Convegni
Studi umanistici

Minorities and Diasporas in Turkey

Public Images and Issues in Education

edited by
Fulvio Bertuccelli, Mihaela Gavrila, Fabio L. Grassi

University Press
SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ EDITRICE

Collana Convegni 64

Studi umanistici

Minorities and Diasporas in Turkey

Public Images and Issues in Education

edited by
Fulvio Bertuccelli, Mihaela Gavrila, Fabio L. Grassi

SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ EDITRICE
2023

This volume has been published with the support of the research project *Indifference as a treatable disease* and the Department of History, Anthropology, Religions, Art History, Media and Performing Arts, Sapienza University of Rome

Copyright © 2023

Sapienza Università Editrice
Piazzale Aldo Moro 5 – 00185 Roma

www.editricesapienza.it
editrice.sapienza@uniroma1.it

Iscrizione Registro Operatori Comunicazione n. 11420
Registry of Communication Workers registration n. 11420

ISBN 978-88-9377-273-0

DOI 10.13133/9788893772730

Pubblicato nel mese di maggio 2023 | *Published in May 2023*

Opera distribuita con licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione – Non commerciale – Non opere derivate 3.0 Italia e diffusa in modalità open access (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IT)

Work published in open access form and licensed under Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial – NoDerivatives 3.0 Italy (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IT)

Impaginazione a cura di | *Layout by*: Fulvio Bertuccelli

In copertina | *Cover image*: Meeting of the Caucasian diaspora in remembrance of the Circassian genocide. On the banner in foreground: “21 May 1864 - We didn’t forget the genocide and the exile of the Circassians, we will not forget it, we will not allow it to be forgotten…”. Istanbul, 21 May 2018. Photo: Fabio L. Grassi.

In remembrance of the victims of the 6th of February 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria

Contents

Preface 9
Fabio L. Grassi

OPENING SPEECHES

Tito Marci 15

Alessandro Saggioro 17

CHAPTERS

1. Indifference as a treatable disease. Social research, communication and education as strategies for the pursuit of human rights 21
   Mihaela Gavrila

2. Minorities and diasporas in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey – an introduction 25
   Baskın Oran

3. The Rums: how to save Greek schools of Turkey? Immigration, arabisation or "folklorization" 31
   Samim Akgönül

4. Kurdish language rights, mobilisations, and representations in the Justice and Development Party's Era 43
   Clémence Scalbert Yücel

5. Armenians in Turkey: from double marginalization to where? 59
   Arus Yumul

6. The Syrian diaspora between resilience and proactivity 79
Emanuela Claudia Del Re

7. The Caucasian diaspora: the struggle for visibility and recognition 97
Cahit Aslan

8. The Alevis: religious, ethnic or political minority? 115
Martin van Bruinessen

Notes on contributors 143

Preface

The Republic of Turkey was born on 29 October 1923 as the final outcome of a very troubled historical process. For centuries the Ottoman dynasty had ruled a very plural society based on the coexistence of various monotheistic religious communities. The religious identity of the peoples in this society was far more important than the ethno-linguistical one. The Sunni Muslims were juridically the dominant and privileged group; Jews and Christians were generally permitted to sustain decent living conditions. This system started collapsing in the last decades of the XVIII century.

The forced population movements were one of the causes of the collapse. By 1912 Anatolia and the Balkans were hosting more than two million Muslim refugees, mostly coming from the Caucasus, with an exceptional inflow in the 1860's. These refugees, who would never return to their native lands, were relatives of many hundreds of thousands who did not reach Ottoman lands, because they had been killed or had died on their way. The last decade of the XIX century was further marked by massacres of Anatolian Armenians. Between 1911 and 1922 the Ottoman communities enjoyed only one and half years of precarious peace. In 1912-13, as a consequence of the Balkan Wars, another giant wave of Muslim refugees swept across Anatolia. Again, several hundreds of thousands were killed or died on their way. More tragedy was to ensure as, during WWI, hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians of all communities died in regular warfare, intercommunal clashes, epidemics, or simply starved. In particular, the Anatolian Armenians were subjected of bloody, "radical cleansing". In 1919-22 most of the Anatolian and Thracian Ottoman Muslims fought for their unity and independence – probably for physical survival as

well – under the leadership of a great military and political leader, the general Mustafa Kemal (the future Kemal Atatürk); in the same period, the Ottoman government signed the humiliating 1920 Sèvres peace treaty, which reduced Turkey to little more than an Anatolian "Bantustan". New episodes of ferocious intercommunal conflict occurred, especially between the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians of the Black Sea. Mustafa Kemal won the war over the ephemeral independent Armenia, which had aimed at annexing North-Eastern Anatolia, then over the Greek army, which had invaded Western Anatolia. After this resolutive turning point he overthrew the Ottoman government, obtained a substantial recognition of his victory in the Lausanne peace treaty and founded the Republic. After the Greek defeat and the later agreed exchange of communities, in 1922-23 approximately one million two hundred thousand Orthodox Christians living in Anatolia were forcibly resettled to Greece and some four hundred thousand Muslims living in Greece were forcibly resettled to Anatolia.

In sum, if during the XIX century the demographical landscape of the territories now belonging to the Republic of Turkey and the surrounding lands experienced a dramatic change, the developments of the years between 1912 and 1923 can be described as nothing less than a demographical catastrophe. The Turkish Republican regime was like a layer of concrete stretched over an exploded volcano. Born in Salonika, Mustafa Kemal felt the plurality of the Ottoman world to be a source of weakness and danger. He shaped the new Turkish state as a perfect Western-like nation state and Turkey as a country where the past should be as much as possible forgotten, excepting for some glorious events such as the Gallipoli battle in the WWI and the "Turkish Liberation War". The multiethnic and multilingual Ottoman Muslim community was now the unchallenged master of the country but was forcibly refashioned as the Turkish nation. The nation-building policy was severe and intolerant towards non-Turkish identities. Paradoxically, little elements of separate identity were tolerated just in the cases of residual non-Muslim communities. Although the Republican regime adopted strongly secularist principles, on practical grounds the Turkish state and the majority of the public opinion have regarded being a Sunni Muslim as the *condicio sine qua non* of being a "perfect" citizen.

In these nearly 100 years Republican Turkey has scored many admirable accomplishments. But her genesis left a permanent imprint in the political and social development of the country. The "Sèvres syndrome", *i.e.* the permanent (and continuously fueled) feeling that the integrity of Turkey is at stake, encourages and legitimates an authoritarian and centralist attitude and, as a consequence, a strong suspicion and hostility towards the claims of the "particular" (not historically Turkish) identities. Almost all of the chapters in this volume show the perpetuation of a repressive "syntax" over the decades. It is a repressive political and cultural frame based on a collective imaginary of siege from the outside and from the inside. However, if it is right and necessary to level criticism against the harmful consequences of the "Sèvres syndrome" in terms of democracy and human rights, it is also right and necessary to underline the role of the longstanding prejudicial anti-Turk hate speech which very often arises in public discussion and social media platforms outside Turkey. Even among scholarly publications, one-sided narratives and underhand moves to deny the historical legitimacy of the Republic of Turkey within her own boundaries are not uncommon.

This volume collects nearly all the papers presented in the online conference held virtually in Sapienza University of Rome on 30 November 2021 followed by a specular one, titled "Turkish Communities in Europe: Challenges, claims, international issues" and held on 23 May 2022. The authors are internationally renowned scholars who deal with the educational issues and the public images related to Turkey's "particular" groups. Neither the conference nor this book could include all of them. However, we hope this volume is welcomed as a useful collective work inasmuch as it provides updated, rigorous, yet sympathetic information about the public images and the educational issues affecting the status of some minorities and diasporic communities in Turkey.

The first chapter provides a conceptual introduction to the topic of "Indifference as a treatable disease. Social Research as platform for a model in communication and education of Human Rights". The conference and this volume have been realized in the scope of the project bearing this name. Indeed, the conference aimed at keeping alive the interest of international public opinion in the issues of pluralism and democracy in Turkey. In this perspective, we are proud to have hosted – alas only virtually – a scholar and public intellectual who has spent

a lifetime struggling for these values, Prof. Baskın Oran, whose paper (chapter 2) provides the historical and conceptual framework for the following contributions. The authors are experts in different disciplines and we left them free to choose the approach they preferred. However, all the contributions offer a historical perspective and touch the issues tackled in the project.

Among the communities addressed, two (the Rums and the Armenians) are officially recognized as minorities by the Republic of Turkey. The Rums are the Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians. Their name means Rome. Indeed, what we commonly call the Byzantine Empire was the Roman Empire, and for all the surrounding peoples Anatolia was the land of Rome. On the basis of the agreement that provided the legal frame for the aforementioned 1922-23 exchange, as well as the Muslim of Western Thrace were allowed to remain in Greece, the Rums of Istanbul and of the little islands of Imbros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) in the Mediterranean were allowed to remain in Turkey. Their number has been dramatically decreasing since the end of WWII, mainly due to the Cyprus question and the nervous relations between Turkey and Greece. Yet Istanbul (including the nearby little islands in the Marmara Sea) still hosts the most important patriarchate of Orthodox Christianity, schools, foundations and monasteries. Therefore, the political importance of this very small community is weighty.

The Armenians are a far bigger community, especially if we include the irregular migrants coming from Armenia. Apart from some sparse individuals, they all live in Istanbul. In the Republican age some Armenians held prestigious positions, such as the great linguist Agop Dilaçar (1895-1979), who was the main helper of Atatürk in the Turkish language reform program. It was Atatürk who chose for him the surname Dilaçar, literally meaning "the language opener". More recently another prominent Armenian intellectual, Etyen Mahçupyan (b. 1950) was senior advisor to the prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2014-15. Nonetheless, many Armenians prefer to adopt a low profile, not only because they live in a fiercely nationalist country but also due to the neverending controversies between Turkey and Armenia (and the West) about the events that occurred during the WWI and the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

On theorical grounds, and especially in a constitutionally secular state, it is quite questionable to categorize as a minority the Alevis of

Turkey, a distinctive Muslim sect. But, like Rums, Armenians and Jews, they are not part of the *de facto* privileged community of Turkish Sunni Muslims. As "wrong" and "perverted" Muslims, along the centuries, and in Republican era as well, they have been exposed to serious forms of discrimination and violence.

As for the Kurds, on theorical grounds they are a classic ethnolinguistic minority, however they are such a large community, and so intertwined with the Turks throughout the country, that they cannot easily be perceived as a minority in the way that we generally think of minority groups such as the Germans in Italy or the Sorbs in Germany. Alevi Kurds cannot belong to the privileged space of the Sunni Muslim Turks, but Sunni Kurds can, and therefore many Kurdish or partly Kurdish individuals have attained the highest ranking positions in the Republic. Nevertheless, both Sunni Kurds and Alevi Kurds are subjected to stereotyping and suspicion, after having been the focus of policies aiming at their cultural cleansing in the single party era (1923-1945) and in the 1980s.

Of the two diasporic communities addressed in this volume, the Syrians who fled from their country due to the war and the five hundred thousand children born to them in the hosting country present a new feature of the Turkish human landscape. The Turkish government and NGOs have managed the massive inflow of Syrian refugees very well, but two factors have led a part of the Turkish public expressing a grudge with respect to these destitute people. These are: 1) the general loss of purchasing power due to the devaluation of the Turkish lira and the quick rise of prices; 2) the fear of a "re-arabization" of the country, a country that in Atatürk's vision ought to be – as completely as possible – detached from the Arab world.

As for the Caucasian diaspora, the expression "last but not least" is here particularly appropriate, because my contribution to the "Indifference as a treatable disease" project was agreed primarily in reference to this community, which is far less debated and researched than the other ones discussed in this volume. Indeed, my primary purpose was to draw the attention of scholars and international readership to a community whose existence, let alone history and current situation, is not widely known, especially outside of Turkey. Later we decided to include the case of the Caucasian diaspora within a more general analysis. What I can say here, to excite readers'

curiosity, is that we face a case where the absence of discrimination coincides with the highest degree of invisibility.

I would like to express my gratitude to the speakers of the conference and the authors of the papers collected in this volume. I am very thankful to Prof. Mihaela Gavrila, as the head of the Sapienza University project "Indifference as a treatable disease", for having invited me to join her team and for having wholeheartedly supported the realization of the online conference and of this publication; my thanks also go to Dr. Fulvio Bertuccelli for his essential contribution in organizing the conference and editing this volume, to the dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences, Sociology and Communication, Prof. Tito Marci, and to the head of the Department of History, Anthropology, Religions, Art History, Media and Performing Arts, Prof. Gaetano Lettieri, for their warm support. Thanks are also due to Prof. Alessandro Saggioro who, as Prof. Marci, delivered a dense and meaningful opening speech, and to the members of the scientific committee of the conference, Profs. Antonello F. Biagini, Paolo Montesperelli, Giovanna Motta and Baskın Oran. Finally, yet importantly, I would like to thank Prof. Marianna Ferrara and the staff of Sapienza Università Editrice for their careful and kind guidance in the realization of this book.

Rome, January 2023

Fabio L. Grassi

Tito Marci,

Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Sociology and Communication

Distinguished colleagues, I am glad to host this important and interesting conference. The subject that we are going to discuss this afternoon is very important because it deals with something related to both the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, the theme of pluralism and multiethnic societies and the way you consider integration of society from these two points of view.

If we consider that the Ottoman Empire was based on the different communities, we can say that the integration of the minorities was simple and complex at the same time. But with the Kemalist ideology and the rise of nationalism the problem of minorities – and diasporas as well – were looked at in a different way. The centralization of politics and the idea of a centralized national government put the foundations of the problems that we are going to discuss today. How to deal today with the minorities issue in the transformation of Turkish society or how to deal with the new trend of the so-called "Islamization" of society?

I am very happy to welcome you to this very important conference.

Alessandro Saggioro,

Director of the PhD program in History and Cultures of Europe

Thank you prof. Grassi for inviting me to introduce this conference. Thanks also to prof. Gavrila for her help and participation in this conference: I have the pleasure of meeting her today for the first time, but I think we have many common interests, and this first occasion will be a starting point for future fruitful cooperation. I would also thank the dean Prof. Marci for his introductory words, that I share and appreciate. I am forwarding you the greetings of the director of the Department of History, Anthropology, Religions, Art History, Media and Performing Arts prof. Gaetano Lettieri, and I present you all my personal greetings and welcome you as director of the PhD program in History and Cultures of Europe. Reading the program and understanding the idea of this conference, I need to say that I'm very proud of the work realized and deeply looking forward to know more from your valuable speeches. I am very thankful to prof. Fabio L. Grassi for his generous effort in organizing it and to dr. Fulvio Bertuccelli for his valuable contribution to the management of the conference and his role as admin in this online meeting. I would also like to thank the distinguished colleagues that will talk during this afternoon.

I think that the topic that you have chosen is very interesting for many different reasons. As I said, I am in charge of coordinating a PhD program in History of Europe, in which the topics of minorities and majorities, diasporas and education are common themes that we meet in the works of many PhD researchers and are part of our teaching programs and research as well. The topic of majorities and minorities is also very important from the point of view of my field of studies in History of Religions. I've been leading two projects in Sa-

pienza: one aimed at defining religious pluralism and another one aimed at defining religious minorities in the frame of religious pluralism both in our days' society and in general through history. During these projects we had many occasions of scientific meetings and as concrete outputs we produced some publications which can help discussing religious pluralism face to the challenges of present societies. In 2017 I edited the special issue of the Journal of Sapienza University "Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni", *Defining Religious Minorities* (SMSR 83/2, 325-330); in 2021 I edited the book *Definire il pluralismo religioso* (Quaderni di SMSR). I cannot resume here today the results of these projects, but I would like to stress the general idea that was at their basis, and that is important to stress when we organize scientific meetings on a global scale. Democracy and peaceful coexistence constitute the agenda of Europe, and they are the basic values that should be considered in every situation as the root of the idea of Europe. Europe does not mean only a small portion of territory of the world but a territory that through history has had contacts, interactions and conflicts with countries and cultures from all the continents. This long story has contributed to discuss, challenge and building values and principles. After the terrible events of the two World Wars of the last century, not in a day, but following a complex series of democratic processes, Europe has accepted and spread the principles of democracy and respectful approach to all kind of communities and groups. These processes are still on their way to a future to come, in which freedom, rights and dignity should become more and more a common condition for every citizen and for all those people that from different parts of the world head to the "old" continent full of hope and concrete necessity. That is why I am sure that your speeches during the conference will be very useful both for us as historians and for the goal of designing a more inclusive historical approach in general. In the intellectual and scientific context, it is necessary to study and understand the complexity of our world and plural cultures: that is why a scientific meeting can have larger responsibility and answer to questions that have a relevance for the society at large. With these ideas in mind, I wish you a fruitful interaction: your contribution in the conference today will be a precious fabric for many future studies.

I really hope that the proceedings of this conference are published, and I encourage you to do so, with the wish to discuss the proceedings in Rome, one day. I hope therefore to welcome and meet personally the friends and the colleagues that are going to talk today. Online meetings are not real life and we hope we can substitute them as soon as possible with the concrete interaction among our universities, our countries and our beautiful cities. My best wishes and thank you all again for sharing your knowledge with us, our students and the public attending this praiseworthy conference.

1. Indifference as a treatable disease. Social research, communication and education as strategies for the pursuit of human rights

Mihaela Gavrila

The theme of the conference "Minorities and diasporas in Turkey: public images and issues in education" is fully in line with the objectives of a broader, multidisciplinary project promoted by our university, involving sociologists, psychologists, jurists, scholars and experts in international cooperation, media and law enforcement representatives. The title of the project is quite significant: "Indifference as a treatable disease. Social Research as platform for a model in communication and education of Human Rights".

The project, which follows the path advocated by the most recent national, European and international human rights initiatives, aims to increase knowledge on the subject from an interdisciplinary perspective, responding to a need increasingly felt by the whole of civil society. I quote one of our masters of life and thought, the jurist Stefano Rodotà:

> "An undeniable need for rights and law manifests itself everywhere, challenges every form of repression, even the national and global politics. A new idea of citizenship was born, of a heritage of rights that accompanies the person in every place of the world." (2014, 10).

Some of these rights are also included in the topics covered by this conference: the right to free movement, the right to education, the right to health, the right to life, the right to children protection, the right to security. Not to mention gender equality issues.

The "right to have rights" (Arendt 1951) and the fulfillment of the mandatory duties of political, economic and social solidarity often appear to be greatly reduced by the critical issues relating to the possibility/need to effectively communicate sensitive social issues, linked to

respect for different generations of rights (Bobbio 1990). The reference is in particular to second generation rights (economic, social, cultural rights) and third generation rights (concerning the community and social solidarity, aimed at protecting the most vulnerable categories – minors, women, migrants, the sick – in addition to the to peace, security, development, humanitarian assistance and environmental protection) and the role that old and new media play in relation to them, still too often contested between the omission of these issues in their agendas and the restitution of distorted and/or stereotyped representations (Acerno 2004 and 2006). And if "denying information in these cases is putting consciences to sleep" (Acerno 2006), the return of narratives anchored to stereotypes and prejudices prompts us to reflect on how the treatment of these rights can be exploited by strong powers, an aspect already highlighted in the 1980s by the World Communications Report (1982).

In this context, the Senegalese educator and former UNESCO General Director Amadou-Mathar M'Bow affirms that "these are just some of the potential areas from which either the best or the worst can arise. The result will be positive only if we resist the temptation to enslave the mass media to narrow interests, to turn it into new instruments of power, justifying attacks on human dignity and exacerbating the already existing inequalities between and within nations" (M'Bow 1982, 14). This power is in the hands of operators who, be they individual journalists or broadcasters, have the duty of completeness, objectivity and impartiality every time they convey a message to the audience.

This awareness is also confirmed in other transnational contexts: 20 years ago, in a Unesco Midterm Review it was declared:

> "The provocations of the new society and the acceleration of processes, even in technological innovation, would require continuous and greater attention to cultural and professional updating in all those fields of activities that deal directly or indirectly with the modern emergencies. Among these are poverty, migration, natural and social destruction of the social and natural catastrophes, increase in illiteracy, the progressive decrease in investment in training." (UNESCO 2003).

To counter these phenomena, we need education, we need research, training, we need a good public policies and communication.

It therefore emerges clearly that from a certain point in recent history onwards an important role is played by the old and new media, which must be an active part of that cultural education project for human rights, to be directed and built together with the new generations, in the face of social and political contexts that increasingly seem to authorize and amplify the expression of forms of intolerance towards all types of difference. And above all, as a guide to the reflection on rights we remember the words of Nelson Mandela: "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite" (Mandela 1994). And love and respect for the other are the basis of integration.

The very idea of society and being together is based on integration: it is a constant game of mirrors, identity, identification and recognition which makes the exclusion or inclusion become foundations of the quality of life within the society (Santoro 2005). But integration in contemporary society is measured with a deeper dimension, with less clear rules: individualization.

> "Individualization is at the same time, cause and effect of autonomy, of freedom and personal responsibility, but it also has, as a downside, the decay of older forms of solidarity, the atomization of individuals, self-centeredness and, basically, what could be termed metastasis of the Ego." (Morin 2011, 43).

University teaching must take these processes into account. It must do everything possible to create opportunities for collaboration instead of competition to deal with crisis situations and to act as a platform of stability and strength in a society described by scholars as "unstable" and "liquid" (Bauman 2000, Gavrila 2018). On the other hand, life together involves identification, seeing "*soi-même comme un autre*" (Ricoeur 1990). It implies the cultivation of the sense of encounter, respect and sharing among cultures.

It is the same spirit that animated this project passionately promoted together with my colleagues Fabio L. Grassi and Fulvio Bertuccelli, within the research that is the frame of this initiative. So, thank you again for your contribution and for your generosity in sharing your research and your reflections with us.

References

ACERNO, S. (ed.) (2006), *Comunicare i diritti umani. Lettura critica dell'informazione*, Edizioni Studio @lfa, Pesaro.

- (2004), *L'inganno quotidiano. I media, l'informazione e i diritti umani*, Frilli, Genova.

ARENDT, H. (1951), *Le origini del totalitarismo,* Einaudi, Torino.

BOBBIO, N. (1990), *L'età dei diritti*, Einaudi, Torino.

BAUMAN, Z. (2000), *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

GAVRILA, M. (2018), *A New Direction in University Teaching. Between Solidarity, Complexity and Media Education*, in "Italian Journal of Sociology of Education", 10(2), 57-75. doi: 10.14658/pupj- ijse-2018-2-5.

MANDELA, N. (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom the Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Franklin Record, Philadelphia.

M'BOW, A. M. (1980), *Foreword*, in *Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow. Many Voices one World. Toward a New More just and More Efficient World Information and Communication order*, Unipub, London-New York-Paris.

MORIN, E. (2011), *La via. Per l'avvenire dell'umanità*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano.

RICOEUR, P. (1990), *Soi-même comme un autre*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris.

RODOTÀ, S. (2014), *Solidarietà. Un'utopia necessaria*, Laterza, Bari.

SANTORO M. (2005), *Esclusi e inclusi*, in P. P. Giglioli (ed.), *Invito allo studio della società*, il Mulino, Bologna, 37-56.

2. Minorities and diasporas in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey – an introduction

Baskın Oran

The concept of "minority" did not exist in the Ottoman Empire. Instead, there was a "*millet* system" established one year after the conquest of Constantinople (1453) and which was somewhat modified after 1839 *Tanzimat* reforms. This system continued theoretically until the demise of the Empire in 1922, although it had practically ended in 1913 when the Muslim Turkist Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) declared its dictatorship[1].

This system which had been adopted from the 6th Century Muslim Arab world, split the nation between the *millet-i hakime* (community that makes the decisions) the Muslims and *millet-i mahkume* (communities for which decisions are made), the non-Muslims.

As in all real empires where no ethnic group was preeminent, the non-Muslims were free to practice their religion and regulate their internal arrangements. They had their own civil courts in instances where Muslims were not involved, they were able to levy their internal taxes, establish their community rules. The only condition was to display loyalty to the Empire and pay taxes which were higher than what the Muslims paid.

On the other hand, the non-Muslims were definitely second-class subjects. They were considered under the custody of the Muslims to whom they should owe allegiance as witnessed by their name, *zimmi* which comes from *zimmet* (debit) and means "under custodianship".

---

1 All information contained in this article is from Oran 2021.

Well until 1839 non-Muslims did not have the right to ride a horse, carry arms, testify in courts against Muslims, wear green, etc..

***

This *millet-i hakime* mentality, which is still prevalent today, was also cloned to the Republican Turkey through Section III, "Protection of Minorities" of the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty that codified the principles of the League of Nations after WWI.

In such a way that the Ankara delegation to the Lausanne Conference refused to accept the criteria of the League ("minorities of race, religion, or language"), and only accepted "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities" to enjoy the guarantee of the League. This term meant, as well, the refusal of the criterium "religion" contrary to what many believe but we'll come to that in a moment.

Also contrary to what many in Turkey believe, the non-Muslims were not the only category to enjoy rights under Section III. But before I come to this, I'll summarize these rights by assigning them, for practical purposes, into groups (from A to D) in an order starting with those that have the most rights and ending with those that have the least:

***

Group A includes "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities". They can enjoy the freedoms of movement and migration, as these apply to all Turkish citizens (Art. 38/3).

They have the same civil and political rights as Muslims (Art. 39/1) and the right to establish, run, and oversee all kinds of charitable, religious, and social organizations (e.g., foundations, schools) at their own expense, as well as the right to use their own languages and to carry out their religious ceremonies at these institutions (Art. 40).

In order to provide education in their mother tongue in provinces or districts where they live in significant numbers, the non-Muslims have the right to receive an equitable share from the budgets of the national or municipal government agencies (Art. 41/1 and 2). Also included are the right to have their family law or personal status matters (marriage especially) settled in accordance with their customs and traditions (Art. 42/1). In addition to these rights, this group should enjoy the rights recognized for the other three groups.

***

Group B includes "Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech". They have the right to orally use their own language in the courts (Art. 39/5). This group's rights, naturally, include those of Groups C and D.

***

Group C includes "All Turkish citizens". Their differences in religion, belief, or sect are not to lead to any discrimination (Art. 39/3). They have the right to use whatever language they wish in both private and in commercial interactions (Art. 39/4). This group's rights, naturally, include those of Group D.

***

Group D includes "All inhabitants of Turkey". They are to enjoy the right to life and freedom from discrimination on the basis of nationality, language, race, or religion (Art. 38/1). They have the right to practice their faith, religion, or sect free from interference (38/2). Equality before the law and freedom from religious discrimination are also among their rights (Art. 39/2). (It should be noted that the term "inhabitants" includes foreigners as well). By the requirements of Art. 37, none of these rights can be divested by any law or official act. This Section III, then, covers both minority rights and human rights.

***

To make a long story short, all these rights were violated by Turkey starting from the signing of Lausanne, and many of them continue in our day. To mention only a few:

1) Group A:

Freedom of movement of the non-Muslims was violated between 1925 and 1932 when they were asked to obtain permission to travel out of Istanbul province. In mid-60s the same obligation was required from the Rums (Greek Orthodox) of Imbroz (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) for travel to Istanbul (Art. 38/3). Education in Greek in these two islands was banned from 1927 to 2015, except for the period 1951-1964. Syriac schools were closed in 1928 (Art. 40) and only in 2014 a single kindergarten was reopened (Art. 14).

Even though Rum, Armenian, and Jewish peoples' names were not mentioned in Section III by using the term "Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech", recognition of non-Muslim communities outside these groups, like Syriacs, Ezidis, Romans, Arab Greek Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics has been refused till the present.

The 1942 Wealth Tax Law was used as the main instrument of the ongoing capital transfer from the non-Muslims to the Muslims. A procedure called the "1939 Declaration" confiscated the real estate holdings of non-Muslim foundations (Art. 42/3). Elections of non-Muslim community administrations is banned to this day (Art. 40).

