devlet ve Suniflar [State and the Classes in Turkey]* (Istanbul: Itetisim, 1989), 67; in Sossie Kasbarian, "The Istanbul Armenians:

99.6 percent today.[40] These numbers seem to reflect what professor Sossie Kasbarian writes as she quotes researcher Tuba Akyol regarding the focus of Kemalist Turkey on ridding non-Muslims from society: '[N]on-Muslims were meant to be exterminated, not assimilated, during the efforts to build a homogenous nation.'[41] Kasbarian adds, 'The remnant of non-Muslims were either made invisible, forced to flee, or "ornamentalized."'[42]

Nonetheless, the Armenians in Turkey have integrated into Turkish society while maintaining their identity, most of whom now live in Istanbul. This integration has occurred despite the restrictive laws that maintain insulting Turkishness or the nation of Turkey is a crime,[43] which can be interpreted loosely to mean that it is illegal to say or do anything outside of the promoted governmental agenda. Although estimates of Armenians in Turkey currently only approach 60,000 people,[44] they still constitute Turkey's third largest Christian population.[45] There are prominent Armenians in Turkey that are involved in sports, theater, music, academia, religion, and journalism. In 2015, 100 years after the 1915 Armenian Genocide, there were three Armenian politicians serving in Turkey: Garo Paylan (Peoples' Democratic Party), Markar Esayan (Justice and Development Party), and Selina Ozuzun Dogan (Republican People's Party), the first Armenians elected to Parliament

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Negotiating Coexistence;" in Bryant Rebecca, ed., *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 208.

[40] "Turkey," https://joshuaproject.net/countries/TU, site editor, Joshua Project, accessed 12 April 2021.

[41] Tuba Akyol, "Ozur Dilerim", *Milleyet Pazar,* in Kasbarian, "The Istanbul Armenians," 208.

[42] Ibid., 209.

[43] "Opinion on Articles 216, 299, 301, and 314 of the Penal Code of Turkey Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 106th Plenary Session," 11-12 March 2016, *European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission),* https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2016)002-e, site editor, *Council of Europe*, accessed on 7 April 2021, 4 n. 2.

[44] Killian Cogan, "Election of Patriarch Leaves Turkey's Armenians without a Voice," 30 Jan 2020, https://eurasianet.org/election-of-patriarch-leaves-turkeys-armenians-without-a-voice, site editor, Eurasianet, accessed 9 April 2021.

[45] "Turkey." The first two largest Christian groups in Turkey, according to the Joshua Project, an evangelical missions organization that tracks the numbers of people from ethnic groups coming to Christ, are: 1) the Georgians with 167,000 and 2) the Syrian Aramaic Turoyos with 74,000, though neither seems to have as complicated of a history with Turkey as the Armenians.

since 1961.[46] Some other well-known Armenians born in Turkey include: Roman Catholic Archbishop Boghos Levon Zekiyan, Massachusetts Institute of Technology economics professor Kamer Baron Acemoglu, pop singer Rober Hatemo, and classical pianist Sahan Arzuni. Many of these Armenians were born in and around Istanbul where the 1915 Armenian Genocide had less of an impact; many also have Turkified surnames that do not have the Armenian traditional 'yan' or 'ian' suffix.

A main reason that Armenians in Turkey are influential in Turkey is because of the Armenian churches and religious centers. The two main centers are the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul, which is affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Church in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, and the Armenian Catholic Archdioceses of Constantinople in Istanbul, which is affiliated with the Vatican. These establishments are significant because according to the Treaty of Lausanne,[47] the treaty between Turkey and the Allies after World War I, Armenians are thought of as a religious minority instead of an ethnic one, meaning the Armenian Church in Turkey is the institute that upholds and sustains Armenian culture and society.[48]

While the Armenian Catholic Archdioceses of Constantinople has less influence (because of the simple sheer size of its adherents) on the Armenians in Turkey than the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Armenian Catholic Archdioceses of Constantinople seems to have been able to maintain its doctrinal and fiduciary integrity with Zekiyan as its head with his irenic yet passionate voice.[49] Zekiyan has criticized and/or supported the Armenians, the Turks, and others regarding matters related to the Armenians in Turkey depending on the accuracy and legitimacy of their arguments.