Religious marriage ceremonies of the non-Muslims were banned for a long time starting from 1926 (Art. 42/1).

To our day there is not a single non-Muslim civil servant in Turkey (Art. 39/1).

2) Group B:

The Kurds' oral use of their language in courts is banned to our day (Art. 39/5).

3) Group C:

The Alevis' practise of their religious ceremonies (*cemevleri*) and traditions (*semah*, etc.) was obstructed in various forms to the present. Sunni mosques were forcefully built in their villages where Sunni imams were nominated amid the protests (Art. 39/2 and 3).

Official campaigns of "Citizen, Speak Turkish" prevented especially the non-Muslims and the Kurds, and also the Arabs from using their mother tongues during the 1930s and again in the 1960s (Art. 39/4), and this prohibition mainly continues to our day for the Kurds in arts and media[2]. Learning of Laz and Circassian languages etc. was banned until the 2000s.

4) Group D:

The rights of non-citizens living in Turkey and of Christian missionaries (Protestant pastor Andrew Brunson in particular)[3] were violated (Arts. 38/1 and 2 and Art. 39/2).

***

Concerning these open violations of the Lausanne Treaty, the following important points should be noted:

1) The title of Section III is "Protection of Minorities" but this Section is a human rights text since it protects even the rights of foreigners ("inhabitants"). This title stems from the fact that the term "minority rights" have been in international use since the 16th Century while the term "human rights" have been introduced there only in 1945 through

---

[2] For the interdiction of theater plays in Kurdish in Istanbul in 2021 see MlsaTurkey 2021.

[3] See Wikipedia n.d..

the United Nations Constitution. Therefore, the use of this title to refuse the rights bestowed upon people outside the "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities" is simply unacceptable.

2) The most important reality behind the violations of rights of peoples who differ from the Hanafi, Sunni, Muslim, Turk majority is the following: Turkey is a "nation-state" from its very beginning.

Do not confuse the "nation-state" with "national state". The latter attributes sovereignty not to God or King but to a concept called "nation", while the former attributes it to the dominant ethno-religious group within the nation and refuses to recognize any other identity (sub-identities).

This dominant group in Turkey is the "Hanafi, Sunni, Muslim, Turk" identity. Hanafi as opposed to Shafii, Sunni as opposed to Alevi, Muslim as opposed to non-Muslim, Turk as opposed to all ethnic non-Turks.

3) Turkey, as a very typical nation-state, implemented two main policies to oppress peoples having different characteristics then the dominant ethno-religious group: a) assimilate those it can assimilate; b) to apply ethno-religious cleansing to those it cannot assimilate.

At this point it'll be helpful to remember that in the Middle East and the Balkans, the essential element of identity is not language or ethnicity, but religion as a residue of the Millet System. And sect is also very important, that is why the Ankara delegation to the Lausanne Conference refused the religion criterium also and only accepted "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities". That was because the Alevis (with the exception of those from Dersim and of Arab origin) even though they were ethnic Turks, were religiously very different from the Sunni vast majority of Turks. The founding fathers who were well aware of this situation wanted to prevent the Alevis from having international rights under the League's guarantee (Nur 1967, 1044)[4].

4) As the residue of the *millet* system, the non-Muslims entered the category of "non-assimilable" and were subjected to ethno-religious cleansing. When Lausanne Treaty was signed and the compulsory

[4] In the next page Dr. Rıza Nur discloses his "solution", which is inherently the philosophy of the founding fathers of the Turkish nation-state as well, in the following words: "The lesson to draw from this: the most crucial, the most righteous, the most vital move is to stick to the principle of eliminating in our country any person belonging to another race, language, religion (…) [Those who are not Turkish] and likewise the Kurds ought to be isolated from their language and ethnicity using an incessant plan of assimilation." (Nur 1967, 1045).

exchange of Turkish and Greek populations was completed the Rum population by itself was 110.000 strong, while in 2021 they are down at 2.000 and the number of all non-Muslims in Turkey is below 100.000, their ratio to the population of Turkey now being less than one per thousand.

5) The category "assimilable" has two factors that support each other: a) to be of the same religion and denomination as the majority; b) to be allochthonous and not autochthonous.

The autochthons are people whose ancestors were born on the same soil. Taking strength from this, they tend to jealously protect their identity (George 1984, 10-16).

On the other hand, the allochthons (= diaspora in Turkey) are very apt to assimilation because they have taken refuge in Turkey to save their lives from the Christians of their original country, and also because they are of the same religion (Islam) as the majority in Turkey. Their ethnically different identity is ready to dissolve into their religious identity.

For example, when in June 2004 the Government decided to broadcast in languages other than Turkish, the Bosnians, who originate from the Balkans (long time Ottoman territory), protested, citing a reason that openly reveals the Muslim allochthonous/diaspora mentality: "We are not Bosnians in Turkey, but Turks. We are first class citizens" (Akşam 2004).

***

I guess this general outline will help to grasp better the main issues regarding minorities and diasporas in Turkey discussed by the authors of the following chapters.

References

NUR, R. (1967), *Hayat ve hatıratım*, vol. III, Altındağ Yayınevi, Istanbul.

GEORGE, P. (1984), *Géopolitique des minorités*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

ORAN, B. (2021), *Minorities & Minority Rights in Turkey – From the Ottoman Empire to the Present State*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London.

MLSATURKEY (2021), *İdare mahkemesi Kürtçe oyun yasağını hukuka uygun buldu*, avilable at <https://www.mlsaturkey.com/tr/idare-mahkemesi-kurtce-oyun-yasagini-hukuka-uygun-buldu/> (last accessed 13 December 2022).

WIKIPEDIA (n.d.), *Andrew Brunson*, available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Brunson> (last accessed 13 December 2022).

AKŞAM (2004), 12 June.

3. The Rums: how to save the Greek schools of Turkey? Immigration, arabisation or "folklorization"

Samim Akgönül

3.1. Introduction

The Greek minority of Turkey is one of the last witnesses of the ottoman past of the country, especially (but not exclusively) of Istanbul. Greeks of Istanbul were actors for centuries in a history as brilliant as it is dramatic. However, their departure does not date from the Greek-Turkish war (1919-1923) as it is the case for the Greeks of Asia Minor. During the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey of 1923, around 150 000 Greeks of Istanbul (alongside Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos Islands) have been spared in order to constitute a parish to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus, Greek schools remained open in the city according to the article 40 of the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923). These schools functioned in close circuit during decades before losing their students after 1964.

On March 14, 1964, the government of Ankara decided to expel twelve thousand inhabitants of Istanbul of Greek citizenship. The latter are ordered to leave the city in twelve hours, authorized to take twenty dollars and twenty kilos of personal belongings. They will be followed by more than thirty thousand Greeks, Turkish citizens for their part: husbands and wives, children, associates, friends, and companions. In total, in a few months, forty-five thousand Greeks will leave their city forever, bitter, surprised, accused of being Greeks in Turkey, and Turks in Greece… Today the Greeks of Istanbul, the city's oldest community, number only a few thousand, we will come back to this question.

These Greeks call themselves *Romios* / *Romioi* and are called "Rum" by Turks because they are considered to be the descendants of the Eastern Roman Empire, which today we call the Byzantine Empire. For almost half a millennium, the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire then, lived within a system of religious "nations" (*millet*), alongside Muslims and Armenians (and also Jews, Catholics and later Protestants). Without idealizing this period of tension during which the hierarchy between Muslims and non-Muslims was real, we can still say that compared to other regions of the world, the system ensured relative societal peace. In this system of *millet*, each community had its own educational system (Cakal 2020).

Things became more complicated with the introduction of the notions of "nation" and "secularism" in the Ottoman empire in which the society was organized according to religion belonging. The long 19th century was one of wars, massacres and expulsions. Turkish nationalism, late compared to the others, is reactionary, radical, sometimes destructive. Thus, the non-Muslim communities of the empire are purged in an endless attempt to homogenize the population. Three dates are significant:

- 1915, the symbolic date of the extermination of the Armenians, qualified as "genocide" by several parts, including historians and several states, that is denied by the Turkish Republic.
- 1923, date of the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey
- 1964, the beginning of the end of Greeks of Istanbul following the government's decision to expel Greek citizens.

In 1923, in the process of homogenizing the Greek and Turkish populations, the two parties agreed on a compulsory exchange. 1,5 million Orthodox from Turkey were exchanged against 500 000 Muslims from Greece, through a traumatic journey. Greek schools of Asia minor, where a specific Greekness of religion and language was transmitted, were consequently shut down (Ralli 2019). But this exchange of populations was not complete. Two groups were spared the forced expulsion: the Greeks of Istanbul – approximately 150 000 people and an equivalent number of

Muslims from Western Thrace. The 1930 Treaty of Ankara also allows twelve thousand Greeks from Istanbul to live in the city, but with Greek citizenship, through residence permits tacitly renewed for decades.

It is this community, made up of Greek citizens and Greek Turkish citizens who, by mixing, marrying, associating, formed the vestiges of the glorious, rich and cosmopolitan past of the city. Until the 1950's were Cyprus issue deteriorated relations between Greece and Turkey. From the 1950s, the Greek minority became a real hostage in the hands of successive governments in power in Ankara. It is nothing more than a currency of exchange. During the first Cyprus crisis, in 1955, a demonstration organized behind the scenes by the government, to show the West that Turkish public opinion was not indifferent to the fate of Cyprus, degenerated into a riot. Hundreds of businesses and houses belonging to Istanbul Greeks are ransacked and raided (Ağır 2014).

3.2. 1964: the turning point

But it was in 1964 that the fate of the community was sealed. After Cyprus gained independence (1960), inter-community clashes multiplied to the point that Cypriot President Monsignor Makarios was tempted to change the Constitution. Ankara, fearing a Greek takeover of the island, is brandishing the threat, initially, of military intervention in Cyprus, using its status as "guarantor". But faced with the opposition, even the disguised threat of the United States barely emerging from the Cuban crisis and the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Ankara had to swallow its anger. It was redirected to the usual scapegoats: the Greeks of Istanbul. It was then that their expulsion was decided. The government unilaterally suspended the 1930 agreement and expelled the twelve thousand Greeks with Hellenic citizenship. In order to put pressure on Greece, supposed to support the Greeks of Cyprus, but also in order to complete the annihilation of the Greeks of the country, begun forty years before. Therefore, the Greek schools that where an important part of the educational panorama of Istanbul started to face the danger of shut down or, worst, becoming ghost schools.

The fear of abuses after 1964 was not completely unfounded. Above all, the main bilateral problem, the one that had brought so much suffering to the minority, Cyprus, remained. And because of the experiences of 1955 and 1964, in each bilateral crisis the minority felt

targeted, as for example during the crisis of 1967. But instead of spectacular measures there were more diffuse applications affecting the structures of the minority. Already with the departure of 30,000 members of the community, many schools had to close:

	Pupils and students	Pre-schools	Primary schools	Middle and High Schools
1923	16 123	70	85	8
1964	6 002	4	42	6
1970	4 412	-	52	6
1978	1 147	-	22	6

To these shortages of students (and teachers) must be added the attempts of the Turkish government to take control of these minority schools considered as "breeding grounds for treachery". To do this, in 1967 a decree promulgated in 1963 (n. 246/7) was applied in order to appoint, in a compulsory way, a Turkish deputy director in all minority schools. These deputy directors were invested with such power that any school action became impossible without their agreement. When a Greek director retired or died, he was not replaced and thus the management of these schools passed directly under the control of the Turkish deputy directors appointed by the Ministry of Education. In some cases, the school was kept open on paper despite the absence of students to allow a Turkish deputy director to keep his position of convenience. In this way not only a Turkish director was kept in his position but also the Turkish government did not attract the anger of its Western partners because of the closure of one more Greek school.

Moreover, still from 1964 the difficulties for the recruitment of Greek teachers in minority schools began. From this date, an aptitude test in the Turkish language becomes compulsory, immediately eliminating several candidates. At the same time, inspections of minority schools are becoming extremely frequent and harsh. It is always at the same period that the difficulties begin for the repair and expansion of school buildings like other public buildings belonging to the minority elsewhere.

All these interventions in minority schools were possible thanks to a law passed in 1961 (n. 222) which henceforth considered minority schools as "private schools" and not as "community schools". In

March 1964 a government decree (n. 410/16) prohibited members of the Orthodox clergy from entering minority schools. In September 1964, another decree (n. 3885) prohibited Orthodox prayers in the courses as well as schoolbooks (Kaya 2015). Thus, a kind of "secularization" from the top took place at the end of the 1960s. All these educational restrictions considerably disturbed the minority. Not only were the schools threatened with closure because of the drop in population, but moreover their control passed gradually into the hands of the central state, putting an end to a communitarianism to which the minority had been accustomed for centuries.

These direct pressures on minority schools were followed by another application that indirectly affected minority education. In 1971, given the disastrous situation of universities where gangs of armed students clashed every day, the government of the time decided to close all private universities. And the Theological School of Halki which depended directly on the Patriarchate and which was the cradle of Greek Orthodoxy also closed. This closure was not forced, but the patriarchal authorities preferred to put an end to the activities of the Academy rather than let it become a school dependent on the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Let us understand that the 1971 decision was not a measure against the minority in general or against minority education in particular, but it was a measure of general application for the whole country. It was later, when the opening of other private universities was allowed, and the reopening of the Halki Theological School was not that this became a real minority problem. Since then, the Theological School of Halki is still closed in 2022.

3.3. How many Greeks remain in Turkey?

As one can see immediately, there are today two main problems that the Greek minority schools face in Turkey. The first one is obvious, as the Greeks of Istanbul are still not seen as first-class citizens but as means of pressure on Greece, Greek schools are constantly objects of policy implementations related not to the Greek children of Turkish citizenship but related to bilateral relations. The second problem is naturally related to demographics. Today, depending on how one defines the "Greekness" of Turkey, there are only between 3 000 and 10 000 "Greeks" of Turkish citizenship living in Turkey. According to several

surveys, those who are names ad "Polites" *i.e.* Greeks of Istanbul are around 3000 and most of them are old (Örs 2018). To them, one may add around 2000 other Greeks of Turkey mainly from the two Aegean islands, Imbros and Tenedos. Greeks from these two islands, migrated, mostly to Greece and elsewhere but those who remain in Turkey live in Istanbul and partially in the islands, especially summertime.

There is another group. In 1923, when the compulsory exchange of populations was decided in Lausanne, the city of Antioch was in Syria under French mandate. Thus, the Arabic speaking orthodox community of the city remained at home. Therefore, when Antioch was reattached to Turkey in 1939 around 15 000 Christians became automatically Turkish citizens. During decades, these Christians left Turkey mainly for Europe and especially Scandinavian countries. Nevertheless, after 1990's Arabic speaking orthodox population of the city that could remain in Turkey besides harsh life conditions started to emigrate to Istanbul. And as the perception of the Turkish republic is still related to religious belonging (and not ethnicity of language) they have been considered as *Rum*, *i.e.* Greek-Orthodox. Consequently, they have the "right" to use Greek minority's institutions, including schools (and foundations). They number is subject of controversies but in total they are believed to be 5000 and among them 2000 in Istanbul (Kaymak, Beylunioğlu 2018). This addition makes, at best 10 000 of Greek-Orthodox in a country of 82 000 0000!

3.4. And how many students and teachers?

The automatic consequence of this demographic collapse is easy to understand. While in 1922 there were 1245 Greek schools in the Ottoman territories, in 2022, exactly one century later, there are only 7 that remain open (Kalafat 2021). These schools are Zapeion, Zografeion, Fener, Langa and Prinkipos (Büyükada), in Istanbul and 2 schools in Imbros (Gökçeada) attended by around 300 pupils from all ages. Each year there are 5 to 10 students who are enrolled to these schools, the basic requirement being that the student be Greek Orthodox of Turkish citizenship. This requirement was introduced by the Ministry of National Education in 1968. This requirement means that not only non-orthodox families cannot send their children to these schools but in addition (and this is the most

important) children of Greek-Orthodox families, diplomats, businessmen and women, teachers, etc, who are not Turkish citizens cannot either.

On the other hand, not only Greeks are very few but also some families don't send their children to minority schools for several reasons such us the reputation of bad quality, the fear of being labeled and finally, many Arabic speaker orthodox attending these schools. We will come back to this question.

The quality of the education in these schools suffer mainly because of the misuse of the principle of reciprocity between Greece and Turkey. In this framework 16 contingent teachers can be appointed in these schools. In 1973, it was decided that teachers could be appointed for the courses where there could be a quota deficit in schools. Within the framework of reciprocity, it was decided that 16 teachers would go to Western Thrace, while 16 teachers would come to schools in Istanbul and Gökçeada. Normally, the reciprocity cannot be applied to the own citizens of a state nor in the matter of Human rights. In other word, the use of reciprocity on minority rights is unlawful and unethical. The same principle is also used for schoolbooks in Greek schools. Books coming from Greece are tightly controlled and specifically not appropriate for Greek language learning students. Students who receive education in the mother tongue (Greek) in schools that have the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education and have the status of private minority schools use both Turkish textbooks and Greek textbooks from Greece. Why, in order to impose books and curriculum from Turkey in Western Thrace, Greeks of Turkey should follow books and curricula from Greece? And of course, vice versa…

This is considering a minority always a "minority" not adult, the other meaning if the word in French, under the strict control of the kin state under the cover of protection.

Another issue preventing Greek families to send their children to these schools is the issue of Turkish deputy director acting like a nanny to control and to scold. The position that was started in 1937, ended in 1948-1949 and re-established in 1962, previously referred to as the Turkish Deputy Director, and now as the Chief Deputy Director, is also included in the new regulation. The word "Turkish" disappeared in the reform of education in 2012 but de facto it's still the case.

And finally, one can mention the financial problems of the minority schools. Most of the buildings are old constructions from the 19th century

needing constant maintenance and repair. Foundations that own these buildings don't have enough resources and they are not allowed to receive donations. As it is the case for example for the Phanar Greek school dating back to 1881-1883.

3.5. How to save the Greeks schools of Istanbul?

The situation of Greek schools of Istanbul is critical and requires urgent solutions. 3 main ongoing processes and their combination are capable to guarantee the survival of these schools.

First of all, one must mention of course the "arabisation". Arabic speaker orthodox, mainly from Antioch, for a minority within the minority, at least sociologically speaking. Unlike the remaining bourgeois Greek families of Polis, Arabs immigrated in Istanbul don't hesitate to send their children to minority schools. The result is very paradoxical. In many classes, children from Arabic speaking families are in majority as for example at the Phanar Greek school. Nevertheless, we should emphasize the fact that Arabic speaking orthodox in Istanbul are in the city for at least 20 years now and most of the children are initiated to Greek language since the kindergarten. The attitude of *Polites* (Greeks of Istanbul) towards these children at Greek schools is very ambiguous. While many families think that the presence of these Arab children, at Greek schools is a problem degenerating the *Polites* identity, others, on the contrary considers that their presence save not only the schools but all minority institutions that are threatened to closure otherwise.

The second option for the survival is immigration. This has two different aspects. On the one hand, following the 2008 economic crisis in Greece, in a relatively peaceful atmosphere of Greek Turkish relations, several Greek citizens some of them being the descendants of former *Polites* but also other young Greeks in search of economic dynamism, came to settle to Turkey, mainly in Istanbul (Kotam 2016). In 2022, approximately 2800 Greek citizens (included students) live in Turkey and some of them send their children to Greek minority schools even if these children cannot obtain their graduation because they are not Turkish citizens! These "guest students" are for example around 15 over 50 students of Zografeion. Another example is in Imvros. The Private Gökçeada Greek Primary School, which started its education life

in 1951 under the name of Aya Theodori, was closed in 1964 due to the tense Cyprus policies. It has been reopened in 2012 after 48 years, the school started its first lesson with 4 students. Noting that most of the students at the school are residents of Gökçeada, the children of quota teachers from Greece are also educated. If the settlement of Greek citizens in Turkey becomes stable, and if foreign citizens obtain the right to be graduated from minority schools, the Greek schools of Turkey my find a new kiss of life.

The second aspect of the immigration is related to Syrians. In 2022, according to several statistics, around 5 000 000 Syrians live in Turkey under the temporary protection of the UNCHR. In Syria, 10% of the population is Christian (Orthodox or Nestorian) (Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı 2017) but there is no data about the percentage of Christians among “refugees”. Nevertheless, it wouldn’t be a surprise to see Syrian Arabic speaking orthodox families’ children in the Greek Schools of Istanbul. This additional population may also allow the survival of minority schools if the Greek minority of Turkey doesn’t fall in the trap of racism that shakes Turkish society in 2022.

There is a third option which is also an ongoing process. This process can be called as “folklorization” because schools are not used anymore (only) for educational purposes but serve as venues for exhibitions, conferences, concerts, etc. For example, Galata Greek Primary School was built at the end of the 19th century in order to contribute to the education and training of Greek children. Located in Galata, one of the oldest districts of Istanbul with its neo-classical architectural style, the school had to cease its activities in September 1988 due to the demographic problems that arose especially since the 1960s and 70s. The school, which started to serve as a kindergarten in 2001was closed once again in 2007 due to the lack of pupils. Galata Greek Primary School reopened its doors in 2012 for “Adhocracy”, one of the two main exhibitions of the Istanbul Design Biennial and curated by Joseph Grima.

Similarly, The Yoakimion Greek Girls' School started to be used as an exhibition space, like the Galata Greek School. The first exhibition in the school building has been the sculpture exhibition titled “Me, me, between worlds and between heavens”, of the Greek artist Kalliopi Lemos describing male violence.

Invisibilization as strategy to survive in a public space that is considered neutral and secularized but is heavily nationalist and under the state control is a common experience of all the minorities in Turkey: ethnic, religious and political. The equilibrium between cultural recognition and politicization of cultural identity of the Greek minority is not an isolated case. Other minorities such as Jews (See for example the experience of *Avlaremoz* launched by young Jews of Turkey[1] or Armenians (Özgül 2014).

3.6. Conclusion

The Greek schools of Turkey, especially in Istanbul, cannot only be seen as educational institutions. They represent at the very same time the glorious and rich past of the community and its uncertain future. Thus, their protection is not only an issue of the transmission of the knowledge. It's about interiorizing and legitimation the Greek past of the city which means the rich and diverse heritage of the ottoman Empire. Therefore, the existence of the Greek schools of Istanbul, their educational and cultural activities is not only a problem of the Greek minority. It's directly related to the entire Turkish society and the State.

References

AFET VE ACİL DURUM YÖNETİMİ BAŞKANLIĞI (2017), *Türkiye'deki Suriyelilerin demografik görünümü, yaşam koşulları ve gelecek beklentilerine yönelik saha araştırması,* available at <https://www.afad.gov.tr/kurumlar/afad.gov.tr/25337/xfiles/17a-Turkiye_deki_Suriyelilerin_Demografik_Gorunumu_Yasam_Kosullari_ve_Gelecek_Beklentilerine_Yonelik_Saha_Arastirmasi_2017.pdf> (last accessed 21 November 2022).

AĞIR, Ü. (2014), *Pogrom in Istanbul, 6./7. September 1955: Die Rolle der türkischen Presse in einer kollektiven Plünderungs- und Vernichtungshysterie*, Klaus Schwartz Verlag, Berlin.

CAKAL, E. (2020), *Pluralism, Tolerance and Control: On the Millet System and the Question of Minorities*, in "International Journal on Minority and Group Rights", vol. 27, n.1, 34-65.

[1] https://www.avlaremoz.com/

KALAFAT, O. (2021), *Türkiye'de özel okullar tarihi*, Akademisyen, Istanbul.

KAYA, N. (2015), *Teaching In and Studying Minority Languages in Turkey: A Brief Overview of Current Issues and Minority Schools*, in "European Yearbook of Minority Issues", vol. 12, n. 1, 315-338.

KAYMAK, Ö., BEYLUNİOĞLU, A. M. (2018), *İstanbul'da yaşayan Antakyalı ortodoksların kendilerini kimliklendirme süreci ve İstanbul Rum cemaatiyle ilişkisellikleri*, in H. Rigas (ed.), *Üç milliyetçiliğin gölgesinde kadim bir cemaat: arapdilli Doğu ortodoksları*, Istos, Istanbul.

KOTAM, A. (2016), *Greeks Settling into Turkey Is like a Shot in the Arm for Greek Community in Turkey*, available at https://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/15819/greeks-settling-into-turkey-is-like-a-shot-in-the-arm-for-greek-community-in-turkey (last accessed 21 November 2022).

ÖRS, R. I. (2018), *Diaspora of the City: Stories of Cosmopolitanism from Istanbul and Athens*, Palgrave Studies in Urban Anthropology, London.

ÖZGÜL, C. (2014), *Legally Armenian: Tolerance, Conversion, and Name Change in Turkish Courts*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2014, 56(3), 622-649.

RALLI, A. (ed.) (2019), *The Morphology of Asia Minor Greek*, Brill, Leiden.

4. Kurdish language rights, mobilisations, and representations in the Justice and Development Party's Era

Clémence Scalbert Yücel

The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) came into government in Turkey in 2002, during the aftermath of a violent conflict between Turkish security forces and the guerrilla forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK). This conflict had resulted in over 40,000 deaths and the internal displacement of more than three million people. The leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was jailed and sentenced to death in 1999; in 2002, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment after the abolition of the death penalty in Turkey. In the years since Öcalan's incarceration, Turkey has seen ceasefires, attempts at conflict resolution, and renewed fighting and military operations against the PKK.

The early years of the AKP's government were a period in which hopes for peace were high. Yet such hopes were not realised. In States of dispossession, Zerrin Özlem Biner writes: "post-emergency period in the Kurdish region took the form of a 'violent peace' (Visweswaran 2013) fraught with unilateral ceasefires, peace talks and their failures". For Biner, "violent peace" is a "zone between war and peace" which, despite the violence and uncertainty, "allowed openness, accessibility, and the movement of ideas, practices, and people (…) [and] the performance and production of the political for the possibility of other forms of life" (Biner 2019, xi-xii).

Despite violence, fighting, and losses, it was still possible to imagine a peaceful future. And yet, the context of the Syrian civil war, the breakdown of peace talks in 2015, open war in Kurdish cities (2015-2016), and the military coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and its repression, led to a

renewed crackdown on the Kurdish movement – among other political movements – and confirmed the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey[1]. As Biner argues, the "window that had enabled peace and reconciliation rapidly shrank" (Biner 2019, 49).

In this chapter, I look more closely into the issue of Kurdish language rights, education, and public image during the AKP years. This is central to the Kurdish issue: the Kurdish language has been a key marker of a contested identity, and its usage a de facto political stance. The desire for language recognition and education rights have been at the core of the Kurdish question, its resolution attempts and its failures, as we shall see. The essay is based on the analysis of media coverage of the issue, as well as the now large body of literature on Kurdish language policy in Turkey. Among this literature, it is particularly worth mentioning the recent doctoral thesis of Ronayi Önen Baykuşak, which presents an original and extremely rich analysis of the Kurdish language policies in Turkey in the 20th and 21st centuries. The chapter first examines the different steps that enabled the more widespread use of the Kurdish language under the AKP government from 2002. It then looks into the mobilisations for Kurdish language rights – in particular those that have taken place since the collapse of the peace process in 2015 – as well as the struggle for Kurdish to be officially recognised in Turkey. In the final section, I shall examine the public image of the Kurds and the Kurdish language in Turkey today, showing that Kurdish is once again denigrated and portrayed as the language of backwardness, separatism, and terror, leading to new restrictions on language use and attacks on Kurdish speakers.

4.1. Language rights under the AKP government: from the perspective of the European adhesion to the collapse of the peace process

From the 1920s up to the 1990s, the policy of the Turkish Republic towards the Kurds was to deny their existence and to ban and repress the use of the Kurdish language and the expression of any form of

---

1 On the rise of authoritarianism in the country, see the special issue of "Mouvements", no 90, 2017/2, entitled *Turquie autoritaire, Turquie contestataire*, and the special issue of the "British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies" no 46, 2019/5 on *Authoritarianism, Citizenship and Democracy in Turkey*.

Kurdishness[2]. This policy of denial and repression was accompanied by state narratives that framed the Kurdish question as "an issue of reactionary politics, tribal resistance and regional backwardness" (Yeğen 1996). For successive Turkish governments and state institutions, the Kurdish issue was to be solved by social change and development, individual assimilation, and the use of violence.

The 1990s saw some first steps towards a recognition of Kurdish and the granting of some language rights to the Kurds, against the backdrop of a complex regional and domestic situation, in particular with the amendment of the law 2932 in 1991[3]. While the war between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK was raging, these legal changes enabled publication in Kurdish and the development of a Kurdish literature in the country. As we will see below, additional linguistic rights were granted under the AKP government. However, the majority of the Kurdish people considered these steps "not as systematic efforts as part of a genuine agenda of democratization and peaceful resolution of the Kurdish conflict, but as a token move to ease internal and external pressures and to co-opt Kurdish demands" (Derince 2013, 147). Indeed, the AKP had been counting on Kurdish votes to remain in government, and these steps must be considered in this framework of electoral competitions[4]. Furthermore, we shall see that these steps were limited, and judged as such, primarily because they neither challenged the status quo nor offered official recognition to the Kurdish language and people.

The first reforms of the new millennium coincided with the acceptance of Turkey as a candidate for European Integration in 2001. In this context, different laws were voted in, which enabled the use of languages other than Turkish in several areas, including publications (law 4709 of 17 October 2001) and TV and radio broadcasting and education (law 4771 of 3 September 2002)[5]. Despite such laws, however, broadcasting was authorised only on public channels and for a limited

---

[2] Scholars in different disciplines have studied this ban and its evolution thoroughly. See, for instance, Virtanen 2003; Hassanpour 1992; Önen Baykuşak 2020; Scalbert Yücel 2010; 2017; and Zeydanlioğlu 2012; 2013.

[3] See Scalbert Yücel 2010.

[4] On this, see Tezcür 2014.

[5] See Virtanen 2003.

amount of time per day, and education in Kurdish was legalised only in private language courses[6]. Most importantly, the language was not – and still has not been – officially recognised. These laws did not mention any language by name but instead used an invisibilising circumlocution: "languages and dialects used traditionally by Turkish citizens in their daily life". These steps thus have not addressed the "political ontology of [the] Turkish nation-state" (Derince 2013, 145) and did not constitute a real change in the treatment of the Kurdish question[7]. Furthermore, none of the subsequent reforms or changes in language and education rights has challenged this "political ontology". Even today, despite various legal reforms and amendments, peace negotiations and resolution attempts, Turkish remains the only official language of the country and the sole legal language of education.

A few years into the AKP government, renewed discussions took place to solve the Kurdish question. But, again, these must be understood in the context of electoral competition for votes between the pro-Kurdish parties and the AKP who, owing to their Islamic background and conservative politics, enjoyed the electoral support of a part of the Kurdish constituency. In 2005, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then Prime Minister, recognised that military action had not solved the Kurdish question and declared his willingness for a peace process to enable its resolution. Just a few years later, different negotiations and resolutions attempts took shape. In July 2009, in the aftermath of the electoral success of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP), the government launched the so-called "Kurdish Opening" (*Kürt Açılımı*), which was quickly renamed, following criticism from Turkish nationalists to "Democratic Opening" (*Demokratik Açılım*) or "National Unity and Brotherhood Project" (*Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi*). That "opening", qualified by Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden, and Nic Walker as an "ad-hoc process of politicking" came to an end in 2011, a year of particularly violent repression against Kurdish activists marked by the Kurdistan Communities Union

---

6 After several administrative issues, these courses were finally opened in Istanbul and in a few cities in Kurdistan in 2004. They did not stay open long as they were not appealing to a Kurdish audience: this audience either demanded more, or was suspicious towards state initiatives. See Scalbert Yücel 2010, 124-126.

7 This point has been stressed by many scholars of Turkey's Kurdish language policy, including Welat Zeydanlioğlu and Serif Derince.

(KCK)[8] trials (Casier et al. 2011, 117). A renewed "peace process" (*barış süreci*) was announced in March 2013. Two years later, this process also collapsed.

These years of "violent peace" saw the passing of laws that made the use of Kurdish possible in a variety of contexts. This also had the effect of making Kurdish much more visible – and somehow acceptable – in the public sphere. For instance, TRT 6 (later renamed TRT Kurdî) was launched on 1 January 2009 as a public channel broadcasting fully in Kurdish. In September 2009, Turkey's Higher Education Board (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, YÖK) approved Mardin Artuklu University's application to establish an "Institute of Living Languages", which aimed to provide postgraduate education in Kurdish and other regional languages. Other universities in the Kurdish region went on to open similar departments teaching Kurdish language and literature. In the following years (2009-2014), the country witnessed the legalisation of optional classes of Kurdish (and other regional languages) as options in state schools and high schools; the legalisation of the use of Kurdish in some contexts including prayers, jail, and political propaganda; and the reinstitution of some old Kurdish place names that had been "Turkified" throughout the 20th century (Öktem 2008).

Given the complete ban on Kurdish in the country for decades, these measures seemed quite important. However, they remained limited and were far from satisfying the Kurds and the Kurdish movement. Indeed, the Democratisation Package announced in September 2013, a few months after the opening of the peace process, just like the previous reforms and changes, did not mention Kurds or the Kurdish language, nor did it address the question of Turkey's official language (Önen Baykuşak 2021, 95-96). It was therefore considered insufficient by the KCK, who declared that without the recognition of the existence of Kurds and of "education in mother tongue" (*anadilde eğitim*), assimilation, negation, and "cultural genocide" (*kültürel soykırım*) would continue[9]. Thus, campaigning on Kurdish language rights and education remains an important issue, despite repression and the toxic socio-political climate.

---

[8] The Koma Civakên Kurdistanê (KCK) was founded in 2005 as part of the PKK organisational complex. The KCK is a network of organisations acting throughout Kurdistan and the diaspora to promote local political life through local councils and to organise civil society and cultural work.

[9] Quoted in Önen Baykuşak 2021, 344.

4.2. Mobilisations for collective language rights: Kurdish as an official language of Turkey and mother tongue education

The fact that none of the changes mentioned above has addressed the legal and constitutional status of Kurdish as an official language of the country or of the Kurds as a recognised people of the country has been one of the main important points of disagreement and conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdish movement. In 2013, Welat Zeydanlioğlu wrote:

> "The right to education in Kurdish continues to be at the heart of the Kurdish question in Turkey, with Kurdish politicians demanding the guarantees of this fundamental right, while the government will only consider offering Kurdish as an elective course. This is part of the AKP's policy of demonising Kurdish demands for collective rights as 'separatist', and instead formulating a watered-down 'individual based' rights policy that fails to meet Kurdish demands." (Zeydanlioğlu 2013, 175).

In the early 2000s, the Kurdish movement had rearticulated its political project around concepts of Democratic republic, Democratic confederalism, and Democratic autonomy. With Democratic autonomy, the movement embraced the struggle for collective cultural rights, in opposition to the individual cultural rights perspective adopted and promoted by the AKP (Önen Baykuşak 2021, 282, 319–321)[10]. In its 2007 Congress, the DTP had declared that local languages must be made the languages of administration and of education in autonomous regions and that this use must be protected in the Constitution (BİA Haber Merkezi 2007)[11]. In this framework, the Democratic autonomy project incorporated the recognition of Kurdish as an official language of the country and of education.

Within this framework, large mobilisations and campaigns focusing on the recognition of Kurdish as an official language of Turkey and a language of education were initiated by the Kurdish movement from

---

[10] See also Casier et al. 2011, 115.

[11] The Party Congress and Charter are discussed in Önen Baykuşak 2021, 283–285.

the mid-2000s onward. These mobilisations were led by the Movement for the Language of Education (Tevgera Zimanê Perwerdehiyê, TZP-Kurdî), which was founded in 2006. Its name is indicative of its focus: the organisation aims at "developing and protecting" Kurdish through education and "language consciousness", ensuring that Kurdish is more widely used (Önen Baykuşak 2021, 292)[12]. In 2008, they launched extensive campaigns calling for education in Kurdish, including a 2010 campaign calling for school boycotts (Ibid., 334-337).

Boycotts continued in the following years, including during the Democratic Opening and Peace Process (2011-2014). In order to offer a schooling alternative to the children taking part in the boycott, TZP-Kurdî, the teachers' union Eğitim-sen, and the Education Support Houses (Eğitim Destek Evleri) linked to the pro-Kurdish municipalities announced the opening of schools providing full education in Kurdish (Önen Baykuşak 2021, 346). According to Şerif Derince, a teacher and language activist, these schools' purpose was to "put pressure on the Turkish state so that it recognises formal education in Kurdish"[13]. Ferzad Kemanger School opened in 2014 in Diyarbakır, offering tuition in Kurdish to around 300 primary school pupils (Ashly 2019; Önen Baykuşak 2021, 348-349). It was the first of a network of 15 unregistered schools in Kurdistan (BİA Haber Merkezi 2015)[14]. As soon as the schools opened, their doors were locked, broken open and locked again. They became sites of major demonstrations. Providing education in Kurdish, these schools were indeed operating illegally – until there were given temporary authorisation at the end of 2014 by the Ministry of National Education. In 2016, with the repression that followed the military coup attempt and the appointment of trustees at the head of once pro-Kurdish municipalities, the schools were closed by decree and went underground before finally ceasing to operate.

Pro-Kurdish parties had been elected at the head of local governments in Kurdish towns and cities since 1999. They had been involved in establishing an alternative "competing governmentality", redefining "Kurdish subjectivity" at the local level (Watts 2010, 142-160). This

[12] Under the umbrella of TZP-Kurdî, a network of centres, Kurdî-Der, opened to teach Kurdish language, produce Kurdish teaching material, and train teachers.

[13] Quoted in Ashly 2019.

[14] For more on these schools, see Dîren 2019.

lasted until 2016 when, after the military coup attempt, the government dismissed (and often jailed) the mayors and appointed trustees at the head of these municipalities. This was a severe blow against Kurdish language. Indeed pro-Kurdish municipalities had been instrumental in the promotion of Kurdish as an official language and a language of education at the local level, as shown in the example of the schools discussed above[15]. Mayors and members of municipal councils were, to quote the title of Nicole Watts' book, "activists in office": they acted "'as-if' new rights and freedoms were in fact in place, pushing the boundaries of legal and illegal behaviour and seeking legal reforms" (Watts 2010, 165). The schools mentioned above were not the first or only site of language activism and promotion of collective language rights by these municipalities[16]. As early as 2006, in the context of the project of Democratic Autonomy, the municipality of Sur in Diyarbakır launched a "bilingual municipality", providing its services in both Turkish and Kurdish. Providing such services in any language other than Turkish was, and still is, illegal. The mayor and the municipal council were therefore removed from office and tried[17]. Nevertheless, pro-Kurdish municipalities around the country continued to provide multilingual services, operating "as if" this was legal.

With the failure of the peace process and in the aftermath of the military coup attempt, these municipalities were dismantled, mayors were arrested, trustees appointed, and Kurdish language organisations and schools were shut down. However, the language movement reorganised itself. In November 2018, the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) and eight other Kurdish parties[18] formed the Kurdish Language Platform (Platforma Zimanê Kurdî), the role of which is to promote the use of Kurdish in Turkey

---

15 See Derince 2014.

16 Along with the schools, the preschool and kindergarten project Zarokistan, supporting a "mother tongue-based multilingual" educational approach, opened in around 20 Kurdish towns and cities, receiving around 1,000 pupils. Though Zarokistan and the other schools were shut down in 2016, some families still organised the provision of underground Kurdish education at home. See Ashly 2019.

17 On this case, see Casier 2010 and Watts 2010, 151-153.

18 This includes AZADÎ, the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the Freedom and Socialist Party (ÖSP), the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (PDK), the Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Turkey (PDK-T), the Party of Freedom and Humanity (PÎA), and the Kurdistan Socialist Party (PSK)

and to campaign for the recognition of Kurdish as an official language (Faidhi Dri 2020):

> "Kurdish language is not forbidden. But it is not a language of education in the schools of Turkey. Kurdish is not a second official language in Northern Kurdistan. Our language is therefore under a major threat of extinction and disappearance."[19] (Rûpela Nû 2018).

The Association for Research on Mesopotamia's Language and Culture (Mezopotamya Dil ve Kültür Araştırma Derneği, MED-DER) had been launched in 2017 to replace Kurdî – Der and teach Kurdish. However, its president, Mehmet Esen, had made his views clear that such courses will not solve the language problem which can be solved only by education in Kurdish[20]. At the start of the 2021 school year, MED-DER called for a "multi-lingual education system" and declared that "mother tongue education is a basic and universal right. Crushing this right is a crime against humanity" (Yenigün Haber 2021). The HDP supported this campaign, sending several hundreds of its members – including those in leadership positions – to learn Kurdish in these classes (Mezopotamya Ajansı 2021a). Other organisations with similar aims were established, including the Kurdish Language and Culture Network (Tora Ziman û Çanda Kurdî), which was founded by Kurdish writers, publishers, politicians, and intellectuals in order to fight against assimilation and to promote the recognition of Kurdish as an official language of the country and educational system (Tora Kurdî 2020). The Movement for Kurdish Language (Hereketa Zimanê Kurdî, HezKurd) was founded in 2020 with similar aims. Activity in support of Kurdish language rights continues, for instance through International Mother Language Day (21 February) and the introduction of Kurdish options in state schools (with large campaigns in the first months of January 2022). Optional Kurdish language classes had not been very well attended (or staffed) since their creation in 2012. Some had criticised them as being insufficient and an unsatisfactory response to Kurdish demands. They had been largely boycotted by the

---

19 Unless otherwise indicated translations from Kurdish or Turkish are my own.

20 See Önen Baykuşak 2021, 376.

Kurdish movement. Yet campaigns led by the Kurdish Language Platform and HezKurd in 2022 focused on enrolling more pupils into these classes as a means to stress the importance of Kurdish language and the need for its recognition[21]. Thus, campaigning has restructured around new organisations using new tools and sites of mobilisation but retains a continued focus on official status and mother tongue education, despite a difficult climate of continued repression and renewed hatred.

4.3. Renewed Kurdish hatred: criminalisation of the Kurdish language, activism and lynch mobs

Throughout the two decades of AKP government, particularly during times when resolutions have been attempted, some cultural rights have been granted and Kurdish has become more widespread in the public sphere. However, the repression faced by Kurdish activists has increased – as illustrated as early as 2010-2012 by the KCK trials. This discrepancy between the granting of more cultural rights on one hand, while repressing political activists on the other seems contradictory only on the surface. The AKP years are marked by growing opposition between the "good Kurd" supporting the political party in power and its policies, and the "bad Kurd", opposing its measures and making different demands. These bad Kurds – such as those who expressed demands for collective language rights – have been accused of supporting the PKK and have been tried under anti-terrorism laws. This mainstream, pro-government narrative was reinforced in September 2021, when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claimed that the ruling party to which he belongs had "solved" the Kurdish issue with "all of its dimensions from rights and freedoms to development" (Duvar English 2021). This eliminated any potential for discussion, given that those who even acknowledge the Kurdish issue today are considered terrorists and can, therefore, be charged. In response to this declaration, Nahit Eren, the president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, declared:

> "If the right to education in the language and the definition of citizenship remain as a problem, if there is continued interference with the right to vote and with elections, there is a Kurdish problem." (Erbay 2021).

[21] On optional Kurdish classes, see Yaşar 2022.

At present, since the collapse of the peace process, language activism remains criminalised[22], which has led the publisher of the famous Kurdish magazine *Nûbihar* to declare that "after the end of the peace process, we have returned to the 1990s"[23]. Indeed we see a reverse process: the de-Kurdification of the public sphere, in particular in the municipalities which has had been placed under the rules of trustees; a renewed fear of using Kurdish in public; and a renewed depreciation of the language.

Theatre plays and songs in Kurdish are regularly banned and in 2018, several TV stations were fined and suspended for broadcasting Kurdish songs. TRT banned 66 Kurdish songs as they supposedly propagated terrorism. This list of banned songs included those of the Kurdish singer Rojda, which had been played by TRT on the radio and on TV for years (Güven 2020). In 2021, imams have been arrested in Istanbul for delivering their Friday sermons in Kurdish and are currently being tried for terrorism (Mezopotamya Ajansı 2021b). But these imams are accused of using words not used by the Kurdish people, but by the PKK, thereby dividing Kurdish language into a "good" Kurdish and a "bad" Kurdish. Such words include *bawermend* (believers), *civak* (society, community), *jiyan* (life), and *wekhevî* (equality), among others. Tora Kurdî has responded to these arrests and trials with a slogan: "your mentality is criminal, not our language" (Rûdaw 2022)[24].

These narratives criminalising Kurdish language and its use are becoming increasingly widespread and visible in the public sphere. In the summer of 2021, TV presenter Didem Arslan Yılmaz removed one of the guests who started speaking in Kurdish from her programme, using negationist and orientalist terminology. She indeed declared: "This is the Republic of Turkey, we don't know this Eastern language" (Haber Merkezi 2021). Phone conversations in Kurdish between prisoners and their families are cut by the jail authorities under the pretence that they are not in an "understandable language" (Tr724 Haber Merkezi 2021).

---

22 On this, see Önen Baykuşak 2021, 375-376.

23 Quoted in Önen Baykuşak, 2021, 376.

24 There is considered a "bad Kurdish" (spoken and used by the media of the Kurdish movement) and a "good Kurdish" (used by the state and government institution). Many among the Kurdish movement have criticised TRT 6, since its creation, for being a tool for assimilating Kurds and perverting the Kurdish language. Further research on this issue is required.

These narratives – and their associated practices – are characteristic of the pre-1990s era but are seeing a resurgence today. Despite being individual actions – by a TV presenter or by a prison guard – they are fuelled and supported by the official narratives and legal practices that criminalise the use of Kurdish. Such attitudes towards the Kurdish language can be traced to lynch mobs that developed in the 2000s, analysed by Zeynep Gambetti as "buttress[ing] the state by aligning civil society and citizens in relation to national objectives" (Gambetti 2013, 127). The proliferation of these lynch mobs did not decline during the peace process and are now on the rise again.

Between 2013 and 2021, it is estimated that five people were killed for speaking or listening to music in Kurdish, and many more were attacked by nationalist mobs (Durgut 2021; İHD 2020). Kurds are attacked because they listen to Kurdish music or speak Kurdish, both of which activities function as markers of their identity, of their difference – which has been criminalised. The summer of 2021 witnessed new attacks and at least eight deaths (Hakim Dal and seven members of the Dedeoğulları family were killed). These attacks are acts of "Kurdophobia", which Mehmet Kurt defines as "an intertwined phenomenon of hostility, fear, intolerance, and racism toward Kurdish people, culture, and language among Turkish supremacists and the wider Turkish society" (Kurt 2021, 925). Such Kurdophobic attitudes and attacks have been nurtured by decades of degrading narratives and policies of denial and assimilation – and mostly remain unpunished.

4.4. Conclusion

The Kurdish movement has always proved extremely resilient: restructuring, reshaping, and reorganising itself in the aftermath of violence, bans, and suppression. The language movement is no exception: soon after language institutions were closed down, new ones were created, and the movement began again.

Nevertheless, the movement now lacks the support of the network of pro-Kurdish municipalities that, since 1999, have been crucial in developing and supporting pro-Kurdish language policies on the ground by making Kurdish a language of administration, local government, and education at the local level throughout Kurdistan.

The Kurdish language is now taught in universities and broadcast on the state TV channel. It is not illegal to speak Kurdish. This has created an appearance of normality and led the Turkish president to declare in 2021 that all rights and freedoms had been granted to Kurds and that the Kurdish question was solved. However, one of the most important rights for the Kurds – the right to education in their mother tongue and the right to official recognition of their language and their very existence – are still denied. Furthermore, the Kurdish language has become divided since the creation of these state-supported institutions: if the TRT 6 channel has been criticised by the Kurdish movement for using a poor Kurdish and therefore being a tool of assimilation, the media of the Kurdish movement is accused of using a pro-terrorist language. A diglossia has emerged between two new language varieties of Kurdish: a good, pro-government Kurdish and a bad, "terrorist", pro-PKK one – reflecting the opposition between "good" and "bad" Kurds. Viewing these "bad" Kurds and their language as terrorists, coupled with the claim that the Kurdish question has been solved, has fuelled a strong hatred towards Kurdish in an increasingly autocratic and nationalist Turkey. Room for manoeuvre for language activists has become tighter, and activism riskier.

References

ASHLY, J. (2019), *In Turkey, Kurdish Educators Take Their Classrooms Underground amid Repression*, in "The New Arab", available at: <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/turkey-kurdish-educators-take-their-classrooms-underground> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

BİA HABER MERKEZİ (2015), *İlk Kürtçe karneler verildi* in "Bianet", available at: <https://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/161771-ilk-kurtce-karneler-verildi> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

- (2007), *Demokratik Toplum Kongresi sonuç bildirgesi: DTP Kongresi'nden "20-25 Özerk Bölge" önerisi*, in "Bianet", available at: <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/102605-dtp-kongresi-nden-20-25-ozerk-bolge-onerisi> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

BİNER, Z. O. (2019), *States of Dispossession. Violence and Precarious Coexistence in Southeast Turkey*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

CASIER, M. (2010), *Turkey's Kurds and the Quest for Recognition: Transnational Politics and the EU-Turkey Accession Negotiations*, in "Ethnicities" 10 (1), 3-25.

CASIER, M. et al. (2011), *Fruitless Attempts? The Kurdish Initiative and Containment of the Kurdish Movement in Turkey*, in "New Perspectives on Turkey", 44, 103-127.

DERİNCE, Ş. M. (2013), *A Break or Continuity? Turkey's Politics of Kurdish Language in the New Millennium,* in "Dialectical Anthropology", 37 (1), 145-152.

- (2014), *Amed Büyüksehir Belediyesi dil ve eğitim çalışmalari için strateji raporu*, Amed Büyükşehir Belediyesi, available at: <https://www.academia.edu/43062488/AMED_BÜYÜKŞEHİR_BELEDİYESİ_DİL_VE_EĞİTİM_ÇALIŞMALARI_İÇİN_STRATEJİ_RAPORU> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

DÎREN, A. (2019), *Her mal dibistanek*, available at: <https://disk.yandex.com/i/KlF-HxGNyPDNgjg> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

DURGUT, Z. (2021), *Kürtçe konuştukları için*, in "Yeni Özgür Politika", available at: <https://www.ozgurpolitika.com/haberi-kurtce-konustuklari-icin-149652> (last accessed 19 April 2022).

DUVAR ENGLISH (2021), *Erdoğan: We Solved Kurdish Issue with All of its Dimensions*, available at: <https://www.duvarenglish.com/erdogan-we-solved-kurdish-issue-with-all-of-its-dimensions-news-59040> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

ERBAY, V. (2021), *Despite Claims, Erdoğan Hasn't Solved the Kurdish Issue, Say experts in Diyarbakır*, in "Duvar English", available at: <https://www.duvarenglish.com/despite-claims-president-erdogan-hasnt-solved-the-kurdish-issue-say-experts-in-diyarbakir-news-59163> (last accessed 8 March 2022).

FAIDHI DRI, K. (2020), *Silencing of the Kurdish Language in Modern Turkey: Who is to Blame?*, in "Rûdaw", available at: <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/210720201> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

GAMBETTI, Z. (2013), *"I'm No Terrorist, I'm a Kurd": Societal Violence, the State, and the Neoliberal Order*, in Z. Gambetti and M. Godoy-Anativia (eds.), *Rhetorics of Insecurity: Belonging and Violence in the Neoliberal Era*, New York University Press, New York, 125-152.

GÜVEN, C. (2020), *State Suppression of the Kurdish Language Is Escalating in Turkey*, in "Turkish Minute", available at: <https://turkishminute.com/2020/10/15/state-suppression-of-the-kurdish-language-is-escalating-in-turkey/> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

HABER MERKEZİ (2021), *Van Barosu'ndan "Kürtçe" çıkışı yapan Didem Arslan Yılmaz'a suç duyurusu*, in "En Son Haber", available at: <https://www.ensonhaber.com/gundem/van-barosundan-kurtce-cikisi-yapan-didem-arslan-yilmaza-suc-duyurusu> (last accessed 19 April 2022).

İHD (2020), *Türkiye'de nefret suçları ve son dönemde yaşanan ırkçı saldırılar özel raporu*, available at: <https://www.ihd.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/20200922_NefretSucuIrkciSaldirilarRaporu-OrnekVakalar.pdf> (last accessed 19 April 2022).

KURT, M. (2021), *No Justice for Kurds: Turkish Supremacy and Kurdophobia,* in "Social Research: An International Quarterly", 88 (4), 923-947.

MEZOPOTAMYA AJANSI (2021a), *HDP'lilere Kürtçe dil sertifikaları verildi*, available at: <http://mezopotamyaajansi35.com/search/content/view/149184?page=1&key=bce3c1b30435ffc962d3b6b9ea8b271c> (last accessed 21 November 2022).

- (2021b), *Kürtçe hutbe okuyan 9 imama tutuklama kararı ifade öncesi verildi*, available at: <http://mezopotamyaajansi35.com/tum-haberler/content/view/140833> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

ÖKTEM, K. (2008), *The Nation's Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponymes in Republican Turkey*, in "European Journal of Turkish Studies", 7, available at: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejts.2243> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

ÖNEN BAYKUŞAK, R. (2020), *Türkiye'de hâkim ve muhalif politikanın gerilim alanlarından biri olarak Kürtçe dil Meselesi* (unpublished doctoral dissertation), Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul.

RÛDAW (2022), *'Civak, jiyan, rûmet, rojhilat, hêja' kelimeleri PKK bağlantısına 'kanıt' sayıldı*, available at: <https://www.rudaw.net/turkish/middleeast/turkey/010120221> (last accessed 19 April 2022).

RÛPELA NÛ (2018), *9 partiyan avakirina Platforma Zimanê Kurdî ragihand*, available at: <http://www.rupelanu.com/9-partiyan-avakirina-platforma-zimane-kurdi-ragihand-3522h.htm> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

SCALBERT YÜCEL, C. (2017), *Guerre, état d'urgence, droits culturels et linguistiques kurdes bafoués. Retour sur le pluralisme selon l'AKP*, in "Mouvements" 90 (2), 101-108.

- (2010), *Liberalisation of Turkish State Policies toward Kurdish Language: The Weight of External Actors*, in R. Lowe and G. Stansfield (eds.), *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*, Brookings Institution Press, London, 116-129.

TEZCÜR, G. M. (2014), *The Ebb and Flow of Armed Conflict in Turkey: An Elusive Peace*, in D. Romano and M. Gurses (eds.), *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 171-188.

TORA KURDÎ (2020), *Tora Ziman û Çandan hat avakirin*, available at: <http://torakurdi.org/content/details/&c=tora-ziman-u-candan-hat-avakirin-> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

TR724 HABER MERKEZİ (2021), *Cezaevinde Kürtçe konuşmaya 'yasak'*, in "TR724", available at: <https://www.tr724.com/cezaevinde-kurtce-konusmaya-yasak/> (last accessed 19 April 2022).

VIRTANEN, O. E. (2003), *Recent Changes in Turkey's Language Legislation*, in "Mercator Working Papers", available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED479897.pdf> (last accessed 7 March 2022).

WATTS, N. F. (2010), *Activists in Office: Kurdish Politics and Protest in Turkey*, University of Washington Press, Seattle.