There is concern, however, regarding the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. Some believe the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople is aligning closely with the Turkish government, especially regarding the 1915 Armenian Genocide recognition. Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan's death after years

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[46] "Armenian Observers in Turkey's Parliamentary Elections," 9 June 2015, https://armenianweekly.com/2015/06/09/armenian-observers-in-turkey/, site editor, Armenian Weekly, accessed 7 April 2021.

[47] "Treaty of Lausanne," https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne, site editor, The World War I Document archive, accessed on 12 April 2021.

[48] Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, "The Armenian Community and the AK Party: Finding Trust under the Crescent," *Insight Turkey* vol. 12, no. 4 (2010), 96.

[49] See, for example: Boghos Levon Zekiyan, "Culture, Policy, and Scholarship in the Subcaucasian Region (Some Critical Remarks and a Methodological Survey)," *Iran and the Caucasus* vol. 12, no. 2 (2008), 329-61.

of battling dementia in 2019 (unable to fulfill his duties for the last dozen years with the Turkish government appointing a substitute) and the Turkish government's limitation of accepted contenders for the position of patriarch to those living in Turkey (aspirants that promoted a pro-Turkish agenda) has led to worries within the Armenians in Turkey community. Reporter Killian Cogan cites the Armenian rights group, Nor Zartonk, regarding the fear of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople becoming a puppet of the Turkish state: 'The state didn't want candidates that could speak freely about the 1915 events. It wanted someone who would adopt its discourse,' with Murad Mihci, the leader of the organization saying, 'That's why it forbade people from abroad.'[50]

Admittedly, since 1915, relations between the Armenians in Turkey and the Turkish government have improved. Armenians today have more freedoms and do not suffer harassment nearly at the same level as previous generations, but it seems, anecdotally at least, this is because of the Turkish government's efforts to 'ornamentalize' the Armenians in Turkey, notably the Istanbul Armenians. EVN Report writer Kristen Anais Bayrakdarian explains:

The new generation of Istanbul Armenians, compared to the generation before them, is much less fearful and more confident and assertive in their Armenian identity and their place, relations and interactions within Turkish society. The changing political climate of 21st century Turkey has meant that this generation of Turkish Armenian youth did not, and do not, suffer discrimination to the same extent as their parents and grandparents. Moreover, social media has allowed for closer integration with Turkish society, especially as a number of Istanbul Armenian youth are beginning to feel suffocated by the close-knit Istanbul Armenian community.[51]

This is not to say there have not been problems or that the Armenians in Turkey have succumbed to becoming Turks. The clearest example of this is the murder of journalist Hrant Dink. Dink, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Agos*, published in Turkish and Armenian, repeatedly criticized the Turkish government for denying the 1915 Armenian Genocide, among other matters. Dink was convicted of insulting Turkishness in 2002 reportedly for saying that

[50] Killian Cogan, "Election of Patriarch Leaves Turkey's Armenians without a Voice."
[51] K. A. Bayrakdarian, "A New Generation of Istanbul Armenians," 24 Oct 2019, https://www.evnreport.com/raw-unfiltered/a-new-generation-of-istanbul-armenians, site editor EVN Report, accessed on 12 April 2021.

he was an Armenian of Turkey instead of calling himself a Turk, and assassinated by a Turkish national in 2007, which sparked concerns of governmental involvement. [52] His death led to a backlash among the Armenians in Turkey. The slogan, 'We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians,' a recollection and commemoration of his arrest for calling himself an Armenian of Turkey in 2002, was carried on placards and chanted at his funeral, which was attended by 100,000 or more people.[53] Several years later, at a memorial for his death, people shouldered the same slogan on signs written in both Turkish and Armenian.[54]

Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction, there is more to the Armenians in Turkey than the 1915 Armenian Genocide. The relationship between Turkey and Armenia complicates matters with land borders between the two countries closed and Turkey's continued support of Azerbaijan, particularly in the most recent war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Earlier this century, it looked like relations between Turkey and Armenia could improve with talks of opening the land borders, and until recently, there were flights between the two countries.