YAŞAR, F. (2022), *Kürtçe seçmeli ders zili çalıyor*, in "Gazete Duvar", available at: <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/kurtce-secmeli-ders-zili-caliyor-haber-1548540> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

YEĞEN, M. (1996), *The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity*, in "Middle Eastern Studies", 32 (2), 216-229.

YENİGÜN HABER (2021), *MED-DER'den 'çok dilli eğitim sistemi' çağrısı*, in "Diyarbakır Yenigün", available at: <https://diyarbakiryenigun.com/med-der-den-cok-dilli-egitim-sistemi-cagrisi/> (last accessed 18 April 2022).

ZEYDANLİOĞLU, W. (2012), *Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy*, in "International Journal of the Sociology of Language", 217, 99-125.

- (2013), *Repression or Reform? An Analysis of the AKP's Kurdish Language Policy*, in C. Gunes and W. Zeydanlioğlu (eds.), *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation, and Reconciliation*, Routledge, London, 162-185.

5. Armenians in Turkey: from double marginalization to where?

Arus Yumul

"We are [considered] neither Turks nor Armenians."
Mesrob II, the late Armenian Patriarch

"Non-Muslims in this country
are the crème de la crème of minorities.
We create no troubles whatsoever."
An Armenian citizen

"Being a minority has a distinct taste.
One learns to be tolerant in the face of injustices."
A Jewish citizen

Let me start with an extract from a 2006 Turkish newspaper article:

> "Armenians of Turkey, of the Diaspora, and Armenians of Armenia are different from each other. […] [Istanbul Armenians] with their commonsensical attitude have set an example both to the world and to Turkey. […] Recently we are observing an exception: Hrant Dink. […] Dink is a romantic Armenian attempting to ignite […] Armenian nationalism in Turkey. […] He is after settling accounts not reconciliation. […] This manner is not befitting a Turkish Armenian. […] Dink is disappointing us. […] He is not exhibiting the posture of an Istanbul Armenian." (Gülcan 2006).

What the columnist defined as the posture of Istanbul Armenians corresponds to the position of the pariah who abstains from getting involved in politics, who will not or cannot venture into the absolute shine of polis light, that is, the one that does not or cannot become a "political actor" (Ring 1991). Political actors are those privileged individuals, who by using "reason, speech, creativity and freedom"

among equals (Ibid., 433), enjoy the opportunity to "reveal actively their unique personal identities" in the public sphere (Arendt 1998, 79). The pariahs, in contrast – who are excluded from the public sphere and are not seen as individuals but always as members of particular groups – instead of making an appearance "in the human world" (Ibid.), as Hannah Arendt puts it, choose to retreat to the relative security of their own private lives and rely on their community for a mixture of "eschatology, charity, appeal, negotiation obedience and acquiescence" (Parvikko 1966, 160). They find the political sphere arduous and exhausting, where they are treated neither as unique individuals nor as equals.

5.1. Armenians as traditional pariahs

"They were both enemies of Turks" these were the first words of a drunken Armenian just after he shot dead two of his Armenian friends at a tavern in Istanbul in 1995 (Show TV 1995). The word Armenian has for so long been stigmatized, anathematized, and criminalized that the man in all probability was trying to legitimize and even de-criminalize his deed by capitalizing on the prevailing anti-Armenian sentiments in society. The ethnic loyalties of Armenians have at all times been perceived as a seditious force destabilizing national unity. Throughout the 1930s, for example, the government scrutinized Armenian citizens who too often moved within the country or travelled abroad, for their connections and correspondence with Armenians abroad, since it was believed that the Armenian component "will be a proxy to all sorts of evil" (Çağaptay 2006, 134-135). Even those Muslims with possible Armenian heritage were under suspicion and surveillance (Ibid., 34). Non-Muslims have been considered as an internal threat. In 1962, a special commission was established by a secret decree with the responsibility of controlling minority activities for the sake of state security[1]. Following the 1980 coup, the junta in 1982 asked from the police not only to record the Armenians within their respective districts, but also to keep them

---

[1] The commission functioned until 2004, when it was abrogated by another secret decree and was replaced by the "Commitee for the Evaluation of Minority Problems" (Hürriyet 2004).

under close surveillance (Radikal 2007). A decree law published in the Official Gazette on 28 December 1988 indicated that, among others, the "native foreigners", referring to non-Muslims, were to be considered as potential saboteurs (Nokta 1989)[2].

Confronted with this situation Armenians in Turkey have led a secluded life, while entrusting their elite with the duty of performing acts of loyalty, since their loyalty as citizens was not taken for granted, it was, as it were, on perpetual trial and had to be substantiated over and over again. They have led a cautious existence trying to remain as invisible as possible. However, this has proved a practically impossible undertaking, since at every turn they found themselves implicated in situations that have not been of their own making. Under these circumstances, Armenians have resorted to classic minority responses as delineated by Geoff Dench (1986, 42-64), namely, that of maintaining a good reputation as law-abiding, loyal people who co-operate with their compatriots and the state in the wellbeing of society, while postponing to an indefinite future their hopes for equal rights. In order to be known as exemplary citizens they have not refrained from expressing their belief in the system and their own future, and their leaders from displaying ardent commitment to the national purpose even if it were to the detriment of their own community.

During the *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş* (Citizen Speak Turkish) campaign of 1930s, for example, the Armenian Member of Parliament, Berç Türker (Keresteciyan), stood for measures for rendering the Turkish language the spoken mother tongue of everybody living in Turkey (Bali 1999, 295). In order to achieve legitimacy as a non-Muslim candidate for the Turkish Parliament, before the elections, Türker, alongside the candidates from the Greek community, had publicly declared that as Turkish citizens they were not going to act in the parliament as representatives of their respective communities (Ibid., 266) – a behaviour expected only from minority politicians who, unlike those from majority backgrounds, are deprived of "an assured fund of nationalist legitimacy at their disposal" and hence cannot afford to show any "partiality to their own groups of origin" (Dench 1986, 53-54).

---

[2] The article of the decree law pertaining to non-Muslims was later abrogated.

There have always been people within non-Muslim communities, who acted as intermediaries between the state and their own communities who were also entrusted with the task of representing the Turkish official views and interests inside and outside Turkey, who, to borrow a term from Rıfat Bali, were the "non-Muslims of the state" with their "accredited patriotism" (2004). This position resembles Georg Simmel's portrayal of the renegades who, aware of their outsider status, continually strive to prove themselves worthy of this new status by displaying a special loyalty to their new patrons (Simmel 1950, 83). This psychological make-up has been prevalent among the Christian renegades who had been recruited to the civilian and military administrative classes of the Ottoman empire through periodical levies (*devşirme*), and were converted to Islam, who had continually to substantiate themselves as worthy of their "new status and standing" (Coser 1972, 580). However, given the lingering nationalist presupposition of disloyalty swinging over their head as the sword of Damocles, accompanied by real or implied threats of punishment, this attitude has become deeply entrenched in the psychic landscape of Armenians. In the words of the then Head Consultant of the Patriarchate: "We always live cautiously so that an individual Armenian, or the Armenian community as a whole, would not have a bad image" (Marmara 1989). As these words make it clear, "impression management" has been a major preoccupation of Armenians whose performance can best be understood as endeavours "to minimize punishment from the majority"– by implicitly accepting "an inferior or pupillary partnership with their national masters" and engaging in "collective affirmation of loyalty to their hosts" (Dench 1986, 45).

However, neither the prudence of individual Armenians nor that of the community as a whole proved adequate to this end. Because, on the one hand, Armenians have been constructed as the perennial Other of the Turkish nation, there was, on the other, Armenians all over the world seeking redress for the grave injustices they had suffered at the hands of the Young Turks at the turn of the century and struggling for the recognition of the massacres as an officially sponsored genocide. Moreover, the nationalizing policies of the state *à propos* non-Muslims since the nineteenth cen-

tury has by and large been dissimilationist, rather than assimilationist, adopting differentialist and discriminatory treatment on the basis of their religious allegiance – a difference that was taken to be self-evident and fundamental, and "as such they were declared as people not belonging to the homogeneously imagined body – the nation" (Yumul 2009, 268)[3]. During the negotiations for the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece at the Lausanne Peace Conference, the Turkish side had insisted to no avail that Armenians should also be included in the deal (Okutan 2004, 71-72). "We will not have Armenians and Greeks remaining as the means of importing corruption and disloyalty into our country" had said İsmet İnönü, the head of the Turkish delegation, to Richard Washburne Child, a member of the American delegation (Alexandris 1983, 85). As late as 10 November 2008, the then Defence Minister, Vecdi Gönül, expressed a similar understanding when he asked: "If Greeks continued to live in the Aegean and Armenians continued to live in many places in Turkey, I wonder whether there would be today's nation state?" In his opinion, "the principles at work at the onset of the Republic were of utmost importance for Turkey's developing into the [present-day] country of really civilized, modern and enlightened people" (Milliyet 2008), implying that the presence of Armenians and Greeks would have prevented the accomplishment of this very goal.

As traditional pariahs, Armenians have instinctively accepted their social station as outsiders or outcasts as given, and have accommodated prejudice and discrimination instead of defying, challenging, or resisting them. Consequently, they have usually remained silent in the face of injustice and inarticulate, though not insensitive, to offending portrayals of their own people. An Armenian woman who had attended an Armenian primary school recalls the instructor of Turkish language courses constantly referring to Armenians as the enemies of Turks while narrating Turkish history. The woman, alongside her classmates, though moved by the epical style of the narration, were left wavering whether if they too should have considered Armenians as their enemies, or

---

[3] For the distinction between dissimilationist and assimilationist nationalisms see Brubaker 1996.

these very enemies were not in fact themselves (Gavrilof 1994). Although the Lausanne Treaty entitled non-Muslims the right to establish, administer, and control their own charitable, religious, social, and educational institutions (Article 40), in an attempt to bring education under strict state surveillance, various restrictions have been imposed upon minority schools. Moreover, the latter have been portrayed as places where seeds of enmity to Turkey have been implanted in young souls and minds. In 1937, "Turkish" deputy headmasters were appointed to minority schools in order to ensure the upbringing of students in accordance with Turkish culture (Bali 1999, 307). A 1965 law stipulated that besides being a Turkish citizen, deputy headmasters should be of Turkish origin (Oran 2005, 91). That minority establishments and their non-Muslim staff were not dependable in the eyes of the state was made clear by an address to deputy directors by the director of Istanbul Education Directorate in 1995:

> "You represent the Turkish Republic in these [minority] schools. We do not choose the headmasters of these schools; the minorities themselves select them. They are not our headmasters. […] You are our eyes and ears in these schools. Your duty is to keep an eye on what is going on in these schools and inform us. Your responsibilities concerning education and teaching are not so vital. You have to closely monitor the minority teachers." (Söz 1995).

The outcome of such incrimination and absolute exposure to majority scrutiny has led to the internalisation of minority psychology, the production of angst-ridden and sensitive minds: "One enters Armenian schools as an Armenian and ends up as a minority", says a young Armenian university graduate. The "strident" yet "useless" endeavour of herself and her classmates to prove to their Turkish teachers that as Armenians they were not elements of menace overwhelms the recollections of her days in Armenian schools. As a university student, she was surprised to realize that her knowledge of Turkish patriotic literature was far advanced than those of her Turkish friends (Aktan 2006)[4].

---

[4] For a more recent study on the effects of Armenian schools on identity formation see Barış 2019.

The desperate attempt of Istanbul Armenians to substantiate their loyalty and trustworthiness has at times taken spectacular and melodramatic expressions. When in 1934, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer announced plans for the production of a film based on Franz Werfel's novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933), narrating one of the rare cases of successful defiance of deportation orders of the government and the ensuing resistance of Musa Dagh Armenian community in 1915, Turkey put pressure on the United States to prevent the production of the film and succeeded in halting the project. Amidst rising tensions and anti-minority feelings fuelled by the Turkish media, accompanied by calls to Jews and Armenians living in Turkey to perform their duties of citizenship and find ways of influencing the American government, a group of Istanbul Armenians, in order to sooth the fuming public opinion, inspired by the Nazi burning of books including those of Werfel, reduced to ashes the book along with a photograph of its author at the cemetery of a church in Istanbul while singing the Turkish national anthem (Bali 1998, 30). In the aftermath of the event, they sent a telegram to Ministry of Interior on behalf of Turkish Armenian intellectuals, where they informed the government of their accomplishment, which they defined as "a great ceremony", making it clear that their deed was an unmistakable testimony of Turkish-Armenians' loyalty to the Turkish state (Ibid., 31). In 1982, Artin Penik, an Armenian citizen of Turkey, setting himself on fire in Taksim Square in Istanbul "in order to protest Armenian terrorism against Turkey" (Cumhuriyet 1982)[5] staged the ultimate act of loyalty.

Even such histrionic performances of loyalty have never been convincing for the majority society. For many, Armenians were staging play-acts so as to keep behind the masquerade the secret of their identity defined by an unrelenting and unyielding anti-Turkism, their hidden agenda of disintegrating the country, and collaborating with its enemies. This state of affairs notwithstanding, Armenians have continued with their acts of patriotism to quench Turkish reaction against their community. In fact, they were encouraged and directed to do so – a classic strategy of dominant majorities who recruit

---

[5] To this day, Penik remains the most commendable and valued Armenian in the eyes of Turkish nationalists.

minorities "to loyal clientship or tutelage", by expecting them to act as "super-patriots to promote the nation's vision and destiny" thus rendering the minorities into precious natural resources for exploitation "by the sovereign whim of the majority" (Dench 1986, 9). For example, against the then pending genocide draft resolution in the US House of Representatives in 2000, Tansu Çiller, the then leader of the Doğru Yol Partisi (True Path Party) and the former prime minister, had appealed to Armenian citizens to campaign against the resolution, which she described as an act aiming at the peace and stability existing between Turks and Armenians in Turkey. In her opinion, it was necessary for Armenians to resort to this course of action so that the existing amity between the Turks and Armenians in the country could be maintained (Özkök 2000). When the French Parliament approved a genocide bill on 18 January 2001, Turkey strongly condemned the French vote, recalled its ambassador to France, and anti-French demonstrations and rhetoric erupted in Turkey. On 30 January, representatives of Armenian Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant communal establishments issued a declaration which read: "The interference of foreign parliaments, aiming to realize certain international objectives, is regrettable and causes discomfort for us and for all other Turkish citizens, with whom we share a common destiny in our country" (Hyetert 2001). The declaration also stated that, as was the case with all other Turkish citizens, the proper place for discussing issues involving Turkish citizens of Armenian descent was the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In the meantime, however, one columnist after stating that Armenians in Turkey enjoyed complete freedom without any restrictions whatsoever and referring to their assumed affluence, reminded their identity-specific duties by asking why Armenians had not voiced their opposition in a more passionate manner: "Couldn't have they sided with Turkey?" he inquired, "Why did they remain soundless? Couldn't have they bombarded the relevant French institutions with letters, faxes, and e-mails? Couldn't have they showed their reaction in the Turkish press, and participate in a protest rally? Why is this muteness?" (Çölaşan 2001).

Finding themselves in a deal where the Armenian image has been swinging back and forth from internal enemies to the "loyal nation" (*millet-i sadıka*), aspiring for the latter was seen as a safe harbour (Yumul 1998). In return for the tenuous and unstable toleration to be shown to

them through the rhetoric of loyal nation, they adopted the acceptable or permissible Armenian template – which the state and society deemed appropriate for them – as role model. Their words and deeds, echoing the official ideological discourse, were a manifestation of a consciousness shaped and perpetuated by hierarchical and hegemonic relations – an internalized attitude and a psychological mindset that has been termed as "secular dhimmitude" (Emekçioğlu 2016)[6].

5.2. Hrant Dink as political actor

It was only in the nineties that the Turkish society discovered its Others, and, ethnicity, a taboo concept until then, started to circulate within intellectual and political circles. Non-Muslims, in turn, may be for the first time since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, got involved in identity politics. They demanded recognition and preservation of their cultures. Identity politics also entails asserting one's identity as an oppressed or marginalized group. In an unprecedented manner, minorities started to talk loudly about their past and present grievances and the violation of their rights granted by the Lausanne Treaty.

For the first time, Armenians narrated their stories; it was a therapeutic encounter through which the Armenian recollections of the past, actively challenging the official coding of history, could publicly articulate itself. As one columnist observed:

> "We have much inveighed against Armenians. As they continued to remain quiet and maintain a shadowy existence in this country, we embarked on detailing the history narrated by our seniors in an ever more neurotic idiom. In the face of the peevishness of Diaspora Armenians we have become ill-tempered and increasingly ill-treated our citizens with whom we have been living together. Now they are taking the floor. After remaining silent for a century, they have numerous stories to communicate. […] There is much for all of us to learn from the story of living and remaining as an Armenian in this country." (Türker 2004).

---

[6] See also Talin Suciyan's work on post-1923 Armenians in Turkey where she describes the everyday practices shaped by "external conditions" – the society and state structures- and "internal conditions" – the Armenian community and the family structures in which she herself grew up – as "embedded in denial: language, history, annihilation and survival were all denied on various levels" (2016, 20-21).

In an unparalleled way, the voices of Armenians that had been silenced, ignored, or misinterpreted began to be heard. Challenging the hegemonic representation of non-Muslims as a happy lot who have always lived in a peaceful and tolerant environment with no problems whatsoever, the "counter-memory" (Foucault 1977) with its "words in reverse" (Bourdieu 1993, 39) repudiating official narratives broke the surface. Such counter-memories in the form of interviews, films, novels, conferences, autobiographies, exhibitions, and books contributed to reshaping public historical judgments. In 1996, *Agos*, the Armenian-Turkish bi-lingual weekly, was established by Hrant Dink[7] with the aims of combating the negative portrayal of Armenians by authorities and the apparatuses of discourse and of opening up the channels of communication with the majority society. In a relatively short time, *Agos* became the mouthpiece of the Armenian community, informing the Turkish public of the trials and tribulations of Armenians in Turkey, while Dink became a public persona. He was a skilled orator, writer and above all an eloquent narrator. His words defied and subverted the repetitious and ossified words of univocal official monologism which, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, with its exclusive and ultimate truth claims "represents the shutting down of dialogue and its alteric potential" (White 2008, 1). By challenging the taken-for-granted hegemonic discourses on the past and present of Armenians, that hitherto seemed to be implacable and lasting, Dink tried to turn what was a monologue of authoritative, repressive, one-sided, and monophonic dominant voice that demanded complete loyalty and was closed to all other voices, into a dialogue (Bakhtin 1981, 324-344). His words were an invitation to a collective search for truth and collective contemplation on the Armenian question. They catalysed not only an emerging alliance between Armenians and Turks, Kurds and others, but also transformed the society. For the first time for decades, the Turkish society, at least part of it, began to perceive the past through the eyes of others.

Hrant Dink, as an Armenian, was cognizant of his condition as an outsider, of the ways in which the past had shaped and continued to shape his present (Ring 1991, 441) and of the role politics played in

---

[7] For the biography of Hrant Dink see Tuba Çandar 2014.

his life, and he accepted the reality of his identity, "rather than denying it, retreating from it" (Ibid., 443) or concealing who he was. He made a perfect example of the conscious pariah, who, according to Arendt, translates the truth of pariah existence "into terms of political significance" (1944, 107). As an "authentic" Armenian – to use Sartrean language – who had chosen himself as Armenian and realized his Armenian condition, he was ready to assume the "responsibilities and the risks" that living authentically entails (Sartre 1995, 90). Dink was prosecuted several times, and was convicted, and had received a six months-suspended sentence for denigrating Turkishness. He was also indicted for pronouncing that in his opinion the mass destruction of Armenians at the turn of the century was a genocide (Turkish Daily News 2006). In his opinion, the reason for his prosecution was the desire to teach him a lesson because he was Armenian (Dink 2007a). Dink had been receiving threats for a number of years. He considered, but did not leave Turkey, which he regarded as his homeland. In his last article in *Agos* he wrote, "I see myself as frightened as a dove, but I know that people in this country would never harm a dove" (Dink 2007b) and was assassinated on 19 January 2007, the very day his last article was published.

In contrast to the majority of Armenians who accepted their pariahdom instinctively and obediently, Dink was defiant of his position as outsider. Envisioning an all-inclusive society, like the K. of Franz Kafka's *The Castle*, rather than capitulating to demands that he remains eternally an outsider, he strived to secure his legitimate place in a common shared world. When Dink explained in an interview that historians from Armenia would refrain from coming to Turkey and participating in the discussions on history with Turkish colleagues, for it was a criminal offence to designate the events of the past as genocide, he was asked by the journalist if in "his country", that is, in Armenia, it were possible to convene a conference where opinion against the official view would openly be pronounced. He replied: "Does not this country [Turkey] belong to all of us?" (Akdağ and Söylemez 2006).

Their arduous and weary struggle both ended in death. Before his death, however, again like the K. in *The Castle*, Dink had demonstrated at least to some Armenians, as Arendt puts it, "that human rights may be worth fighting for, and that the rule of the castle is not divine law and, consequently, can be attacked" (Arendt 1944, 120). Following Dink's as-

sassination, the deeply-shocked and tormented Armenian community placed a death notice in national papers reading "Rest in peace Hrant. We are here". This was a signal that they were going to follow the path opened by Hrant Dink.

5.3. From traditional pariahdom to conscious pariahdom

In 2006, before the assassination of Hrant Dink, a group of Armenians, with the members of the Greek minority, probably for the first time in their history since the establishment of the republic, issued a declaration against the discriminatory discourse used by the politicians of different parties during discussions concerning the minority foundations in the parliament – where they pronounced that they were not hostages but citizens of the Turkish Republic (Radikal 2006). This was momentous since not only intellectuals or journalists signed the petition but also lay members of the communities. On other occasions, they also denounced the "acts of loyalty" performed by their co-ethnics. In 2010, for example, they launched a petition entitled "We live in a different Turkey" (*Biz başka bir Türkiye'de yaşıyoruz*)[8] against the rosy picture painted about Armenians in Turkey by the chairman of the Board of the Armenian Holy Saviour Hospital (*Sourp Prgitch*), and his remarks that 1915 was just "a fight between two loving friends" and that there was "no need to describe it as genocide" (Milliyet 2010). Following Hrant Dink's example, they had transformed themselves from pariah position to that of conscious pariahs, those who, in Seyla Benhabib's words, transform "difference from being a source of weakness and marginality into one of strength and defiance"(1995, 11), or political actors, who defend themselves as Armenians when attacked as Armenians, by leaving behind their old reasoning, the deep-rooted conviction "that it does not pay to fight back, that one must dodge and escape in order to survive"(Arendt 2007, 361). They decided to come out of hiding, to speak up, rather than remain in the relative security of their invisible ghettos. Many people publicly embraced their Armenian identity or re-discovered their long-forgotten Armenian ancestors and origins. They also start-

---

[8] The Turkish text of the petition is available at <http://bizbaskabirturkiyedeyasiyoruz.blogspot.com/>.

ed to build fresh interactions with majority society, instead of reacting by withdrawing within themselves. The *Nor Zartonk* (New Awakening) movement of Istanbul Armenians took part in the Gezi Park protests (2013) and led the struggle against the demolition of *Kamp Armen* – the former Protestant Armenian orphanage – a movement that resulted in the return of the camp to its rightful owner. Armenians participated in the 24 April commemorations honouring the victims of the genocide, and also Hrant Dink commemorations.

Of course, this is not to say that traditional pariahdom with its acts of loyalty, performed especially by the leaders of the community, disappeared altogether from the scene. Although such acts of loyalty have lost their intensity and did not attract as much attention as before – since, besides Armenians and other non-Muslims, other groups have been included into the ranks of fifth columnists – they did not completely fade away. In an interview he gave to the daily *Milliyet*, just after his election as Patriarch in 2019, Sahak Maşalyan put the emphasis on the loyalty of Armenians: "as the loyal citizens of this country we will continue to contribute to Turkey" (Milliyet 2019). Concerning President Joe Biden's recognition of the Armenian genocide in 2021, he issued a statement reading: "It saddens us to see that the suffering of our people and the suffering of our ancestors are instrumentalized by some countries for everyday political purposes" (Hürriyet Daily News 2021). In his opinion, in order to pave the way for a "constructive dialogue", it was necessary to use a "more meticulous language" and refrain "from expressions [like genocide] that degrade national dignity" (Ibid.). According to AFP, Turkey's Armenians, fearing retribution, kept low profile after Biden's genocide recognition. "Discretion has become a part of our daily lives" said an Armenian who wished to remain anonymous to protect his business. "Everyone has difference on every issue", he commented, "but when it comes to the Armenian question, everyone is united in Turkey". Yetvart Danzikyan, editor-in-chief of *Agos*, perceptively asked: "How can you expect a community which has lived under pressure for decades to speak up?" (France24 2021). However, different voices were also raised on Armenian-related issues. "Remaining silent does not guarantee my safety" said Garo Paylan,

the outspoken Armenian MP of Peoples' Democratic Party, "our collective memory tells us this. In the end, continuing our existence here, isn't up to us, but will be decided by the rest of society standing up for us" (Yackley 2020). Will Armenians revert back to traditional pariahdom depends, as Paylan has asserted, on the rest of society. Given the fact that 53.8% of the population in Turkey do not prefer Armenian neighbours and 60.9% perceive Armenia as a threat (Aydın et al. 2021, 81, 119) the likelihood is still there, since, in the words of Hannah Arendt, so long as "defamed peoples [...] exist", the pariah quality "will be produced anew by each generation with incomparable monotony" (1961, 66).

5.4. Diaspora and diasporization

Armenians of Turkey have long experienced double marginalization, since they have been constructed as the pariahs, or so to speak, the "lost tribe" of the Armenian world. They have been depicted by their co-ethnics elsewhere as "conservative Armenians" subservient and acquiescent to the Turkish state, "instruments of Turkish propaganda", or as "Turkified Armenians". Hrant Dink had described the lives of Armenians in Turkey as "a life on the edge", since, in his words, as an Armenian living in Turkey, "one finds oneself either as the enemy of one's own nation or as the enemy of the state" (Suny 2002). He also complained that the Armenian diaspora considered Armenians in Turkey as Armenians of a lesser rank:

> "By putting a distance between themselves and us, they consider themselves to have turned into 'firmer Armenians'. They are not aware that the crux of the matter lies in remaining in Turkey and continuing as Armenians. This is exactly what we achieve. Despite all the pressure and discomfort, we have skilfully managed to remain on these lands where we are deeply rooted, while at the same time preserving our identity. Instead of praising us for our accomplishment, they relegate our status to Armenians of the last comportment." (Kaplan 2003).

The Turkish hegemonic discourse, on the other hand, has designated Armenians in Turkey as "our Armenians" in a patronizing manner disassociating or – to use the word preferred by this dis-

course – "absolving" them from a demonized and antagonized diaspora, defined only by their extremism and resolute anti-Turkism.