Undeniably, other factors are involved that obfuscate matters between the Armenians in Turkey and the Turkish regime, such as the Armenian Diaspora advocating that international powers force the Turkish administration to recognize the 1915 Armenian Genocide,[55] but this highlights a point already implied. While the connection between the Armenians in Turkey and the general Ottoman/Turkish population often has been mixed, there has not been a constant desire to eradicate all of the Armenians from the Ottoman Empire or Turkey from most of the current or past Ottoman/Turkish administrations. Indeed, even during the ebbs and flows of peace and conflict, the majority of the

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[52] "Was the Turkish State Involved in Journalist Hrant Dink's Assassination?," 3 April 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/was-the-turkish-state-involved-in-journalist-hrant-dinks-assassination/a-56764394, site editor, DW Akademie, accessed on 12 April 2021.

[53] Maureen Freely, "Why They Killed Hrant Dink," *Index of Censorship,* Feb 2007, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064220701334477, site editor, Sage Publications, accessed on 12 April 2021.

[54] Ayla Jean Yackley, "Armenian Migrants in Turkey Live in the Shadow of Century-old Massacre," 24 April 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-turkey-armenia-idUKKCN0XL066, site editor, Reuters, accessed on 12 April 2021.

[55] See for example: "How the Armenian Diaspora Forged Coalitions to Push for Genocide Recognition," 18 Nov 2019, https://theconversation.com/how-the-armenian-diaspora-forged-coalitions-to-push-for-genocide-recognition-126703, site editor, The Conversation, accessed on 12 April 12, 2021.

Ottoman/Turkish population has lived and continues to live peacefully with the Armenians. To state or think otherwise is incorrect. Zekiyan writes that those incorrect thoughts seem:

to be a purely ideological and meta-historical construction [which is part of the] opinion of those, especially Armenians, who sustain the theory of a "continuous genocide," [which has been] conceived, programmed, and practiced over the Armenian and, more generally, the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire since its very early phases.[56]

Currently, the Armenians in Turkey are caught in the middle of a political battle. If truth be told, the issue of the Armenians in Turkey is not with any of the peoples in Turkey. The issue of the Armenians of Turkey is not even specifically with the Turkish government's harassment of them. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has tolerated and given some freedoms to the Armenians in Turkey – perhaps more than many of the Others in Turkey who suffer far worse maltreatment – which seems to have mollified many of the Armenians in Turkey, to a degree, and, perhaps at times made them somewhat 'ornamentalized.'

The issue, one that not only the Armenians in Turkey face but one that the international community grapples with, is Turkey's desire to have greater influence in the region. To acknowledge past and current wrongs would only make the current Turkish administration stronger and more respected, even with the Turkish government's desire to make Turkey into the new Ottoman Empire.[57] In accepting and amending previous failures, including recognizing the 1915 Armenian Genocide as Genocide and not part of the horrors and unfortunate realities of war, the Turkish state could show it is benevolent, which would help convince the global population that a strong Turkey is good not just for Turks, but for the minorities in Turkey and for the rest of the world.

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[56] Boghos Levon Zekiyan, "Armenian-Turkish Relations in the Framework of Turkish and Armenian Scholarships," *Iran and the Caucasus* vol. 14, no. 2 (2010), 376.

[57] Michael Colborne, "Erdogan is Making The Ottoman Empire Great Again," 22 June 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/22/erdogan-is-making-the-ottoman-empire-great-again/ site editor, Foreign Policy, accessed on 12 April 2021; Abigail Ng, "Egyptian Billionaire Naguib Sawiris Says Turkey's Erdogan Wants to be 'New Ottoman Emperor,'" 13 Nov 2020, https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/13/naguib-sawiris-says-turkeys-erdogan-wants-to-be-new-ottoman-emperor.html, site editor, CNBC News, accessed on 12 April 2021.

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