Hrant Dink's assassination was not an end but a beginning for Armenians in Turkey. It was a momentous turning point where many Armenians, especially the younger generations, reclaimed their identity as Armenians: "I made acquaintance with my Armenianness when Hrant Dink was killed" says a young Armenian. It led him, he explained, to "explore the past" in order to make sense why being an Armenian in itself was something to be accused of (Deutsche Welle 2022). Until then, another stated, Armenians reasoned concealing their identity provided them "a secure shelter" but realized that it was only an illusionary security (Ibid.). Instead of leaving the protection of their rights to a behind-the-scenes diplomacy carried out by "privileged" Armenians, they adopted an alternative approach to their politics of survival, by telling their trials and tribulations in the public realm and voicing their demands loudly. In lieu of making a virtue of their acquiescence, and of trying to preserve the already fragile status quo by accommodating to circumstances, they decided to take initiative themselves and strived to change those very circumstances. They entered into communication and collaboration with non-Armenian experiences of otherness and marginalization, and stood up also for the latter's rights, besides those of their own. *Nor Zartonk* (New Awakening), which was founded in 2004 as an e-mail discussion list of young Armenians, turned into an activist movement after the assassination of Hrant Dink. His death became "the engine of the motor" says one of its founders, Sayat Tekir. It led them to make it their "mission to strengthen *Nor Zartonk* and to talk about the rights of Armenians in Turkey" (Barsoumian 2015). Another notes that politicizing *Nor Zartonk* "was a response to Hrant Dink's murder: "We embraced the struggle he waged alone and aimed to take it as far as we could" (Agos 2017). Of course, they were aware of the perils immanent in action, but the risks were worth taking. Given the murder of Sevag Balıkçı, a young Armenian, during compulsory military service on the very day of 24 April in 2011, and of Maritsa Küçük – 84-year old Armenian woman – in 2012, and desecration of Armenian churches and cemeteries, and the discovered assassination plot against Garo Paylan, be-

sides the death threat he had received from a nationalist MP, there were good reasons for fear and uncertainty. This new youth-led activism on the part of Armenians led to a change – but not a complete reversal – in the perception of the Armenian world regarding Armenians in Turkey. They came to realize that Armenians in Turkey were not a homogeneous lot. "Some of the most dynamic examples of Armenian resistance in the last decade", wrote *The Armenian Weekly*, "have arisen in Istanbul" (Guest Contributor 2015). On the other hand, this new stance was interpreted by Turkish nationalists as "attempts at diasporizing Turkish Armenians" (Tulun 2000)[9]. This time around, however, Hrant Dink, who, before his death, had been severely denounced by nationalist circles, was set as an example to the rest of Armenians. For Dink, reconciliation between Armenian and Turkish peoples as well as between Armenia and Turkey, had precedence over the genocide recognition of foreign countries. Although Dink, in no uncertain terms, had pointed out that, in his view, what took place in 1915 was a genocide, many in Turkey prefer to remember only his call for reconciliation and dialogue[10]. On the other hand, according to Ara Sarafian, those in the diaspora "who accused Dink of being a Turkish agent" – for his prioritizing "the development of empathy" between Turks and Armenians – "when he was alive, have turned him into a hero" after his death (Ziflioğlu 2008)[11].

---

[9] The author resorted to the same distinction quoted at the beginning of this article, namely, the distinction between Armenians in Turkey, in the diaspora, and in Armenia – a distinction that in Turkish discourse on Armenians corresponds to "the good", "the bad, and "the destitute" Armenian respectively (Mouradian 2010).

[10] Reacting to being pitted against Hrant Dink, Alin Ozinian, a political analyst, stated that contemporary Armenian political actors are accused of "being harsher and more impatient" than Dink. "When Hrant Dink founded *Ago*s", she explained, "there was a different environment in Turkey, it was believed that things would get better". "This was his reality" she said, whereas her own reality was shaped by the scene of Hrant Dink's dead body "lying on that pavement" (+Gerçek TV 2022).

[11] Rober Koptaş, the then editor-in-chief of *Agos*, also stated that some people in the Armenian diaspora before his assassination considered Dink to be an agent of the Turkish state, commissioned by the latter to persuade and deceive them (Vural 2013).

References

Agos (2017), 19 January.

Aktan, H. (2006), *Bir arada iki derede hayatlar*, in "Birgün", 18 June.

Alexandris, A. (1983), *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*, Center for Asia Minor Studies, Athens.

Arendt, H. (2007), *Zionism Reconsidered*, in J. Kohn and R. H. Feldman (eds.), *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 343-374.

- (1998), *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- (1961), *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Meridian Books, Cleveland.

- (1944), *The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition*, in "Jewish Studies", 6, 2, 99-122.

Aydin, M., et al. (2021), *Quantitative Research Report: Turkey Trends 2021, Istanbul, Kadir Has University Turkey Studies Group*, Akademetre and Global Academy, available at <https://khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/turkeytrends-web-press.pdf> (last accessed 20 February 2022).

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981), *The Diaologic Imagination: Four Essays,* Michael Holquist (ed.), Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trans.), University of Texas Press, Austin.

Bali, R. N. (2004), *Devlet'in Yahudileri ve "öteki" Yahudi*, İletişim, Istanbul.

- (1999), *Cumhuriyet yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri. Bir Türkleştirme serüveni [1923-1945]*, İletişim, Istanbul.

- (1998), *Bir Tarihi Romanın Filme Çekilememe Serüveni: Musa Dağ'da Kırk Gün'ün Hikayesi*, in "Tarih ve Toplum", 29, 170, 21-33.

Bariş, L. (2019), *The Effects of the Armenian Schools on Armenian Identity Formation in Turkey*, Libra, Istanbul.

Barsoumian N. (2015), *A New Awakening: An Interview with Nor Zartonk's Sayat Tekir*, in "The Armenian Weekly", 27 August 2015, available at <https://armenianweekly.com/2015/08/27/interview-tekir/)> (last accessed 20 February 2022).

Benhabib, S. (1995), *The Pariah and her Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Biography of Rahel Varnhagen*, in "Political Theory", 23, 1, 5-24.

Biz Başka bir Türkiye'de Yaşıyouruz (2010), available at <http://bizbaskabirturkiyedeyasiyoruz.blogspot.com/> (last accessed 22 February 2022).

Bourdieu, P. (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Brubaker, R. (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Coser, L. A. (1972), *The Alien as a Servant of Power: Court Jews and Christian Renegades*, in "American Sociological Review", 37, 5, 574-81.

Cumhuriyet (1982), 11 August.

Çağaptay, S. (2006), *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* Routledge, London.

ÇANDAR, T. (2014), *Hrant Dink: An Armenian Voice of the Voiceless in Turkey*, Maureen Freely (trans.), Transaction Publishing, New Brunswick, NJ.

ÇÖLAŞAN, E. (2001), *Bizim Ermenilerimiz*, in "Hürriyet", 24 January.

DENCH, G. (1986), *Minorities in the Open Society: Prisoners of Ambivalence*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

DEUTSCHE WELLE (2022), *Türkiye'de genç Ermeni olmak*, 14 January 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu3EwsvJEQg> (last accessed 18 February 2022).

DINK, H. (2007a), *Bir Ermeni olduğum için haddim bildirilmeliydi, tıpkı bir güvercin gibiyim, dikkatli ve ürkek*, in "Radikal", 20 January.

- (2007b), *Ruh halimin güvercin tedirginliği*, in "Agos", 19 January.

EKMEKÇIOĞLU, L. (2016), *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

FOUCAULT, M. (1977), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

FRANCE24 (2021), 27 April, available at <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210427-turkey-s-armenians-keep-heads-down-after-genocide-recognition> (last accessed 10 February 2022).

GAVRILOF, K. Ç. (1994), *Türk-Ermeni dostluk derneği kurulsun*, in "Express" (Turkish weekly), 17 December.

+GERÇEK TV (2022), *Dink'siz 15 yıl*, 19 January 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KurgLoK93nw> (last accessed on 27 February 2022).

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR (2015), *Nor Zartonk Member to Speak in Boston Nov. 12 on "Armenian Activism" in Istanbul*, in "The Armenian Weekly", 6 November, available at <https://armenianweekly.com/2015/11/06/tekir-in-boston/)> (last accessed on 4 February 2022).

GÜLCAN, N. (2006), *Hrant Dink, pabucu yarım*, in "The Journal of Turkish Weekly", available at <http://www.turkishweekly.net/turkce/yazarlar.php?type=7&id=%2010> (last accessed on 2 August 2006).

HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS (2021), 24 April.

HÜRRIYET (2004), 24 February.

HYETERT (2001), 1 February, available at <https://hyetert.org/2001/02/02/recent-declaration-of-armenians-in-turkey-in-english/> (last accessed on 22 February 2022).

KAPLAN, S. (2003), *Erivan'da Fanatizm*, in "Hürriyet", 5 December.

MARMARA (1989), 8 August.

MİLLİYET (2019), 14 December.

- (2010), 27 March.

- (2008), 11 November.

MOURADIAN, K. (2010), *The Good, the Bad and the Destitute*, in "The Armenian Weekly", 14 November, available at <https://armenianweekly.com/2010/11/14/mouradian-the-good-the-bad-and-the-

destitute-erdogan-stereotypes-armenians/> (last accessed 27 February 2022).

NOKTA (1989), 6 August.

OKUTAN, Ç. M. (2004), *Tek parti döneminde azınlık politikaları*, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, Istanbul.

ORAN, B. (2005), *Türkiye'de azınlıklar. Kavramlar, teori, lozan iç mevzuat, içtihat, uygulama*, İletişim, Istanbul.

ÖZKÖK, E. (2000), *Çiller'in ermenilere yazdığı mektup*, in "Hürriyet", 11 October.

PARVIKKO, T. (1996), *The Responsibility of the Pariah: The Impact of Bernard Lazare on Arendt's Conception of Political Action and Judgement in Extreme Situations*, University of Jyvaskyla, Jyvaskyla.

RADİKAL (2007), 4 October.

- (2006), 26 September.

RING, J. (1991), *The Pariah as Hero: Hannah Arendt's Political Actor*, in "Political Theory", 19, 3, 433-452.

SARTRE, J. P. (1995), *Anti-Semite and the Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, trans. G. J. Becker, New York, Schocken Books.

SHOW TV (1995), 11 January, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNTFjnm0gVc&t=1752s> (last accessed 20 February 2022).

SIMMEL G. (1950), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, K. H. Wolf (trans. and ed.), The Free Press, New York.

SÖZ (1995), 4 March.

SUCİYAN, T. (2016), *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History*, I. B. Tauris, London.

SUNY, R. G. (2002), *Buluşmanın satıraraları*, in "Agos" (Turkish-Armenian weekly), 22 March.

TULUN, M. E. (2020), *Attempts at Diasporizing Turkish Armenians – IV*, in "AVIM", 14 March, available at <https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/ATTEMPTS-AT-DIASPORIZING-TURKISH-ARMENIANS-IV)> (last accessed 10 February 2022).

TURKISH DAILY NEWS, (2006), 19 July.

TÜRKER, Y. (2004), *Yine Ermeniler!*, in "Radikal", 20 December.

VURAL, F. (2013), *Koptaş: Türkiye, Ermenistan ve Diaspora'nın gücünü çok büyütüyor*, in "T24", 24 April, available at <https://t24.com.tr/haber/koptas-ermenistan-ve-diasporanin-gucu-cok-buyutuluyor,228488> (last accessed 27 February 2022).

WHITE, E. J. (2008), *Bakhtinian Dialogism: A Philosophical and Methodological Route to Dialogue and Difference*, available at <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.359.7435&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (last accessed on 18 February 2022).

YACKLEY, A. J. (2020), *War in the Caucasus Hits Close to Home for Turkey's Armenians*, in "eurasianet", 21 October, available at <https:/

/eurasianet.org/war-in-the-caucasus-hits-close-to-home-for-turkeys-armenians> (last accessed on 16 February 2022).

YUMUL, A. (2009), *The Concept of Turkishness and the EU Membership*, in "Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics", 20, 3 & 4, 263-281.

- (1998), *Ermeniler millet-i sadıka mı, beşinci kol mu, geçmişin kalıntıları mı?*, in A. Berktay, H. C. Tuncer (eds.), *Tarih eğitimi ve tarihte "öteki" sorunu*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Istanbul, 85-94.

ZİFLİOĞLU, V. (2008), *A Common Enemy That Is Called Hate*, in "Turkish Daily News", April 26.

6. The Syrian diaspora between resilience and proactivity

Emanuela Claudia Del Re

Almost a decade ago, the population of Syria stood at 21 million. In less than 10 years, the number of the population has decreased due to demographic, economic, political, ethnic, and sectarian forces. Today, about one-fourth of Syria's people have been scattered across other countries as refugees, asylum seekers, and self-settled migrants. Another one-fourth of them live as internally displaced persons inside the country, driven from their homes by violence and economic and political chaos.

The Syria crisis is now in its twelfth year. The *2022 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview (*HNO*)* estimates that over 14.6 million people needed humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including 6.9 million internally displaced Syrians (OCHA 2022). Of that number, approximately 9.6 million are in severe need of humanitarian assistance. The 2022 HNO finds that economic deterioration is now a major driver of needs even in areas that have been less directly affected by hostilities and displacement.

Syria has become the world's largest refugee crisis in decades (UNHCR 2022). Turkey hosts the largest number of registered Syrian refugees, currently more than 3.6 million. The vast majority of Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries live in urban areas, with only one out of twenty accommodated in a refugee camp. In all neighbouring countries, more than a million Syrian refugees have little or no financial resources to live. Many of them lost employment since the COVID-19 pandemic has broken out.

In Lebanon, nine out of ten refugees now live in extreme poverty; there are no formal refugee camps and, as a result, Syrians are scattered throughout urban and rural communities and locations, often

sharing small basic lodgings with other refugee families in overcrowded conditions.

Jordan is accommodating over 660,000 Syrians: approximately 80 per cent of them live outside camps, while 128,000 have found sanctuary in refugee camps such as Za'atari and Azraq.

Iraq also is a main host country for Syrians, with some 244,000 registered refugees, while in Egypt there are more than 130,000 that left Syria in the last years.

Whilst the regional refugee response to the Syrian crisis has largely focused on Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, less is known about the situation of Syrian refugees in Iraq. The majority of the 244,000 Syrian refugees registered in Iraq are of Kurdish ethnicity that arrived in the country following conflict in 2012 and 2013. According to UNHCR figures, approximately 98.8% of them are registered in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah governorates. Most refugees in KRI originated from Hasakeh and Aleppo governorates in Syria. The remaining minority of Syrian refugees are registered in central and west Iraq. This includes Syrian refugees that originated from Deir ez-Zor governorate in Syria, which had fled cross-border to Anbar governorate in West Iraq, under the Government of Iraq (GoI). When the influx of Syrian refugees to Iraq began in 2012, Iraq, and KRI in particular, enjoyed relative economic stability and progress. People seeking refuge entered a welcoming environment in which both the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and host community were willing to support the refugee population.

I have worked, both as a scholar doing research on field and as the former President of a no-profit organisation, with the Syrian refugees living in camps in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey from 2012 to 2017. I have witnessed many changes in the "organisation" and the growth of the refugee camps since then. Over the years, the refugee camps have been moving from a precarious situation to a permanent condition (Del Re 2016). The refugee camps, which at the beginning of the crisis were a stretch of tents that almost disappeared on the horizon, have been transformed into permanent settlements with streets, shops, restaurants and other activities organized as "city-district".

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, the Kurdistan Regional Government has shown hospitality and positive efforts in accommodating the influx of Syrian refugees despite Iraq's domestic challenges and

difficult circumstances. In the last ten years, I have travelled many times to the KRG, working and living in the refugee camps of the region, especially in Domiz, Kawergosk, Kawa, Qushtapa, Arbat.

After many years on field in conflict areas and many conversations with my Syrian friends, I have realized – and I have extensively written on that – that the status of migrant/refugee is not only an administrative condition but is also a psychological/mental status (Del Re, Shekhawat 2018; Del Re, Larémont, 2017; Del Re 2016; Del Re 2015). This is a reality even when the migration has been successful in terms of settlement, not necessarily – or rarely – corresponding to an inclusive concept of citizenship. In my experience with thousands of Syrian refugees in Iraq, I have observed that identity for them moves on different levels, on top of which there is their nationality intended as citizenship: "I am Syrian" first, followed by the declination of the other elements of identity. The "hierarchy of individual identities" varies according to social contexts or situations. The Syrian refugees in Iraq perceive themselves as a minority, being Syrian Kurds. The self-identification process is complex because it implies that groups and individuals are aware of their identity so much that they identify themselves as a minority (Del Re 2019). The process is articulated because their self-identification might not be in line with definitions attributed to them by States or other groups. The terminology used to define groups – ethnic group, people, community, nationals or other – is varied. The Syrian refugees in Iraq, for example, change their self-identification according to many variables, of which the most important is the attitude of the hegemonic group or groups. Self-identification and identity are key issues. Identity – widely studied in social sciences although little in reference to minorities except for specific case studies – in my opinion is the result of a multi-levelled self-perception that derives from a stratification of multiple identities, that an individual/group ordinates according to a hierarchy that depends upon contingent factors and variables. Identity, according to my long experience on field, can be the cause itself of discrimination, intolerance or other, even within the same minority group (the differences between the Syrian Kurds and the Iraqi Kurds are significant at social, cultural, educational level due to, for instance, their different recent history, and their Kurdishness is not a guarantee or a synonym of mutual understanding or tolerance).

6.1. Turkey as a host country of Syrian refugees

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria Turkey has been the primary destination for Syrian refugees with the first camps set up ten years ago. Today, Turkey is home to more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees that constitute the vast majority of over 4 million refugees and asylum seekers currently living in country, making Turkey the world's largest host of refugees (UNHCR 2022). The Turkish Interior Ministry claims this figure is higher and that Turkey hosts 6 million. In any case, there is no doubt that Turkey hosts the highest number of Syrians and has the largest refugee population in the world, whose number also includes Afghans, Iranians, and Iraqis. For the last decade, the local governments in Turkey have had to find immediate solutions for welcoming and accommodating a huge number of people fleeing from their homeland. This has made municipalities the main actors in two challenging issues: infrastructure planning for the growing population and identification of the services needed to live together with different cultures and traditions and to ensure and maintain social harmony. Turkish municipalities have been working to meet humanitarian needs while making great efforts to keep cities prosperous and develop them in the face of the unexpected and massive population increase.

As pointed out by the young Turkish researcher Gül Tuçaltan, expert in geography and spatial planning, urban governance and political ecology:

> "The international mass migration and the Syrian refugee crisis have resulted in fundamental demographic, social, cultural and ecological changes in urban areas and also created the need for re-addressing the matters of urbanization, infrastructure, municipal service delivery and urban planning. In order to manage these multilayered and complex processes and respond to migration-related urban problems, municipalities need new tools for information, skills and implementation enabling them to understand their existing working area and to produce innovative solutions with limited resources within this area as the traditional tools and understanding we have used to date for urban planning are no longer sufficient to understand, handle, and change this unstable situation." (2021, xix).

In Turkey, the project "Developing a Knowledge Base Project of the Resilience in Local Governance" (RESLOG Turkey) can be considered as a good/best practice. RESLOG is a pioneer project implemented in Turkey (and in Lebanon) financed by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and funded by the Swedish Government. It sees the involvement of Turkish regional municipal unions in strengthening local governance. The project aims at contributing to national migration policies that reflect local realities and needs, to enhance inter-municipal learning and support structures through regional associations, and to improve holistic planning and governance at municipal level[1].

Since the start of the Syrian migration, RESLOG municipalities (Adana Metropolitan Municipality, Hatay Metropolitan Municipality, Mezitli Municipality, Reyhanlı Municipality, Sarıçam Municipality and Seyhan Municipality in Çukurova Region, and Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Orhangazi Municipality, Osmangazi Municipality, Sultanbeyli Municipality, Şişli Municipality, and Zeytinburnu Municipality in Marmara Region) have achieved remarkable results in promoting the integration of Syrian migrants and refugees and their intercultural forms of life with native communities. We see integration or achieving social cohesion and harmonious forms of togetherness as a two-way process in which both native and migrant communities are active participants, and both undergo change and development. Many Turkish municipalities have successfully managed rapid mass migration and the resulting significant population increases, but this is generally not well known. Intercultural forms of life between migrants and refugees and native populations are largely a local matter which depends on local services, projects and activities at neighbourhood and even street level, but it can be enhanced by cooperation with national and international actors. While municipalities are responsible for leading the process, cooperation with other stakeholders is essential, including other public institutions, NGOs, universities, the media, and religious, cultural and sporting organizations, international development agencies and funders, and most importantly, the migrant and local communities themselves.

[1] See RESLOG Project 2018.

Turkey is a major destination for regular migration and for refugees, and the millions of Syrians who fled from their homeland have changed the demographic profile of both big cities and small and coastal cities. The Syrian migration to Turkey since 2011 has brought a series of challenges in terms of developing and implementing regulations and policies. Ankara has promulgated laws and regulations regarding migration management and has implemented projects and practical measures to address the needs of migrants, trying to foster social cohesion (Burcu *et al.* 2018). Turkish society has shown great resilience in absorbing a huge number of refugees in the last decade, but negative public perceptions toward the refugees have grown significantly in the last two-three years. Although incidences of violence have been negligible, numerous public opinion polls confirm a stark decline in public support for hosting the refugees. Not surprisingly, Turkish citizens are expressing considerable concern about the future in relation to life with Syrian refugees (PODEM 2019). Host community hostility toward the Syrians is rising. The potential for anti-refugee violence is highest in the metropolitan areas of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir where host communities see Syrians as culturally different and resent their competition for low-wage jobs or customers, especially within the informal economy. Many also believe Syrians receive preferential access to public services and assistance (International Crisis Group 2021). A 2020 study by the Turkish-German University's Migration and Integration Research Center (Kınıklıoğlu 2020) indicates that the perceptions of Turkish citizens vis-à-vis Syrian refugees have significantly turned negative. In stark contrast, the perceptions of Syrians about life in Turkey have dramatically improved; 60 percent of Turks believe that Turkey has done its best to host the Syrians. Contrary to theories that Syrians are culturally close to Turks and therefore prefer to stay in Turkey, 82 percent of Turks feel they have no cultural commonalities with Syrians. While 72 percent of Turks believe that Syrian refugees will harm Turkey's socio-cultural structure, 74 percent think that public services will either deteriorate or diminish because of the refugees.

Perceptions among Syrian refugees vis-à-vis Turkish society are overwhelmingly positive (Anadolu Agency 2022). Most Syrians do not feel discrimi-nated against and continue to harbour feelings of gratitude and desire for coexistence toward their host society. Overall, most

Syrian refugees express that they are happy to live in Turkey and see the Turkish government as the primary provider of critical assistance.

Developing social cohesion and integration policies should not be viewed as an option, but a necessity. Adopting equal access to services and resources by everyone as a fundamental principle, and developing inclusive social policies as a matter of human rights, justice and humanity is necessary at both national and local levels. Failure to do so alienates migrants struggling to access socio-economic, political and cultural resources and services, and promotes marginalized, self-protecting parallel migrant communities, and anti-social reactions of varying degree. Turkish municipalities, as shown by the RESLOG Project, have played a key role in managing the migrations of the Syrians since 2011 through the services they provide to migrants and refugees, and by facilitating their integration and living together with native communities. Despite the lack of central government funding for social cohesion, many municipalities have used their own resources to develop services, projects and activities that meet the needs of refugees and locals in need, and foster living together. Municipal involvement in the integration of migrants is an increasing trend internationally, as is their role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[2]. For instance, the role of municipalities in social cohesion is acknowledged by a number of landmark international instruments, including the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, to which Turkey is a signatory. In addition to the fact that many, if not all, of the 17 SDGs can be seen as direct prerequisites for social cohesion (e.g. no poverty, zero hunger, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, etc.), two SDGs stand out as regards cities and urban life, namely SDG 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", and SDG 16 "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"[3]. Drafted close to the UN Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda,

---

[2] No Poverty (Goal 1), Zero Hunger (Goal 2), Good Health and Well-Being (Goal 3), Quality Education (Goal 4), Gender Equality (Goal 5), Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11), Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Goal 16) and Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17).

[3] See SDG 11 and SDG 16 on the official Web Page of the UN SDGs: https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

an outcome of the UN HABITAT III Conference in 2016, promises international solidarity with cities hosting refugees in the framework of human rights with a specific focus on vulnerable groups. Similarly, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees affirms the role played by local government in providing services to refugees, commits the international community to share the responsibility with cities on the front line by means of increasing their capacity and infrastructure, and invites networks of municipalities to share their best practices and innovative solutions with each other.

As previously said, RESLOG operated at local, regional, national and international levels with multiple components and activities focusing on capacity-building for municipalities and their unions in policy making, knowledge generation and dissemination, migration master planning and implementation to reach this overarching objective. RESLOG adopted a structural approach, which targeted strengthened municipal capacities that can further support the lives of refugees and host communities through advancement in analysis, planning, inclusive service delivery, project development and implementation for peaceful co-habitation.

At the national level, RESLOG, in partnership and coordination with the Union of Municipalities in Turkey (UMT), established the Mayors' Platform for advancing National Migration Policy. The project brings the mayors of cities most affected by migration together to produce a policy paper for increased representation of the local level in national migration policy. Together with the Mayors and the technical teams of thirteen Municipalities (district and metropolitan), a National Migration Policy and Strategy (NMPS) document is developed. The document puts the wealth of the rich experience of the municipalities at use with two Mayors' Roundtables and three Municipal Technical Teams Meetings. NMPS was introduced to public and government authorities with a dedicated launch and networking event in November 2021.

At the regional level, through "knowledge generation activities" RESLOG supported municipalities in understanding and responding migration-related urban challenges (RESLOG Project, 2018). Unions of Municipalities are the main mediators of this process. The pilot implementation was achieved in partnership between the Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) between 2018 and 2021.

Knowledge Generation Book Series consisting of publications developed in collaboration with various national and international experts, introduces the municipalities to existing and emergent perspectives, trends and intervention tools; combining them with the everyday experiences of the municipalities, which could positively affect the perspective and practices of local decision-makers for more inclusive governance and planning. These include cross-cutting issues that needs to be taken into consideration in each and every action such as gender, climate change, SDGs, right to participation and active citizenship. The series also include a Municipal Experiences Sub-Series: thematic working groups of municipal officials from all around Turkey prepared and presented their experiences on welcoming mass migration, social cohesion and co-habitation and social services.

At the local level, RESLOG supported the preparation of Migration Master Plans in twelve pilot municipalities, initiated a problem prioritization study and enabled the engagement of selected activities with the municipal strategic plans. Subsequently, each municipality prepared small-scale action projects. A detailed analysis, project development, monitoring, implementation and reporting process was supported by REGLOG experts on local governance, civic participation, gender, cohabitation and project development.

6.2. Framing the Syrian diaspora

The Syrian refugees living abroad constitute a diaspora. "Diaspora" is defined as a dispersed collective residing outside their country of origin who "maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homeland and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries" (Sheffer 2003, 17). Key concepts and research on diaspora communities have been developed by work such as the pioneering book on *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* by Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (2010).

Diasporic communities are often referred to by scholars as "imagined communities". Benedict Anderson defines the nation as imagined in that it is limited, sovereign, and a community bound by a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson 1991). In other words, members are connected by a psychological sense of belonging to a group, rather

than a physical space. This imagined sense of "home" connects and empowers members of the diaspora to identify themselves in terms of a collective identity linked to their shared experience and origin coming from "an imagined, putative or real homeland" (Cohen 1997, 76).

A substantial literature exists on the role(s) that diaspora communities, diaspora CSOs and individuals in the diaspora can play in the political and socioeconomic development of their home countries. Examples of such communities in the Middle East include the Kurdish, Iranian, Palestinian, Lebanese and Jewish diaspora.

The Syrian diaspora was already substantial in size before the Syrian crisis broke in 2011. Some estimated the size of the Syrian diaspora at 20 million people worldwide *i.e.,* larger than the Syrian population inside Syria (Mehchy, Mahdi 2010).

Since 2011, volunteerism among the Syrian diaspora has proliferated (Qaddour 2013). This has been particularly evident since the large-scale population displacement that took place during the civil war in Syria. Increasingly, both old and new Syrian diaspora communities in the United States, the Middle East and Europe have mobilised voluntary efforts among their personal networks to deliver emergency humanitarian aid. Much of these diaspora efforts have become increasingly organised and professionalised.

As a result, a large number of Syrian diaspora-led organisations now exist and operate as first responders to the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Syria. In providing various humanitarian assistance, remedial education, livelihoods, health, and many social services, these Syrian diaspora organizations have been vital in compensating for the absence of the government in many cities and areas in Syria (Al-Zoua'bi 2015). Despite the security, political and logistical challenges involved in their work, they are promoting innovative models of humanitarianism based on solidarity efforts and close cooperation between the Syrian diaspora on the one hand and affected populations and local civil society actors across Syria on the other (Brownlee, 2015). Members of the diaspora are held together through shared cultural repertoires and information, for example replicated through different media sources. Print media as well as television and Internet sources can promote a shared identity and collective consciousness on a global scale (Georgiou 2005).

6.3. Identity and the role of social media

Internet is a tool to interlink the diversified Syrian diaspora and it is a powerful medium in maintaining the sense of identity among the Syrian diasporic community. It provides a feeling of belongingness with their homeland. In the context of migration, Internet means "death of distance" (Brinkerhoff 2009, 102) and it transforms the traditional understanding of migrant networks and migration processes by adding a new dimension. E-Tools like websites, e-mail, audio-video calling via internet, chat room, online messaging, social networking sites like Orkut, Facebook, hi5, Cyworld, Flickr, Friendster, Google Buzz, LinkedIn, MyLife, Myspace, BIGADDA, Ibibo, etc. provide an opportunity to meet the diversified diaspora virtually.

By creating a new kind of diasporic public sphere, advancement of information and communication technologies and the diffusion of the Internet add a complex digital extension to the traditional character of diaspora and serve as a potential facilitator for diaspora engagement.

A lot of interest has grown regarding how members of the diaspora use the media. Out of this, the academic study of "digital diasporas" and "diasporic media studies" have grown exponentially. Digital media have an undeniable influence in the lives of immigrants outside and nationals inside the nation of origin. Due to the separation of digital media from mainstream media channels and the potential of digital diasporas "to foster democratic values, support integration in the host society, and contribute to security and socio-economic development in the homelands" (Brinkerhoff 2009, 147). According to Arjun Appadurai (1996) global cultural flows are developed through the relationships between dimensions of human movement, technological, flow, financial transfers, technological capabilities and images created by the media. Appadurai names these the "ethnoscape", "technoscape", "financescape", "mediascape" and "ideoscape". Within the "mediascape", narratives of another world are those provided to us by the media (1990, 296). This is the dimension in which diasporic groups use the media as a tool to gain insight into a native community that is physically foreign. Media images are the technological means used to bring pieces of this community into the homes of diasporic groups. In addition to this, the mediascape is a space for "social interaction and communication within the diasporic communities" (Georgiou 2005, 487).

According to Marie Gillespie, a sociology professor at The Open University in the United Kingdom, today, refugees use smartphones and social media platforms in five primary ways: communication, translation, information, navigation and representation (Kaplan 2018).

In Turkey, smartphone ownership by many Syrian refugees in the camps was noticeable to government agencies, which reported that 90% of Syrian women in Turkey owned a mobile telephone, while 91% of Syrian women inside and outside the camps used a mobile phone to communicate with their relatives (AFAD 2014). Separated from their husband and other relatives, many Syrian women living in Turkey were able to remain connected to relatives outside Turkey via smartphone, thanks to telecommunication companies that recognized the connectivity needs of Syrians refugees and promptly improved their infrastructure.

As pointed out by the Turkish sociologist Nilüfer Narlı:

> "The diverse yet related categories of smartphone uses by Syrian refugees should be apprehended in three major settings or processes: war and displacement; settling and rebuilding a new life; virtual connection to the war and the construction of a war memory." (Narlı 2018, 277).

In the context of war, displacement and life-building settings, smartphones have enhanced security by giving the Syrian refugees an address where they can exist while navigating their way to safety. Given these diverse security concerns, the smartphone is a safety tool for reaching other family members in an emergency and checking if someone outside the home is safe. Smartphones connect Syrians to their diasporic networks, their country of origin and communities in Turkey: it is a tool of connectivity for diaspora communities forming a "virtual diasporic space" (Mitra, Schwartz 2001, 221).

Syrian refugees also use their smartphones to record their journeys of displacement and new life in Turkey, as well as to receive and spread Syrian war news and images (e.g. photos of enemy soldiers' corpses or their own soldiers' heroic images); that is, a visualization of the war. The use of smartphones for building a digital archive of the Syrian war and displacement, and for providing evidence and memory is important.

Despite being a non-human entity, a smartphone is part of the refugees' lives, a virtual lifeline and tool for safety and survival. In coping with their everyday life difficulties and struggling to survive in emergencies, the refugees invent new links with the powers of life, which respond to their contingency needs created by each immediate situation (e.g. needing translation in a hospital). They shift from the intended purpose of telephone services and modify the diverse functions of smartphones depending on their situational needs. They empower themselves strategically by inventing new practices with their smartphones in order to integrate the host society by learning the language, and to access education and work. For these Syrian refugees living in Turkey the use of smartphones and apps is continuously evolving in a constant interplay with their contextual needs and motivations of. At the same time, some refugees also use smartphones for illegal activities (e.g. navigating illegal journeys with the assistance of smugglers), which makes the device a *dispositif* to counter technologies of domination and surveillance.

Migrants promote communications that go beyond the boundaries of the state and the culture of one nation, challenging the dominance of existing local media players. This results in cultural hybridity and a diverse selection of available media, ranging from the local to the national and the transnational. Therefore, central to studying culture, media use, and identity, is the concept of the deterritorialization of communities and cultures. Deterritorialization refers to a changing world where cultures are no longer locally bound but globally interchanged (Appadurai 1990). Due to this, diasporic communities are in some cases referred to as "deterritorialized nations" (Karim 2003, 3). Some authors theorize that deterritorialization results in a cultural atmosphere where even the foreign becomes familiar through mutual exposure (Tomlinson 1999). Media content, therefore, is a vehicle of deterritorialization through manifestations of homogenization, differentiation and hybridization of cultural content (Martì 2006). On the other hand, Appadurai (1990), Tomlinson (1999) and Morley (2001) suggest that media in this way also becomes a vehicle of reterritorialization. Reterritorialization expresses a "search for cultural diversity, for particularism, for the reinforcement of the local" (Martì 2006, 97). In other words, there is an attraction to culturally specific local content.

Andén Papadopoulos and Pantti state that that Syrians living in the diaspora are not only interested in consuming transnational content, but they in fact have a responsibility in maintaining the image of the Syrian uprising that is conveyed to the rest of the world (Andén Papadopoulos, Pantti 2013). The authors underscore the importance of diasporic communities in conflicts in their country of origin in today's mediatized society, especially regarding their power when it comes to political mobilization.

6.4. Conclusion

The Syrian diaspora's unique connection with, and understanding of, their home country gives this diaspora a vital role in defining the self-perception of the Syrian communities and, as we have seen above, undertaking humanitarian relief and development efforts with IDPs and other affected communities inside Syria. Moreover, beyond the merely humanitarian components of this response, the diaspora organizations and their local partners have also been developing crucial bottom-up approaches to support the resilience of IDPs, as well as wider peacebuilding and community cohesion, by contributing to the development of a new Syrian civil society that engages affected communities, local actors, and community representatives. On the advocacy front, the Syrian diaspora has been showing increasingly higher levels of organization and mobilization. This has helped to promote their collective contributions, solidarity and social cohesion, and their ability to achieve impacts inside Syria as bridges and mediators between international organisations and IDPs and other conflict-affected populations in Syria. Despite funding limitations and challenges, the continuity of diaspora engagement and support to IDPs and other affected populations in Syria is evidence of the promising role that, as social and development actors, the diaspora can play in the peaceful future of Syria. Researchers and policymakers interested in the response to internal displacement in Syria should carefully consider how the different modalities of interventions by diaspora communities have contributed to humanitarian operations, mediation, and the stabilisation of conflict-affected areas.

References

AFAD (2014), *Syrian Women in Turkey,* available at https://www.afad.gov.tr/kurumlar/afad.gov.tr/17935/xfiles/afad-suriye-kdn_eng_1_.pdf (last accessed 22 October 2022).

Al-Zoua'bi, Z. (2015), *Syrian Civil Society Organizations Reality and Challenges*, Citizens for Syria, Berlin.

Anadolu Agency (2022), *Most Syrians in Turkey are Happy, More Willing to Stay: Study*, available at https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/most-syrians-in-turkey-are-happy-more-willing-to-stay-study/news (last accessed 21 October 2022).

Andén Papadopoulos, K., Pantti, M. (2013), *The Media Work of Syrian Diaspora Activists: Brokering Between the Protest and Mainstream Media*, in "International Journal of Communication", 7, 2185-2206.

Anderson, B. (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London.

Appadurai, A. (1996), *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

-(1990), *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, in "Theory Culture Society", 7, n. 2-3, 295-310.

Brinkerhoff, J.M. (2009), *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Brownlee, B.J. (2015), *The Revolution 'From Below' and its Misinterpretation 'From Above'. The Case of Syria's Neglected Civil Society*, available at <https://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/syria/article/view/1189/913> (last accessed 27 September 2022).

Burcu, A. *et al.* (2018), *Evolution of National Policy in Turkey on Integration of Syrian Children into the National Education System* available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000266069> (last accessed 21 October 2022).

Cohen, R. (1997), *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, University of Washington Press, Seattle.

Del Re, E. (2019), *The New Role of Religious Minority in Contemporary Globalized Societies*, in "Religioni e Società", Fabrizio Serra Editore, Roma-Pisa.

-(2016), *L'insostenibile precarietà dei campi profughi*, in "Limes", 4(16), 221-228.

-(2015), *Contro le miserie del presente i curdi di Iraq (e Siria) sognano in grande*, in "Limes", 3(15), 137-146.

Del Re, E., Shekhawat, S. (eds.) (2018), *Women and Borders. Refugees, Migrants and Communities*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York.

Del Re, E., Larémont, R.R. (eds.) (2017), *Pursuing Stability and a Shared Development in Euro-Mediterranean Migrations*, Aracne Editrice, Roma.

Faist, T., Bauböck, R. (2010), *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

GEORGIOU, M. (2005), *Diasporic Media across Europe: Multicultural Societies and the Universalism-Particularism Continuum*, in "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 31(3), 481-498.

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP (2021), *Turkey's Syrian refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, available at < https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/248-turkeys-syrian-refugees-defusing-metropolitan-tensions> (last accessed 21 October 2022).

KAPLAN, I. (2018), *How Smartphones and Social Media Have Revolutionized Refugee Migration*, in "The Globe Post" available at < https://theglobepost.com/2018/10/19/refugees-social-media/> (last accessed 22 October 2022)

KARIM, K. (2003), *Mapping Diasporic Mediascapes*, in K. KARIM (ed.), *The Media of Diaspora: Mapping the Globe*, Routledge, London, 1-16.

KINIKLIOĞLU, S. (2020), *Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Changing Attitudes and Fortunes*, available at < https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-changing-attitudes-and-fortunes> (last accessed 21 October 2022)

MARTÍ, G.M.H. (2006), *The Deterritorialization of Cultural Heritage in a Globalized Modernity*, in "Journal of Contemporary Culture", 1, 92-107.

MEHCHY, Z., MAHDI, A. (2010), *General Overview of Migration into, through and from Syria*, CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2011/41, Technical Report, Migration Policy Centre.

MITRA A., SCHWARTZ R. L. (2001), *From Cyber Space To Cybernetic Space: Rethinking the Relationship Between Real and Virtual Spaces*, in "Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication", 7(1), 220-224.

MORLEY, D. (2001), *Belongings: Place, space and Identity in a Mediated World*, in "European Journal of Cultural Studies", 4, 425-448.

NARLI, N. (2018), *Life, Connectivity and Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Surviving through a Smartphone*, in "Open Edition Journals – Questions de communication", 269-286.

OCHA (2022), *2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic*, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2022-humanitarian-needs-overview-syrian-arab-republic-february-2022> (last accessed 19 September 2022).

PODEM (2019), *Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Challenges to and Opportunities for Longer-Term Integration*, available at < http://podem.org.tr/en/researches/syrian-refugees-in-turkey/> (last accessed 21 October 2022).

QADDOUR, J. (2013), *Unlocking the Alawite conundrum in Syria*, in "The Washington Quarterly", 36:4, 67-78.

RESLOG PROJECT (2018), available at <https://sklinternational.se/projects/projekt/turkeyandlebanonresilienceinlocalgovernance.1046.html> (last accessed 19 October 2022).

SHEFFER, G. (2003), *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

TOMLINSON, J. (1999), *Globalization and Culture*, Polity Press, Cambridge
TUÇALTAN, G. (2021), *Forward*, in A. Kaya (ed.), *Syrian Migration and Municipal Experiences in Turkey. Living together and Social Cohesion,* SKL International AB, xix-xxi.
UNHCR (2022), *Syria Emergency*, available at https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html (last accessed 19 September 2022).
UN (n. d.), *Sustainable Development Goals*. Available at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (last accessed 21 November 2022).

7. The Caucasian diaspora: the struggle for visibility and recognition

Cahit Aslan

7.1. Introduction

It can be said that the problem of diasporas and minorities' educational needs in Turkey gained a legal and political dimension with the declaration of the Republic (29 October 1923). The founding willpower of the Republic evaluated all ethnic groups under a single identity, the Turkish identity except non-Muslim communities such as Jews, Greeks and Armenians. Therefore, neither in the law nor in practice, identities of people with different origins were not recognized, and they were not included in the new arrangement in educational institutions. However, before the declaration of the Republic, Circassians, who benefited from the political freedom that developed with the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, had schools where they taught in their mother tongue. For example, the Çerkes Teavün Mektebi (The Circassian Solidarity School) had been founded in 1910 and pursued its activity up to 1914. Çerkes Numune Mektebi (The Circassian Sample School) school, which was opened on 18 August 1919, is another example. The most distinguishing feature of this school is that male and female students attended the school together and the Latin alphabet was given preference in education.

However, in the Lausanne Treaty signed on 24 July 1923, Circassians were not granted minority rights. A month later, this school was closed. Another example for Circassians' activism is the fact that articles about education in Circassian were written in the newspaper *Ğuaze* (Guide), which was published on 2 April 1911. This newspaper continued its publication until 1914.

However, in 2012, a new page was opened for people with different origins who were on the verge of disappearing. Although "mother tongue-based multilingual education/teaching" has not been included in the legislation or curriculum which avoided naming any language spoken in Anatolia as "mother tongue", the teaching of some mother tongues has started in practice, albeit gradually. The "Living Languages and Dialects" course has taken its place among these optional classes that since 2012 have been given in the 5th grade and after. Adyghe and Abkhazian, which are considered Circassian languages, have been included from pre-school education to university education. Although it contains many technical and legal problems, this action can be considered as an important development. Thus, this study investigates the educational developments affecting the Caucasian diasporas in Turkey in general and the Circassians in particular (including Adyghes and Abkhazians). On the basis of the available data, the chapter evaluates the challenges encountered in this process and offer some insights for their overcoming.

7.2. Language based education and optional language courses

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey until 2012, communities living in the country, whose mother tongue is different from Turkish, did not have the opportunity to learn their own language within public education system, except for the minorities recognized within the framework of the Treaty of Lausanne. Nevertheless, the Constitution that came into force in 1982 expressly prohibited the teaching of languages other than Turkish as a mother tongue:

> "No language other than Turkish can be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education. The foreign languages to be taught in education and training institutions and the principles to which the schools providing education and training in a foreign language will be subject are regulated by law. The provisions of international treaties are reserved."[1]

---

[1] While the name of this law was "Foreign Language Education and Teaching Law", it was changed to "Law on Foreign Language Education and Teaching and Learning

That is why many mother tongues are facing extinction. For example, Ubykh, one of the Caucasian languages, has disappeared in 1992 with the death of the last speaker, Tevfik Esenç. According to the reports published by the United Nations, 18 languages in Turkey are under great threat and are struggling to survive. Unfortunately, Adyghe and Abkhazian are also included in this list. For example, it has been determined that 80% of the Circassian population uses Turkish instead of Circassian and 20% of the native speakers are the elderly (Şener, 2006: 180). However, here, it is a question of giving mother tongue education to children of different ethnic origins, not in place of Turkish, but in addition to Turkish. In addition, there is a mother tongue education problem, which is a right according to the treaties to which Turkey is a party (Özbudun 2010, 1).

7.3. Background of education in diaspora Circassians

During the Tanzimat Period, when the winds of freedom and liberty blew, many associations and societies were established, new newspapers and magazines received publishing privileges, and many new schools began their education life. The privilege of publishing a newspaper, which was previously granted with permission, could now be obtained with a petition submitted to the press directorate (Gazel, Ortak 2006, 223). Circassians also started education and printing activities taking advantage of the freedom environment that came with the Constitutional Monarchy.

The first Circassian organization, which was established by taking advantage of the opportunities brought by the II. Constitutional Period was Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti. Its official establishment date is November 4, 1908. The purpose of the association, which was active until 1923, was to:

> "[…] spread religious duties, good morals, and constitutional rules, to establish and strengthen commercial, industrial and agricultural relations with each other; to achieve the goal of climbing to the summit of progress in harmony with the Ottoman communities." (Güsar 1975, 29).

Different Languages and Dialects of Turkish Citizens" with the Law No. 4771 dated 3/8/2002.

The association also stated that it would publish a newspaper to achieve its goals and reach the public. Accordingly, a newspaper called *Ğuaze* was launched. Issues such as the development of education and the creation of a national alphabet were among the topics raised in the journal. The association aimed to be the voice of the Circassian people, arguing that traditions should be preserved, and that generations should be educated for the progress of the Circassian people. The association gained some success in issues such as the creation of an alphabet suitable for the Circassian language, the publication of a newspaper, the opening of schools both in the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus, and the provision of education in Circassian for the first time. It should be noted that these achievements had been gained thanks also to the good relationship between the association, and state bureaucracy. Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti (Circassian Women Solidarity Society) had a publication organ called *Diyane* (Our mother), which was published on 12 March 1920. The magazine had sections in both Turkish and Circassian. 12 pages were in Ottoman Turkish and 4 pages were in Circassian written in the Latin alphabet. The most important activity of Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti was that of establishing a school named Çerkes Teavün Mektebi (the Circassian Solidarity School). Founded in 1910, the school continued its education until 1914. Established within the body of Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti, this institution would primarily deal with the education of poor Circassian children. Although it allowed the registration of paying students as well, their number did not reach more than half of the total population of the school. The duration of education, which was reserved for male students, consisted in a seven-year pathway including a preparatory year, three years of elementary school, and three years of junior high school. In addition to the official curriculum, there were separate Circassian reading and writing classes, as well as etiquette, gymnastics, and lessons practiced in the school yard (Doğan 2019, 151-154).

The Çerkes Numune Mektebi, which was established on August 18, 1919, was a co-educational school where both male and female students studied together. This is a first in the Ottoman Empire, since it was the first school in which Muslim boys and girls studied together. The purpose of the school, which provided primary and

secondary education, was to keep the Circassian culture alive, to teach and protect the Circassian language, and to raise a morally upright, educated generation. Moreover, it was the first institution which opened a kindergarten in the Ottoman Empire. The curriculum included Turkish, Circassian, Geography, History of the Caucasus History, Circassian Literature, French, Physical Education and Music. Moreover, the use of the Latin alphabet made the school the first training institution adopting such a measure in the education of a Muslim community ten years before the alphabet revolution in Turkey. The school had a number of students around 150-180, classes had up to 25-30 children. The students were expected to wear a monotype uniform. Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti and the associated school were closed in 1923 after the Treaty of Lausanne. Along with the refusal to recognize the Circassians as a minority in Lausanne, the association and the school were respectively closed in August and in September 1923 despite their contributions to Turkish education and culture (Doğan 2019, 157). Unfortunately, as a result of the non-recognition of a minority status for the Circassians in the Treaty of Lausanne, all these educational activities could not be resumed.

7.4. Recent transformations

In the years between 1923 and 2012, mother tongue teaching in formal education was prevented not only by the means of legislation and political pressures were put to make the language disappear (Aksoy 2020).

As the above-mentioned article of the 1982 Constitution, which hindered the teaching of mother tongue in formal education the situation has not changed for decades and "mother tongue-based multilingual education/teaching" has not been included in the legislation or in the curricula. However, albeit gradually, the teaching of some mother tongues has started in practice. With the transition to the new education system in 2012, the course named "Living Languages and Dialects" took its place among the optional classes offered in schools starting from the 5th grade. Adyghe and Abkhazians welcomed this development.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, Adyghe and Abkhazian languages started to be given as optional courses even though they did

not receive considerable attention. However, according to the information given by the Ministry of National Education, the number of students who prefer Circassian languages has increased in years. For instance, the number of students attending Adyghe optional courses opened in Düzce and Turhal was of 19 in the 2012-2013 academic year, increased to 53 in the classes given in Düzce and Kayseri in the 2013-2014 academic year, and reached 168 in the classrooms opened in Düzce and Kayseri in the 2014-2015. As regards to Abkhazian language, the first teaching was opened in Sakarya/Hendek in the 2014-2015 academic year gaining 15 attending students. In all, a total of 250 students chose Adyghe and Abkhazian language courses between 2012 and 2015 (KAFFED n.d.).

It has been observed that there have been confusions regarding the procedure over time. For example, a separate curriculum prepared by a NGO named Adyge Language Association aiming to establish an Adyghe language course based the Latin alphabet was approved by the Board of Education in 2015. However, Federation of Caucasian Associations (KAFFED), which prepared teaching materials using the Cyrillic alphabet, pointed to the drawbacks of including two separate Adyghe lessons using two different alphabets in the curriculum. Therefore, KAFFED drew attention to the fact that the Adyghe language should be taught with the Cyrillic alphabet, as in other countries and as it is more linguistically correct. Moreover, while there are difficulties in finding 10 students for the current Adyghe classes, it is stated that the need of choosing between two alphabets could make more difficult to attract an average number of students and thus endanger the implementation of the courses. After the requests forwarded by KAFFED to the Ministry calling for the removal the Latin script-based Adyghe course from the curriculum resulted unsuccessful to the Ministry, the Federation applied to the Administrative Court for a suspension of the provision (Kaya 2014, 24).

Shortly, the inclusion of optional Living Languages courses in the curriculum without the necessary preparations brought along many problems. For example, as happens for other optional courses, each teaching needs a minimum number of 10 students. This limitation is seen as a big issue because of the small size and the dispersion of the population without forgetting the lack of

opportunities to spark interest in learning the mother tongue (Kaya 2014, 25).

According to the information given by Kaya (2014), based on KAFFED's Monitoring Report 2015, no program was established within the universities for the training of teachers who would teach Adyghe and Abkhazian languages. Therefore, some of these were also selected among the attendees who received certificates in the framework of the courses organized by KAFFED. In some universities, for example in the Subdepartment of Circassian Language and Literature of the Department of Caucasian Languages and Cultures, which was opened within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Düzce University in the 2013-2014 academic years, Adyghe education was provided. Since these departments were opened within the Science and Literature faculties, and not within the education faculties that provide graduates with the qualification and formation to teach, their graduates can work as teachers only after receiving pedagogical formation training.

The materials of the Adyghe and Abkhazian language classrooms to be used in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th were prepared by KAFFED within the framework of a protocol agreed between the Ministry of National Education and KAFFED. Textbooks and listening materials prepared by KAFFED for Adyghe and Abkhazian lessons taught in 5th grades have been approved by the Ministry of National Education; published by the Ministry to be used as a textbook in the 2014-2015 academic year, they have been published also in the form of e-book on the Ministry's website. The 6th grade books, and voiced texts/listening CDs prepared by KAFFED were also delivered to the Ministry and published for the 2015-2016 academic year. KAFFED has also prepared Adyghe and Abkhazian textbooks for 7th and 8th grades. No budget was provided by the Ministry of National Education for the preparation of textbooks and materials, and the institutions even donated the copyright of the materials to the Ministry.

It has been observed that some problems occurred in delivering the textbooks and materials to the students who attended the course. According to the information given by the Ministry of National Education, 848 copies of the Abkhazian book and 813 of the Adyghe books were requested.

7.5. Mother tongue teaching and Circassians

The members of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey have sometimes expressed their concerns about the inclusion of their mother tongue in the formal education process, according to the political conditions of the country. For example, on 21 May 2017, the Circassians living in Sivas expressed their demands for access to education in their mother tongue during the march commemorating the anniversary of the Circassian genocide and the great exile. As it was said during the march:

> "The protection of the mother tongue is sacred. The Circassians who gave their lives for this country in the War of Independence did not know a word of Turkish until the moment of martyrdom. Now their descendants do not know their own mother tongue. Circassian is among the languages that are disappearing. In this sense, solution to the problems with access to optional mother tongue courses by Circassians living in Turkey has to be found." (Timeturk 2017).

Similarly, the Circassians who came together on Sunday, 11 March 2018 in the framework of the Adyghe Language Day events organised by the Istanbul Caucasian Culture Association, expressed their demands emphasising the importance of mother tongue teaching (Cumhuriyet 2018). Moreover, on 12 November 2019, the president of the Turkish Circassian Forum called for a state-owned television channel broadcasting in Circassian demanding more financial support by relevant public institutions on the protection of mother tongue education (Haberler.com 2019). In addition to these various initiatives are being organized with the aim of protecting, developing and transferring the language to future generations within the scope of Adyghe (Circassian) Language Day on 14 March.

With a law published in the Official Newspaper dated March 13, 2014, the Law n. 2923 on Foreign Language Education and Teaching and Learning Different Languages and Dialects of Turkish Citizens was amended, and it was decreed that Turkish citizens can open private schools in order to provide education and

training in different languages and dialects that they traditionally use in their daily lives[2].

Circassians were one of the first peoples to take steps to realize the demands for education in the mother tongue. Adana Circassian Culture Association started working on the kindergarten project in Adyghe in 2012. With the support of UNICEF, they opened a kindergarten in Adana that teaches Adyghe and all staffs are Circassian. All the equipment of the kindergarten, which became operational on 22 September 2013, providing education in Adyghe was supplied by UNICEF's "Education Strengthening Project" (T24 2013). However, although it was a three-year project, the kindergarten could pursue its activities just two years and was closed down due to economic reasons.

In short, with the abolition of some bans on mother tongue and allowing private courses, significant gains have been realized. Among these one should list the inclusion of optional mother tongue courses in secondary education, which was the result of the constructive dialogue and mutual understanding and cooperation developed by KAFFED with relevant political and administrative public authorities, and the introduction of Circassian departments at Düzce and Kayseri Erciyes Universities. As a result of the negotiations and cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, Adyghe and Abkhazian modules were added to the curriculum of Public Education Institutions. Moreover, language courses can now be opened in Public Education Centres or in public supported associations (Cumhuriyet 2018).

In addition, as a result of these reforms, on 7 June 2004, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) started broadcasting in five minority languages and dialects. In Zazaki and Kirmanci dialects of the Kurdish language, Arabic, Bosnian and Circassian languages, television broadcasts are for 45 minutes five days a week; radio broadcasts are for 30 minutes five days a week and start at 6 am.

---

[2] Law on Amending Various Laws for the Promotion of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, Law n. 6529; Accepted Date: March 2, 2014.

7.6. Recent developments

As of the 2020-2021 academic year, with the initiatives of KAFFED Mother Tongue Commission and Göksun Circassian Culture Association, 23 students chose the Circassian (Adygee) elective course started classes in 2 grade and were accompanied by 2 teachers in Yavuz Selim Secondary School in Göksun district. The number of students is expected to continue to increase in the coming years (KAFFED 2021a). The first Circassian (Adyghe) classroom opened with the initiatives of the Ödemiş Caucasian Cultural Association was established in the Ödemiş District of İzmir. 11 students who chose the Circassian (Adygee) optional course in the Cyrillic alphabet in Gereli Şehit Süleyman Özdemir Secondary School in Ödemiş District started the lessons with the contributions of 1 teacher (KAFFED 2021b). Significant transformations are also taking place at university level. Düzce University's Circassian Language and Literature Department, which launched the first Circassian Language and Literature undergraduate program outside of the Caucasus, opened in 2013 and gave its first graduates in 2017. It provides a significant part of its faculty members in close cooperation with Adygea State University in Maykop. There are six academicians in this department: one full professor, two associate professors, two assistant professors and one research assistant (KAFFED 2021c).

Similarly, the Department of Circassian Language and Culture in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has been opened at Erciyes University. This department, which accepted its first students in the 2018-2019 academic year, will have its first graduates in 2022. It consists of five academicians: one full professor, one associate professor, two assistant professor and one lecturer (ibid.).

The students are accepted to these departments through the Central University Entrance Exam. The score type and base scores of both departments are as follows:

University	Department	Score type	Quota	Base scores
Erciyes University	Circassian Language and Culture	Verbal	30	258,37900
Düzce University	Circassian Language and Literature	Verbal	30	250,80076

Tab.1. 2020-2021 Academic Year Circassian sections

Apart from universities, KAFFED continues its own educational activities. For example, online Circassian and Russian language courses are active for the 2021-2022 period (KAFFED 2021d).

Circassian (Western Dialect) classes, which started in October 2020 and were open to all Circassians in the world for the first time in the virtual environment, were realized four evenings in a week for six months, between 20:00 and 22:00 over the Zoom program. The lectures were attended from the USA, Georgia and Canada, as well as from different cities of Turkey. The Circassian Language courses lasted 6 months during which students of different ages and language levels worked interactively on literacy, basic grammar rules, counting, conversation and vocabulary development. As the 6-month period has been completed, students actively participating in the classes have been subjected to an exam according to their skills. Successful students attending the online program have obtained Circassian Basic Level (KAFFED 2021e).

The fact that education came to a standstill throughout the country, because of the pandemic that emerged in 2020, was among the factors which prevented opening classes in secondary education. Thereupon, as a result of the work of KAFFED Mother Tongue Commission (Optional Courses Group) for the 2021-2022 academic year, in the elective process that started on 4 January and ended on 22 January 22, 10 classrooms with 100 students in Kayseri province, 2 classes with 20 students in Düzce, 3 classrooms with 38 students in Göksun, 1 classroom with 11 students in Çorum, 1 classroom with 12 students in the village of Ertuğrul in the Ödemiş District of İzmir, with the efforts of the Ödemiş Caucasian Culture Association, were opened. Last year, there were online events regarding Circassian and Abhhazian language courses, while the Circassian (western dialect) language courses continued for 5 months. Nearly 300 students participating even from countries such as Germany and Israel attended the courses (KAFFED 2021f).

7.7. Latest general context

In short, after the optional mother tongue course was enacted in Turkey, different numbers and proportions of students were included in this process in some Circassian-populated areas, throughout different academic years, in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. For example, according to the information in the

archives of KAFFED, after the start of the new constitutional amendments in 2010, the Ministry of National Education decided to start the Adyghe and Abkhazian optional courses in 5th grade of schools the under the name of Living Languages and Dialects in 2012. In general, the table is as follows:

	Kayseri		Düzce		Çorum		Turhal		Hendek***		Göksun		Ödemiş	
Years	s*	n**	s	n	s	n	s	n	s	n	s	n	s	n
2012-2013	3	42	1	10	0	0	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013-2014	12	120	1	10	0	0	0	0	1	15	0	0	0	0
2014-2015	17	210	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015-2016	16	160	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	15	0	0	0	0
2016-2017	10	100	2	20	0	0	0	0	1	14	0	0	0	0
2017-2018	10	100	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018-2019	5	50	3	32	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019-2020	2	20	3	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2020-2021	4	51	2	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	23	1	11
TOTAL	79	853	15	155	1	10	1	10	3	44	2	23	1	11

* Number of classrooms ** Number of students *** Abkhazian language course

Tab. 2. Participation in Circassian optional courses by year

According to the KAFFED vice president (Arslan 2021), the optional courses encountered several difficulties at the beginning. The classroom could not be opened due to the shortage of trainers, but the problems started to disappear thank to the participation of language teachers who received trainer certificates with the cooperation of the federation and associations, and those who graduated from Düzce University Circassian Language and Literature Department in the last three years. A total of 92 people were given certificates across Turkey.

In addition to the effective use of the website and social media, KAFFED reaches out to families especially through its member associations and conducts informative activities about applying for mother tongue courses. For this purpose, posters and brochures containing detailed information are also printed and delivered to the federated associations. A subcommittee has also been formed to work on this issue in order to improve communicative effectiveness and reach more people.

KAFFED used social media effectively to demand mother tongue lessons and reached Circassian families, especially through members

of the Circassian association, and carried out an information campaign on this issue. KAFFED sent posters and brochures with detailed information to the associations. It organized teams to be more effective.

KAFFED provided Educational Training on various dates in order to carry out the mother tongue lessons given in its affiliated associations in a more professional way. Thanks to KAFFED's relationship with the state, the Circassian associations can give the certificate to those who received language courses in Public Education Center.

In 2010, KAFFED applied to the General Directorate of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education of the Ministry of National Education with the Adyghebze and Abaza Literacy Module Programs prepared by KAFFED Mother Tongue Education Commission and started to work on giving Adyghe and Abkhazian courses within the scope of Public Education. As a result of these studies, the aforementioned programs were approved on 23 August 2010, and the curriculum of the courses was added to the Public Education Automation System. The modules, which were removed from the system after a while, due to the political turmoil at that time, were resumed after the studies and negotiations conducted by the Federation. The modules were rearranged according to the European Union standards by the KAFFED Mother Tongue Commission and delivered to the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning. As of 2018, the way to open a Circassian mother tongue course in Public Education has been paved. Many of the associations have opened and continue to increase the number of courses within Public Education Centers in this direction.

As of 2020, the associations that provide Circassian language courses affiliated with KAFFED are as follows: Bahçelievler Caucasian Circassian Association - 1 classroom, Balıkesir Adıge Cultural Association - 2 classroom, Denizli Caucasian Culture Association - 1 classroom, Düzce Adyge Culture Association - 3 classroom, Istanbul Uzunyayla Caucasian Culture and Solidarity Association - 1 classroom, İzmir Circassian Cultural Association - 1 classroom, K. Maraş Caucasian Cultural Association - 2 classroom, Mersin Caucasian Cultural Association - 1 classroom, Mustafa Kemalpaşa Circassian Cultural Association - 1 classroom, Susurluk Caucasian Association - 1 classroom, Tokat Circassian Association - 1 classroom. In short, there are a total of 15 classrooms supported by the Public Education Center in 11 associations affiliated with KAFFED. Apart from this, there are also

associations that offer courses in the presence of volunteer trainers. These are:

Associations	Language Courses
Adana Circassian Cultural Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distance education)
Antalya Circassian Association	Adyghe 2 Classrooms (distanced)
Bahçelievler Caucasus Circassian Association	Adyghe 1 classroom (distanced)
Balıkesir Adyghe - Circassian Cultural Association	Adyghe 2 Classrooms (distanced)
Bandırma Northern Caucasus Cultural Association.	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distanced)
Circassian Association / Ankara	Adyghe, Abkhazian and Asetinian one each Classrooms
Circassian Culture House Association	Adyghe and Russian one each Classroom (distanced)
Denizli Caucasus Culture Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
Düzce Adyghe Cultural Association	Adyghe 3 Classrooms (public edu.)
Eskişehir Northern Caucasian Cultural and Solidarity Association	Adyghe ve Abkhazian one each Classrooms (distanced)
Ist. Uzunyayla Caucasian Cultural and Solidarity Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
İstanbul Caucasian Cultural Association.	Adyghe ve Abkhazian one each Classroom (distanced)
İzmir Circassian Cultural Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
Kahramanmaraş Caucasian Cultural Association	Adyghe 2 Classrooms (public edu.) Adıgece 1 Classroom (distanced)
Kayseri Caucasian Association.	Adyghe 1 Classroom - distanced
Kiçir Adyghe Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distanced)
Mersin Caucasian Cultural and Solidarity Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
Mustafakemalpaşa Circassian Cultural Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
Reyhanlı Circassian Association - Adyghe Khase	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distanced)
Sakarya Caucasian Cultural Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distanced)
Samsun Circassian Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distanced)
Susurluk Caucasian Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
Tokat Circassian Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (public edu.)
Yalova Circassian Union Cultural and Solidarity Association	Adyghe 1 Classroom (distanced)

Tab. 3. 2019-2020 Years- Language Activities in Caucasian Associations

7.8. Conclusion

The educational activities of the Circassians of Turkey go back to the very old history, the *Tanzimat* period when they had two schools and newspapers in Istanbul, which provided education in their own language. However, with the transition to the Republican regime in 1923, they lost these opportunities. Until 2012, they did not have any activities in the field of formal education. This situation caused language erosion in them and accelerated their assimilation process. With the gradual reform process that took place in 2012, new opportunities have emerged. Between 2012-2021, Circassians, like other ethnic groups, also had significant experiences. Despite some negativities, two departments for Circassian language,

Culture and Literature were opened in two universities in this process. Courses on mother tongue teaching were opened in approximately 25 associations which are non-governmental organizations in 23 cities, and 1006 students received elective mother tongue education in 102 classrooms in state schools in 7 cities.

As can be understood from the field studies, it has been observed that the Living Languages and Dialects Optional Courses, which have been implemented since 2012, have been developed far from participation. In other words, these developments meet the real needs of the participants.

It is important to ensure the participation of representatives of relevant ethnic groups while preparing, planning and implementing the curriculum of the Living Languages and Dialects Elective Courses, which have been implemented since 2012.

In addition, it has been understood that the conditions such as the requirement that the minimum number of 10 students for each course, the absence of teachers, and the negative attitudes of some school administrators towards the preference of these courses have a negative effect.

It should be known that the primary responsibility for teacher training and preparation of textbooks and materials rests with the government. Because the responsibility for the education in the mother tongues belongs to the state.

In this light, the start of national state broadcasting in minority languages is an important development. However, it would be more effective that the state did not make these broadcasts unilaterally, but in consultation with the representatives of its addressee minorities.

Most importantly, it is a fact that the struggle for existence of the Circassians in Turkey cannot be carried out only by teaching the mother tongue, nor can be solved with the Living Languages and Dialects Optional Courses. Moreover, no changes have been made in Article 42 of the Constitution yet. This leaves them insecure. The right of all peoples to receive education in their mother tongue should be constitutionally guaranteed, in Turkey or elsewhere. Shortly, minority identities and languages in Turkey need to be legally and constitutionally secured.

References

AKSOY, E. (2020), *Benim adım 1864 Çerkes hikâyeleri*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul.

ARSLAN, A. (2021), *Personal Interview*, conducted by C. Aslan (25 May).

CUMHURİYET (2018), *Çerkesler'den tarihi noktada anadil çağrısı*, available at <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/cerkeslerden-tarihi-noktada-ana-dil-cagrisi-940765> (last accessed 31 October 2021).

DOĞAN, A. (2019), *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Çerkes muhacirlerin eğitim faaliyetleri ve ğuaze gazetesinde eğitime dair yazılar*, in "Vakanüvis-Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi", 4, 1, 142-165.

GAZEL, A. A., ORTAK, Ş. (2006), *İkinci meşrutiyet'ten 1927 yılına kadar yayın imtiyazı alan gazete ve mecmualar (1908-1927)*, in "Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi", 7, 1, 223-256.

GÜSAR, V. (1975), *Çerkes Teâvün Cemiyeti*, in "Kafkasya Dergisi", Nisan-Mayıs-Haziran 1975, No. 47, 29.

KAFFED (n.d.), *2015-2017 faaliyet raporu*, available at <https://www.kaffed.org/docs/Kaffed_2016-2017.pdf> (last accessed 31 October 2021).

-(2021a), *İzmir'de ilk Çerkesce sınıfı*, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20211202130621/https://kaffed.org/haberler/diasporadan/item/4484-izmir-de-ilk-cerkesce-sinifi.html> (last accessed 30 November 2022).

- (2021b), *Göksun'da ilk Çerkesce sınıfları açıldı*, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20211202123407/https://kaffed.org/haberler/diasporadan/item/4489-goksun-da-ilk-cerkesce-siniflari-acildi.html (last accessed 1 December 2022).

- (2021c), *Erciyes Üniversitesi Çerkes Dili ve Kültürü Bölümü yeni öğrencilerini bekliyor*, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20211028204433/https://www.kaffed.org/haberler/diasporadan/item/4432-cerkes-dili-ve-kulturu-bolumu-yeni-ogrencilerini-bekliyor.html> (last accessed 30 November 2022).

- (2021d), *Düzce Üniversitesi Çerkes Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü yeni öğrencilerini bekliyor*, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20210924164010/https://www.kaffed.org/haberler/diasporadan/item/4430-cerkes-dili-ve-edebiyati-bolumu-yeni-ogrencilerini-bekliyor.html> (last accessed 20 November 2022).

- (2021e), *Çerkesçe Dil kurslarımız tamamlandı*, available at <https://www.kaffed.org/haberler/federasyondan/item/4294-cerkesce-dil-kurslarimiz-tamamlandi.html> (last accessed 31 October 2021).

- (2021f), *Abhazya Devlet Üniversitesi diasporadan öğrenci kabul programı başlatıyor*, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20210924163901/https://www.kaffed.org/haberler/kafkasyadan/item/4433-abhazya-devlet-

uni%CC%87versi%CC%87tesi%CC%87-diasporadan-ogrenci%CC%87-kabul-programi-baslatiyor.html> (last accessed 31 October 2022).

KAYA, N. (2014), *Türkiye eğitim sisteminde renk, etnik köken, dil, din ve inanç temelli ayrımcılık*, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, Istanbul.

ÖZBUDUN, E. (2012), *Anadilde eğitim mi, anadilin öğretimi mi?*, in "Star", available at <www.ozgurcerkes.com/?Syf=26&Syz=94135> (last accessed 30 October 2021).

ŞENER, C. (2006), *Türkiye'de yaşayan etnik ve dinsel gruplar*, Etik Yayınları, Istanbul.

TIMETURK (2017), *Çerkesler anadilde eğitim kolaylığı istedi*, available at <https://www.timeturk.com/cerkesler-anadilde-egitim-kolayligi-istedi/haber-643040> (last accessed 31 October 2021).

T24 (2013), *Anadilde eğitimde ilk adım Çerkeslerden geldi*, available at <https://t24.com.tr/haber/anadilde-egitimde-ilk-adim-cerkeslerden-geldi,242457> (last accessed 31 October 2021).

8. The Alevis: religious, ethnic or political minority?

Martin van Bruinessen

8.1. Shifting self-perceptions

The Alevis constitute a different type of minority than ethnic groups such as the Kurds or Circassians and non-Muslim religious communities such as Jews or Armenians. The name Alevi suggests a distinctly religious identity and at least a nominal association with Islam, but Alevis lack the centralized religious authority of the non-Muslim groups as well as their legally recognized separate status. During the past century, Alevis have moreover been fiercely divided amongst themselves about what distinguished them from the non-Alevi majority and whether Alevism was a religion at all. Many 'secular' intellectuals insisted that Alevism was a cultural tradition and a humanistic worldview that had little to do with Islam. By the late 1970s, in the context of political polarization of Turkish society, Alevism was widely perceived as a political identity of distinct leftist inclination.

In the left movements and organisations that flourished between 1960 and 1980, ethnic background was generally considered as irrelevant and at best a matter of some exotic interest. It was clear, however, that Alevis were over-represented in all left movements as well as in several Kurdish associations and parties, although they rarely if ever mentioned their Alevi background. The left generally tended to view the Alevis as inherently more sympathetic towards socialist ideas because of the history of popular uprisings and oppression by the

Ottoman state, and the alleged egalitarian traditions of Alevi communities[1]. Political activists of Alevi background downplayed the religious dimension of Alevism and insisted that their struggle was in the name of socialism (or Kurdish nationalism of a distinct socialist slant) rather than Alevism[2].

The political violence of those years culminated in a series of anti-Alevi pogroms in which right-wing thugs, some of them brought in from far away by the fascist youth organization, attacked Alevi neighbourhoods and the defenders were joined by radical left activists from elsewhere. The conflict of right and left was conflated with the older tension between Sunni Muslims and *Kızılbaş* (literally Red Head - one of the main groups of Alevis).

The region where these confrontations took place (Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Sivas, Çorum) was ethnically mixed; there were Turkish and Kurdish speakers among both Alevis and Sunnis, and many of them were tribally organized. The Sunni-Alevi clashes strengthened the Alevi communities' perception, in spite of the considerable variety in their cultural and religious traditions, of a strong commonality among themselves (in which they even included the Arab Alevis) and an almost unpassable boundary between them and neighbouring Sunni Muslim groups. Both the ethnonyms "Turk" and "Kurd" were commonly used by Alevis for their Sunni neighbours, not for themselves. Geographically as well as in self-perception, Alevi communities were squeezed in between Kurds and Turks. They came to constitute a sort of ethnic group in the sense of Fredrik Barth's transactional account of ethnicity (Barth 1969)[3]. Many individual Alevis

---

[1] A clear overview of the attitude of leftist activists towards Alevis and their experience with Alevi communities in that period is given by Bahadır 2020.

[2] There was one notable exception. Nejat Birdoğan, who was to gain fame as the author of some of the best empirical studies of Alevi communities in the early 1990s, was arrested after the 1980 coup d'état under the notorious article 163 of the penal code, which bans political activism in the name of religion. He was the only non-Islamist ever arrested under that article, being accused of propagating the idea of an Alevi state (personal communication with Birdoğan, mid-1990s).

[3] According to Barth, it is not a distinct culture or historical continuity that constitutes the ethnic group, as had been the common anthropological view, but the maintenance of social boundaries separating it from other groups (in the case of the Alevis, boundaries with Sunni Kurds and Turks). For Barth, boundaries take precedence over the "cultural stuff", but some elements of culture may be elevated as symbols that mark the social boundary (e.g. iconic representations of Ali and his two-pointed

have felt torn between two rival claims to their identity, Kurdish (or Turkish, as the case may be) and Alevi[4]. The left, which rejected Sunni religious prejudice as well as Turkish chauvinism and idealized Alevism as a tradition of popular resistance to oppression by the state, offered a perspective to negotiate the boundary, conflating three stigmatic identities, the "three K": *Kürt, Kızılbaş, Komünist*.

The most iconic of these massacres was that of Kahramanmaraş in December 1978, in which over a hundred people were killed and hundreds of houses and workshops were destroyed and burned down[5]. These violent clashes all involved the mobilization of right-wing hoodlums by the ultranationalist youth organization (*ülkü ocakları* - idealist hearths), the assassination of prominent individuals or bombings as triggers of the violence, conspiracy theories about communist and Alevi attacks on mosques or on Sunni villages, and massive assaults on Alevi neighbourhoods. In Kahramanmaraş, Alevi neighbourhoods were under siege for several days, without the police or army intervening. Most of those killed, however, belonged to Alevi families living in Sunni majority neighbourhoods, where there was no effective communal defence and where their houses had been marked in advance.

The Kahramanmaraş massacre persuaded the government (then led by the left-leaning Bülent Ecevit) to give in to the military's demand to declare martial law in Istanbul, Ankara and large part of Eastern Turkey. In September 1980 the armed forces went a step further and carried out a coup, detaining political leaders of government as well as opposition, banning all political parties, trade unions and associations, and initiating a massive hunt for political activists, targeting especially the left and the Kurdish movement.

Determined to prevent a revival of political polarization, the military overhauled the political and legal system and had a new

---

sword Zulfikar on the Alevi side, Islamic concepts of ritual purity and seclusion of women on the Sunni side), whereas the significance of other cultural traits, including language, is played down.

4 Identity struggles and debates appealing to political, religious and ethnic or ethnonational identities continued during the following decades. See van Bruinessen 1997 and, by a prominent participant, Aygün 2020.

5 For a perceptive analysis in English of the events and their social and political background see Sinclair-Webb 2003.

Constitution drafted that severely curtailed civil liberties. In what seemed a departure from the military's tradition of staunch secularism, a conservative variety of Sunni Islam, the so-called Turkish-Islamic synthesis, was adopted as an antidote to socialist thought. Religious education, which had until then been an elective subject in state schools, became mandatory. The Ministry of Education had new textbooks for history and "knowledge of religious culture and morality" (*din kültürü ve ahlak bilgisi*) written that reflected the newly adopted, conservative Sunni school of thought[6].

Alevi children had previously been able to avoid the religion classes because they were elective but were henceforth obliged to attend and learn of the obligation of prayer, fasting etc. The regime moreover embarked on a drive to build mosques and appoint imams in villages where there was none (which were usually Alevi villages)[7]. As an effort to convert Alevis to Sunni Islam these policies appear to have been a failure. However, they made Alevis more acutely aware of the difference between their own traditions and Sunni Islam and caused an increased interest in the religious dimension of those Alevi traditions. By the end of the decade, when some of the restrictions on civil society were lifted, this was to give rise to a vocal Alevi activism that was cultural and religious rather than socialist.

8.2. Geographical distribution and historical background of Alevi communities

The name "Alevi" is a blanket term applied to a broad range of communities that are not all closely related and that are primarily defined by their difference from normative Sunni Islam (which in most cases involves a rejection of the canonical obligations of prayer (*namaz*), fasting in Ramazan, donating the alms tax (*zekat*) and pilgrimage to Mecca, their special devotion for the prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali and his descendants, and a distinctive

---

6 On the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, see Toprak 1990; Güvenç et al. 1991; Copeaux 1997, 77-101; on its impact on historiography and school textbooks Copeaux 2002. The new curriculum and the content of the textbooks for religion studies are analysed by Uyanık 2009.

7 These measures are referred to in Bilici 1998 and Yaman 2004, 132-134.

communal ritual known as *ayin-i cem*. The largest sub-groups of Alevis used to be known as *Kızılbaş*, *Bektaşi* and *Nusayri*. Smaller groups are known by tribal names such as *Çepni* and *Sıraç*, *Tahtacı* and *Abdal*.

There are Kurdish and Zazakî-speaking Alevi (*Kızılbaş*) communities in the upper and middle Euphrates basin, Turkish-speaking Alevi communities in the region enclosed by the river Kızılırmak in Central Anatolia and thinly dispersed in West and South Anatolia as well as in European Turkey and parts of Bulgaria and Rumania, and Arabic-speaking Alevis (or *Nusayri*) in Hatay and Adana, along the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean. The last-named group adhere to the same tradition as Syria's `Alawites, which is significantly different from that of the Anatolian Alevis[8].

The name *Kızılbaş*, applied to the Kurdish and Zaza as well as some of the Turkish Alevis, points to their historical connection with the Safavid movement, whose followers were so named because of their distinctive red headgear. The Safavids found much enthusiastic support throughout Anatolia in the 15th and 16th centuries. Their most charismatic leader, Shah Isma'il, and his closest followers were expelled towards the east by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) and founded a state in Iran. Shah Isma'il, who composed religious poetry under the pen name of Hata'i, has remained a highly venerated figure among the Alevis, and Sultan Selim the archetypical enemy because of his massacre of allegedly tens of thousands of *Kızılbaş*.

Another subgroup of the Turkish Alevis, partly overlapping with the *Kızılbaş*, is that of the village *Bektaşi*, who owe this name to a historical affiliation with the alleged descendants of the 13th-century peripatetic Sufi Hacı Bektaş and the central lodge of the Bektaşi Sufi order in Nevşehir. The Alevis of Southeastern Europe also acknowledge affiliation with Hacı Bektaş and especially with his contemporary, the dervish saint Sarı Saltuk (Kiel 2000).

The core institution among these communities is that of *dedelik* (literally grandfatherhood), hereditary ritual leadership largely monopolized by holy lineages known as *ocak* (hearth). Each village community

---

8 An early survey made of these various communities by the nationalist author Baha Said in the early 1920s was recently reprinted: Baha Said Bey 2006. More recent and more detailed surveys, based on personal field observations, in Birdoğan 1992 and Türkdoğan 1995. The most ambitious and most informative survey, based on hundreds of interviews with resource persons in the Kızılırmak region, is Yıldırım 2018.

is traditionally affiliated with a specific *ocak*, of which usually only a small number of members is selected to fill the role of spiritual preceptor and ritual specialist, *dede*[9]. Each *ocak* claims descent from a well-known saint in Alevi sacred history, and through him from one of the Shi`i imams. The family that claims descent from Hacı Bektaş, known by the title of *çelebi* (gentleman) and the family name of Ulusoy, constitutes a special case among the *ocak*. They reside in the village where the central lodge of the Bektaşi Sufi order was located and are considered as the highest religious authorities by the village Bektaşi as well as some (but by no means all) of the Kızılbaş *ocak*. Most *ocak* serve Kurdish as well as Turkish village communities. The Arab Alevis do not take part in the same *ocak* system, but they also have hereditary religious specialists known as *shaykh* (elder), who play a highly influential role in the community[10].

The *ayin-i cem* has to be led by a *dede*, assisted by a second ritual specialist, the *rehber* (guide), who in most cases belongs to a different *ocak*. A third important participant in the ritual is the *zakir*, the singer-musician who performs sacred poetry, accompanying himself on the long-necked lute called *bağlama* (also *tanbur* or *tomir*). The *zakir* does not have to belong to an *ocak*, and the same is true of the men who perform the nine further functions that are specified as necessary conditions for a proper *cem* ritual, making up the sacred number of twelve functions (*on iki hizmet*). Traditionally, only born Alevis of both sexes who have moreover received initiation in an *ikrar* (affirmation) ceremony, as was the case of most or all adults in the village community, are admitted to the *ayin-i cem*[11]. A second degree of initiation involved the establishment of symbolic kinship between two married couples,

9 The first major study of the *ocak* system is the dissertation by Ali Yaman, son of the prominent *dede* Mehmet Yaman, for which he interviewed 110 *dede*, representing some forty *ocak* (Yaman 2004). See also the survey of *ocak* in Birdoğan 1992, the analysis by Gezik & Özcan 2013 of the complex relations between Kurdish *ocak*, and the attempt at a systematic inventory in Yıldırım 2018, 227-246.

10 Much less is known of Nusayri ritual and belief than of the other Alevi communities. The *shaykh* are believed to hold secret religious knowledge that they are not allowed to share with commoners, even though they impart religious education on male members of the community (Arnold 2005, Doğruel 2005, 187-197).

11 Among the Arab Alevis there is a similar communal ritual, in which however only adult men take part. Only men are initiated; women receive no religious education. See Arnold 2005, 310-312.

who became each other's *musahip, i.e.* vowed to unlimited mutual support and sharing of property.

All these institutions, it appears, were already present in the Safavid movement but may well have even older origins. Before the Safavids, in the era of transition from Christianity to Islam, the Wafa'iyya, another popular religious movement named for the 11th-century Kurdish saint Abu'l-Wafa Taj al-`Arifin, found a large following among the Turcoman and Kurdish tribes and peasantry of Anatolia (Ocak 2005; Karakaya Stump 2020). Genealogical documents preserved by several *ocak* in Eastern Turkey indicate that their ancestors were originally affiliated with the Wafa'iyya, later transferred their loyalties to the Safavids and in some cases yet later shifted to the Bektaşi Sufi order as a more politically secure umbrella under Ottoman rule (Birdoğan 1992, Karakaya Stump 2020).

Although the Wafa'iyya, the Safavids and the Bektaşis are considered as heterodox by present standards of Sunni orthodoxy, the original communities that gathered around Wafa'i and Safavid emissaries may not have been too different from the majority of Anatolian Muslims of their day, with whom they shared many popular beliefs and practices. It was the political conflict between the Ottoman and Safavid states from c. 1500 onwards and the gradual establishment of a learned and Shariah-oriented version of Islam by the Ottoman state that made the proto-Alevis appear as increasingly deviant. In peasant uprisings of the 16th century it is hard to distinguish political and economic dissent from religious heterodoxy. The Janissary troops who put down the major uprisings probably held religious views that were not too different from those of the rebels[12]. When the Ottomans established their control over Central and East Anatolia and made the first tax surveys, there were no villages with a mosque. The religion of the mosque and *medrese* (seminary) was an urban affair; the institutions and the foundations supporting them were founded by the state or by high officials. Orthodox Sunni Islam only gradually spread to the

12 On these uprisings: Sohrweide 1965, Imber 1979. The Janissaries, slave soldiers recruited as young boys from subjected Christian peasant populations and educated as Muslims, had a special connection with the Bektaşi Sufi order (Birge 1937, 74-78). The documents cited by Sohrweide and Imber indicate that there was an active persecution of Anatolian *Kızılbaş* in the 16th century but that condemnations of their religious deviance concerned in fact their political allegiance to the Safavid enemy.

countryside, in step with the gradual expansion of state control. In that respect, the post-1980 urge to build mosques in Alevi villages and teach Sunni doctrine to Alevi children represents a return to Ottoman style governance[13].

For the Arab Alevis, who have a different history and were never affiliated with the Safavids, it has also been argued that they had constituted an established and well-connected strand of Islam since before Sunni or Shi`i orthodoxy were codified. In his study of the `Alawis of Syria (and by implication the Arab Alevis of Turkey), the historian Stefan Winter concludes that in the Middle Ages they did not constitute a marginal rural community but were a heterodox sect whose religious ideas "not only appealed to an urban intellectual class but also served to focus and express the social grievances of recently and perhaps still incompletely Islamized rural populaces" (Winter 2016, 41)[14]. For most of their history, the `Alawi communities were not as marginal and oppressed as their self-image has it.

The *Nusayri*, *Kızılbaş* and *Bektaşi* still constitute three more or less separate communities (or rather ensembles of communities, each with considerable internal variety), with different traditions of belief and ritual, and with different relations with the state and with Turkey's official Islam as represented by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, commonly and briefly known as Diyanet). The *Kızılbaş*, and among them especially the Kurdish/Zaza Alevis of Dersim, Malatya and Kahramanmaraş are least affected by normative Islam, whereas among the village *Bektaşi* of Central and Western Turkey normative Islam in its Sunni or Shi`i form has made some inroads. The *Nusayri* tradition has evolved independently of the *Kızılbaş* and *Bektaşi*; their rituals are different and so, presumably, is their doctrine – but since the doctrine is only known to the religious elite, most Arab Alevi commoners do not really know how different theirs is from those of the other Alevi groups.

---

13 There had been at least one earlier deliberate effort to build mosques and appoint imams in Kızılbaş villages under the late 19th-century Sultan Abdulhamid II, see Çakmak 2019, 325-326; Kieser 2000, 167-170; Winter 2018, 220-228.

14 The author observes that the `Alawi *da`wa* (proselytization) was actively supported by the Shi`i Hamdanid dynasty ruling in Aleppo in the 10th century. Under the Sunni dynasties ruling Syria in the following centuries (the Ayyubids, Mamluks and Ottomans), `Alawis were consistently seen as deviant but not really persecuted (Ibid., *passim*).

In the Ottoman Empire, these heterodox communities were not formally treated as religious minorities, unlike the various Christian and Jewish groups, which as *dhimmi* (in Turkish *zimmi*) had a protected status but were subject to special taxes. For tax purposes and military duties the heterodox communities were considered as Muslims, and the early population censuses (*tahrir defterleri*) do not list them separately[15]. The *Kızılbaş* no doubt were seriously mistrusted because of their loyalty to the Safavid enemy. Many in fact had followed Shah Isma'il to Iran, and many more were to follow after the brutal suppression of later uprisings. Otherwise, however, the state did not much discriminate against the proto-Alevis, although prejudices against them were probably widespread, as is apparent from other Ottoman sources, such as Evliya Çelebi's famous *Seyahatname* (Book of Travels).

Pious Sunnis avoided social contact with Alevis, accusing them of unspeakable sins including incest and nightly rituals that turned into sexual orgies. (*Mum söndüren*, "candle extinguishers", is how these communities were often called, with much explicit speculation on what happened once the lights were out). Because they did not perform the obligatory five daily prayers and the necessary ablutions, they were seen as ritually unclean and literally untouchable. Food prepared by Alevis could under no circumstances be eaten by a good Sunni Muslim – something that remained an impediment to friendship and co-operation between Sunnis and Alevis well into the 20th century.

8.3. The Alevis and the Republic

Many Alevis, especially the older generations and those of Turkish ethnicity, are staunch Kemalists, convinced that Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)'s secularizing reforms protected the Alevis from Islamic fundamentalism and empowered them. However, the Republican People's Party (CHP), which was once, under Atatürk, the sole legal party and almost identical with the state apparatus, lost much of its popular support after Turkey's transition to a multi-party system, not only among conservative Sunni Muslim voters but among the Alevi electorate as

---

[15] The `Alawis are the only exception, because the Ottomans in their first census held on to a tax that had been levied specifically on the `Alawis by the preceding Mamluk regime. As Winter remarks, this makes them only sectarian group thus recognizable in Ottoman tax registers (Winter 2016, 78-83).

well. From the 1970s onwards, when the party adopted a social democratic discourse, the Alevis have at most times been a reliable source of electoral support for the CHP and prominent Kemalist intellectuals have been courting the Alevis[16]. Presently Alevis probably constitute the CHP's last remaining compact bloc of voters (but the Alevis are highly divided politically: many of the Kurdish Alevis support the pro-Kurdish party HDP).

There exists a persistent myth that Turkey's Republican elite looked favourably upon the Alevis, perceiving them as allies in the struggle to modernize and secularize Turkey and enabling their social mobility. In fact the Kemalists were above all Turkish nationalists, for most of whom Sunni Islam was an essential element of Turkish identity. There were, it is true, a few nationalists who perceived Alevism as representing the most authentic Turkish religious tradition, untainted by the Arabic religiosity of Sunni Islam, just like the simple Turkish language of Alevi poetry was seen as purer and more authentic than the convoluted Ottoman Turkish with its heavy load of Persian and Arabic borrowings. However, even the most secular-minded among the Republican elite held on to some of the old prejudices against Alevis, to which was added a certain disdain for their backwardness and superstitions[17].

Alevis were also affected by the measures banning Sufi orders and closing Sufi shrines, which were issued in 1925 in response to the (Sunni Kurdish) Shaykh Sa`id uprising. Alevi shrines (including most notably that of Hacı Bektaş and the central lodge of the Bektaşi order) were also closed and the Alevi ritual of the *ayin-i cem*, though not explicitly mentioned, shared the ban. The implementation of these measures was not uniform: some communities continued to perform the *ayin-i cem* more or less regularly, though in secret, elsewhere it gradually disappeared, along with other traditional religious practices.

The Republic's "civilizing" struggle against backwardness and tribalism at times took violent form. The biggest violent event in the history of modern Turkey was the 1937-38 military campaign against Dersim (later renamed Tunceli), a mountainous region inhabited by Zaza- and Kurdish-speaking Alevis. Villages were bombed and torched,

---

[16] See the analysis of CHP-Alevi relations over the years in Schüler 2000 and the observations in Massicard 2013, passim.

[17] Perhaps the most detailed study of Turkish nationalist perceptions and attitudes towards Alevis is Dressler 2013.

fleeing people were sprayed with poison gas, burned alive or walled up in the caves where they tried to hide. The campaign arguably constituted genocide; at least ten per cent, and possibly a much higher proportion of the population were killed (van Bruinessen 1994). Many of the survivors were deported to Western Turkey, in an effort to assimilate them to Turkish culture. It is a moot point whether the campaign was directed against the Dersimis as Kurds or as Alevis; however, it was not their religious beliefs but the perception of their refusal to adapt to Republican modernity that was the prime motivation. (Interestingly, many people in Tunceli have become strong supporters of the Republican People's Party and decline believing that Ataturk personally was responsible for the genocidal campaign).

Alevis are still divided in their attitude towards the Kemalist Republic. Many continue to believe that the Republic liberated them and protected them from Sunni fanaticism. Many others, however, speak of the massacres in Dersim as part of a long series of anti-Alevi violence, beginning with the suppression of Alevi rebellions in the 16th century and the execution of the Alevi poet and saint Pir Sultan Abdal, through an earlier Young Turk campaign against the Alevi Kurds of Koçgiri in 1920-21, to the pogroms of the 1970s and yet another series of violent events in the 1990s[18].

A state institution that became increasingly influential after 1980 and at least indirectly affected the Alevis was the aforementioned Diyanet, which is in charge of all mosques and imams in the country[19]. Diyanet officials have displayed different attitudes towards Alevis, sometimes condemning them as perverts and deviants, but more frequently claiming that "true" Alevis have much in common with Sunni Muslims, especially those of a Sufi inclination. They have insisted that historical saints such as Hacı Bektaş abided by the Shariah, prayed five times a day and fasted during Ramazan, implicitly accusing contemporary Alevis of deviating from this "genuine" Alevism. The actually existing and

---

18 The campaign against Koçgiri is discussed by Kieser 2000, 382-4, 398-403 in the context of a broader analysis of Young Turk attitudes towards Alevis, Armenians and foreign missionaries. The events in the 1990s include the torching of an Alevi cultural festival in a hotel in Sivas in 1993 and a pogrom in Istanbul's Gazi neighbourhood in 1995, in both of which state agents were believed to have acted as provocateurs. See Massicard 2013, 44-46, 50-55.

19 On Diyanet's growing importance and rapidly increasing budget, see van Bruinessen 2018.

specifically Alevi traditions (the *ayin-i cem, semah, dedelik, ikrar, musahiplik*) were not acknowledged by Diyanet. Against accusations that Diyanet discriminated against Alevis, its spokespersons time and again insisted that it treated Sunnis and Alevis equally as Muslims and built mosques for both, and that Sunnis moreover loved Ali just as much as Alevis did[20].

The curriculum of religion classes (*din kültürü ve ahlak bilgisi*) that became mandatory after 1980 was not prepared by Diyanet but by the Ministry of National Education. The textbooks of those years (analysed in Uyanık 2009) do not even allude to the existence of Alevism and are written in a style that addresses the readers as if it is self-evident that they are Sunnis. Many years later, following the AKP's victory in the 2007 elections, the Erdoğan government for a brief period made efforts to reach out to the Alevis and redress their complaints. One concrete result of the "Alevi opening" was the addition of some 15 pages specifically describing Alevism to the school textbooks. The new content, however, was again written by Sunni theologians and did not reflect the wishes of Alevi resource persons who had been heard, inevitably weakening the trust some Alevis had initially placed in the government's proclaimed intent of dialogue (Soner, Toktaş 2011, Yaman 2021). These developments will be discussed in some detail in the final section of this chapter.

8.4. Social and economic change

Migration to regional or metropolitan cities in search of work or education, which began in the 1950s, brought many more Alevis in direct contact with the state. The rise of the left, during the 1960s and 1970s, involved many young Alevis and offered them an alternative way of understanding their marginalized identities. Some of the new immigrant neighbourhoods emerging in the cities were predominantly Alevi in composition. Leftist organizations vied for control of these neighbourhoods, helping to create something of an Alevi public sphere (in which Alevi history and Alevi symbols were given a political rather than a religious significance)[21].

---

20 See the discourse analysis of Diyanet's official statements on Alevis in Uyanik 2009, 126-176.

21 For a description of life in one of these neighbourhoods, Ali Baba Mahallesi in Sivas in those years, see Ata 2021; on a famous leftist Alevi neighbourhood in Istanbul see Wedel 2002.

The increased visibility of Alevis and the emergence of a parallel Alevi economy in regional urban centres such as Sivas, Malatya and Kahramanmaraş also led to increasing tension and conflict between Sunni and Alevi communities. In one of the earliest explanations of violent Sunni-Alevi conflict, the socialist author Ömer Laçiner, who knew the situation on the ground from growing up as a Sunni in Sivas, described how Alevi shopkeepers and craftsmen, although economically weak, were resented as competitors by the established petty urban traders, craftsmen and workers who were typically Turkish speakers and Sunni Muslims (Laçiner 1978; see also Laçiner 1985).

There were as yet no explicitly Alevi associations; the organizations that had many Alevi members were either *hemşeri* associations (in which people from the same hometown or province of origin, for instance Sivas, gathered) or leftist groups united by a common ideology and worldview (in which the martyred Alevi poet Pir Sultan Abdal and Lenin or Che Guevara could rub shoulders as advocates of social justice). However, there was one political party that specifically targeted Alevi voters though carefully avoiding to use the word Alevi. This was the Union Party (Birlik Partisi), originally established in 1966 with the support of a broad range of prominent, mostly conservative Alevi personalities in an attempt to stop the political left making further inroads among the Alevi electorate. By the early 1970s, the party adopted a leftist discourse that was reminiscent of that of its earlier competitor, the socialist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi), which had meanwhile been banned. The Union Party never succeeded in winning more than a small proportion of the Alevi vote[22].

The urbanization of large numbers of Alevis also caused the traditional religious leaders, the *dede*, to lose much of their influence. Most villages used to be visited at least once a year by the *dede*, who then presided over the *ayin-i cem* ritual. Until well into the 1980s, urban communities were not served by *dede*, and interest in the religious tradition was, especially among the younger generations, minimal. To the extent that people took pride in their Alevi identity, they tended to emphasize it was a cultural tradition rooted in popular protest against

[22] Ata 2007 is an excellent study of the history of this party and its efforts to establish relations of trust with various Alevi authorities and segments of the Alevi communities. On the importance of *hemşeri* associations for Alevi migrants in the cities, see Çelik 2003.

an oppressive state, with distinct musical and poetic expressions. The annual cultural festival in the village of Hacı Bektaş, organized since 1964, became and remained until the early 1980s a celebration of Alevism as a progressive, humanistic strand in Turkey's social fabric (Norton 1995). Its character changed after the state co-opted it in the wake of the 1980 military coup, in an effort to buy the loyalty of the Alevi communities.

Although individual Alevis experienced social mobility and made careers in business, education, the professions, or the bureaucracy, they were usually not recognisable as such. Most in fact deliberately hid the fact that they were Alevi in order to pass as ordinary Turks. Among the secular middle classes, there was no discernible difference between Sunni and Alevi, for public display of religiosity was unusual until much later. Mandatory religious education in school, introduced after 1980, was resented by many Sunnis as well as Alevis, though for the latter it represented a greater threat to the part of their identity that they were trying to hide.

8.5. Alevism goes public: the Alevi revival

The date when Alevis began positioning themselves explicitly as Alevis in the public sphere can be dated more or less precisely, with the publication of the so-called Alevi manifesto (*Alevi bildirgesi*) in the Kemalist daily *Cumhuriyet* of 6 May 1990. The signatories of the declaration included Alevi personalities as well as prominent progressive non-Alevi intellectuals[23]. The text of the manifesto had been prepared the previous year at a gathering in Hamburg, Germany, and it is probably correct to state that the Alevi revival began in Germany rather than Turkey itself. Alevis had been well-represented, perhaps even overrepresented, among labour migrants and refugees there. Cities like Berlin and Hamburg hosted large Alevi communities, and it was there that, using the greater freedoms granted by German law, Alevis established the first associations and began demanding equal rights with Sunni Muslims (Sökefeld 2008). Intellectuals from Turkey were invited to discuss matters of Alevi history and identity, state policies,

---

[23] The entire declaration is reproduced in Zelyut 1990, 295-301. Zelyut was one of the Alevi signatories; the others included such non-Alevi luminaries as Yaşar Kemal, Aziz Nesin, İlhan Selçuk and Nejat Birdoğan.

and human rights. The Alevi declaration was a direct response to the government policies of imposing a conservative Sunni Islam during the oppressive decade of the 1980s[24].

The manifesto began with the claim that there were 20 million Alevis in Turkey, which amounted to a third of the population – a huge exaggeration, but one that served to draw attention to the unfairness of their neglect. State expenditure for religion, paid also from Alevis' tax contributions, the declaration continues, only serves Sunni Muslims. Diyanet only represents Sunni Islam; the obligatory religion lessons in state schools only teach Sunni Islam; the state finances mosques and mosque personnel but no Alevi institutions and functionaries. The manifesto calls for official recognition of Alevism and support of a reformed *dede* institution, as well as more adequate representation of Alevis and Alevism in the media and in the school curriculum. These are the demands that Alevis have continued pursuing in the following decades.

The publication of the Alevi manifesto was followed by a frantic publishing activity, as new Alevi journals emerged and the book market was flooded by books that debated Alevi history, culture, religious practices and whatever else it was that defined or constituted Alevism. The first wave of identity-reinforcing publishing was soon followed by academic studies by students and university lecturers of Alevi background[25]. Alevis also entered the public sphere in other ways: city-based associations were established: the conservative Hacı Bektaş Veli Cultural Association, the left-leaning Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association, and the conservative CEM Foundation[26]. And a new institution made its appearance, the *cemevi (*literally house of the *cem)*, a building especially dedicated as a venue for the *ayin-i cem* (besides serving other community functions).

---

[24] It was a Hamburg-based Alevi association that published the first major book of the Alevi resurgence, Birdoğan 1990.

[25] Karin Vorhoff carried out an inventory and systematic analysis of the production of the first years (c. 1990-1995), in which intellectuals of Alevi background attempted to define what Alevism is: Vorhoff 1995, 1998. Two decades later, Rıza Yıldırım critically surveyed the literature on what he calls "modern Alevism", classifying them into four groups: historical, anthropological, nationalist-conservative and Alevi approaches (Yıldırım 2018, 43-78). On ethnic lines of division in the Alevi movement see van Bruinessen 1997.

[26] A detailed account of the emergence and development of Alevi associational life is given in Elise Massicard's excellent study (2013, 47-55, 163-184).

In the villages, the *ayin-i cem* had typically been held in the house of one of the inhabitants, although there were also villages that had a dervish lodge (*tekke, dergâh*), where the *cem* could be held. As remarked above, the ban of Sufi orders and Sufi shrines also affected the performance of Alevi ritual, and due to its village-based nature the ritual did not travel easily to the urban environment. The first urban *ayin-i cem* were organized in the context of a short-lived early movement for revival of Alevi tradition in the 1960s. These were a few isolated celebrations as largely symbolic gestures, that were not repeated until much later[27]. In his memoirs, the *dede* Mehmet Yaman notes that former Bektaşi lodges were the sites of the Alevi revival in Istanbul: at first the Karaca Ahmed lodge and later, when the *cem* ceremonies were drawing larger numbers of attendants, in the Şahkulu lodge, which was renovated in the 1990s and became the site of more frequent *ayin-i cem* celebrations (M. Yaman 2018, 167-169). Then, one after another, new *cemevi* were opened in different districts of Istanbul and other cities[28]. Most of the new *cemevi* were community centres, offering various other social services besides a location for congregational ritual – basic courses in Alevism for young people and funerals being especially important services.

In the urban setting, and especially in the diaspora, the *ayin-i cem* differed from the traditional ones in the villages. They were not closed meetings of a village community where everyone knew everyone else but open gatherings accessible to all Alevis and even to interested onlookers. Initially, the congregations that took part in *ayin-i cem* in the new *cemevi* consisted of people from many different regions, and *dede* of different *ocak* presided over the ceremonies. The *cemevi* thus contributed to the integration of different strands of Alevism; even Arab Alevis, whose village traditions were significantly different and who did not have the *dede* and *ocak* institution, were observed to take part and learn the rules of the *ayin-i cem*. As more and more *cemevi* were opened,

[27] Members of the Ulusoy family and some other prominent Alevi personalities organized what may have been the very first modern urban *cem* ceremony in Ankara in 1963, with the participation of the most prominent Alevi minstrels of the time (Massicard 2005, 121-122; Yıldırım 2017, 103-104). In Istanbul, somewhat later in the decade, the *dede* Mehmet Yaman and friends held one or a few ceremonies in an old lodge of the Bektaşi Sufi order, the Karaca Ahmed Dergâhı, which was restored for this purpose (M. Yaman 2018, 168-169).

[28] At present, there are said to be over a hundred *cemevi* in Istanbul alone, and more than two thousand in all of Turkey (Yaman 2022, 99-100).

however, some became exclusively affiliated with a specific *ocak* and its traditions. Gradually, some of the distinctions existing between rural Alevi communities were reproduced in urban communities.

Recognition of the *cemevi* as a house of worship on a par with the Sunni mosque became a core demand expressed by Alevi spokespersons. Mosques receive free electricity and water from the state, and the Alevis demands the same for their *cemevi*. However, until now the state has consistently rejected this demand. In the official perception, most clearly stated by Diyanet but also by theologians at the various Faculties of Theology, the *cemevi* is like a Sufi lodge, just as the *ayin-i cem* is like any other Sufi ritual, which is considered as a form of devotion but not as worship (*ibadet*) strictly speaking.

8.6. Religious education

Until very recently, Alevi religious education has been of a highly informal nature only. Children were told religious lore by their parents and heard stories from older men and women considered as knowledgeable. On the occasion of his visits to the village the *dede* explained the rituals and their meaning; in their own village surroundings, both the *dede* and his wife (*ana bacı*) were available for explanations. Interested young men learned to sing some of the sacred poetry, which expressed condensed (and not immediately intelligible) religious teachings. Migration and modern education further alienated many young people of Alevi background from this rudimentary religious knowledge. Alevi identity was primarily defined through the "othering" of Alevis by the Sunni majority and by the state. For many, the minor details of each region's religious traditions were less relevant than the shared stigmatic identity. Alevi poetry and music, cultivated as a "folk" tradition rather than anything religious, was adopted as the major symbol of identity that could also be a source of pride.

The introduction of compulsory Sunni religious education in school, from the 1980s onwards, raised an interest in the religious differences between Alevism and Sunni Islam and in the possibility of Alevi religious education. The surge in publications on Alevi subjects in the 1990s responded to a widely felt need for knowledge about Alevism as an alternative to Sunni Islam. Alevi intellectuals offered a wide range of reinterpretations of the history and meaning of Alevism,

often more sociological than theological. The Alevi associations meanwhile provided a safe environment, where people could meet and freely discuss and learn more about Alevism. It seemed that intellectuals and associations might serve the Alevis in roles of leadership and representation for which the traditional *dede* were ill-equipped and that possibly the Alevi intellectual might come to replace the hereditary *dede*.

But it soon became clear that a redefined Alevism whose core is religious doctrine and ritual rather than folk culture cannot easily be constructed without the *dede*. As the Alevi manifesto had it, there was a need for a reformed *dede* institution and a more systematic education of the *dede*. It was a handful of *dede* with a modern education who took the leading role in seeking to transform their traditional role and to adapt what had been a village ritual to the new urban and transnational environment, presiding over *ayin-i cem* ceremonies in Istanbul, Ankara and major West European cities and volunteering to give systematic courses on Alevi ritual and belief.

One of them was Mehmet Yaman, who combined his legitimacy as a *dede* from a prominent *ocak* in Erzincan with an education in an *imam-hatip* school (training school for imams and preachers) and Muslim theological college. He claims he was the first to deliver systematic courses on Alevism, first in the Şahkulu lodge in Istanbul in the early 1990s and later also in several German cities (Yaman 2018, 169-174). Similar courses were soon also given in other *cemevi*. An encyclopaedic book of his on Alevi traditions and ritual (Yaman 1993) found employ in some of these courses and was reprinted several times[29].

Another *dede* who adopted a prominent role in the 1990s was the law professor İzzettin Doğan, whose father Hüseyin Doğan from Malatya had been the most widely respected *dede* of his generation. İzzettin Doğan, a conservative personality who cultivated Turkish-nationalist circles, sought a role for himself as the intermediary between the state and the Alevi communities through the CEM Foundation that he

---

29 Yaman was not universally accepted in Alevi circles, however. Many feared that, due to his education in Sunni institutions, he was too much influenced by Sunni teachings to be a true representative of Alevism. His own explanation of why he chose that particular education was that Alevi burials are performed according to Islamic rites and each Alevi community therefore needs a person who can perform the Muslim prayers and recitations properly. Because Sunni imams may refuse to perform that service for Alevis, at least some Alevis need to learn enough to act as imams (conversation with the author, Berlin, June 1997).

established in 1995. Fiercely opposed to the leftist emphasis on the elements of resistance and opposition in Alevi tradition, Doğan insisted on its Islamic aspects and its presence as a major strand in Turkish-Islamic civilization. He disseminated his views on Alevism in professorial-style seminars and frequent press interviews, which made him the best-known (though not most representative) spokesperson for Alevism[30]. Unlike other Alevi associations, the CEM Foundation never called for the abolishment of Diyanet and of mandatory religious education but demanded representation of Alevis within Diyanet in the form of a distinct sub-directorate.

Other *dede*, who were working with the main Alevi associations, may have been at least as effective in shaping the reinvented urban *cem* ritual and informally disseminating religious knowledge. One of them, Hasan Kılavuz, who for some time was the chairman of the *dede* council of the largest Alevi umbrella organization in Germany, became quite well-known for claiming that Alevism had little in common with Sunni Islam and was practically an independent religion[31]. (After his return to Turkey, where he leads an Alevi association in Mersin, he became more accommodating towards Diyanet, which illustrates the difference in attitudes between associations in Turkey and Western Europe).

The Alevi associations, especially those in Germany, have experienced difficulties in finding *dede* who were both knowledgeable and supportive of their ideological viewpoints. They have been calling for a system of *dede* education similar to that of Sunni *ulama* (experts of Sunni Islam law) but independent of the state. The efforts by the Alevi Academy, established by intellectuals in European exile, to develop a curriculum for *dede* training in the form of seminars were an interesting experiment but the organizers themselves acknowledged that they could not confer legitimate authority as a *dede* upon the graduates (Dressler 2006, 283-285).

Europe was a significant actor in the background in yet another sense: in negotiations on Turkey's possible accession to the European Union there was much pressure for reforms concerning, among other things, democratic and minority rights. In the first two five-year periods as the ruling party (2002-12), the AKP carried out a number of

---

30 A more extensive description of Doğan's activities is given in Dressler 2006, 277-282. For a convenient overview of his views, see Aydın 2000.

31 This made Kılavuz, who has a leftist background, the polar opposite of İzzettin Doğan among the Alevi religious elite, see Dressler 2006, 285-287, 290.

significant reforms and made accommodating gestures towards Kurds and Alevis, initiating a dialogue with various representatives of both groups. In what was called the "Alevi opening", the government held meetings with *dede*, academics, theologians, trade unionists, functionaries of associations and artists to listen to their complaints and demands (Soner, Toktaş 2011). In a report on the process, the co-ordinator of the "Alevi opening", the academic Necdet Subaşı, notes the disunity among Alevis about many fundamental issues including how to define Alevism, but also the broad agreement about their demands from the state:

> "But one sober note, the Alevi community leaders always emphasized certain demands in terms of their expectations from the state and the political power. This catalogue of demands remained constant, including a share from the state budget for their clergy, recognition of *cemevis* as houses of worship, either the abolition of religion classes or the inclusion of Alevism in these classes in the public school curriculum. Ultimately, these demands should be met because secularism implies that the state needs to treat all faiths equally." (Subaşı 2010, 173).

On the issue of the status of the *cemevi* and the *dede* the government refused to give in, arguing that the only house of worship for Muslims is the mosque and that the *cemevi* is like a Sufi lodge and the *dede* like a Sufi shaykh, neither of which receive state support.

The only concession the government made concerned the textbooks on religion and morality, to which a number of passages on Alevi Islam were added. These reflected the official position of Diyanet and the theological faculties that Alevism was part of the Anatolian Sufi tradition, with a strongly devotional attitude towards Ali and the Shi`i Imams, whom Sunnis as well as Alevis respect. Alevi saints and poets were mentioned side by side with other Anatolian saints, folk heroes and religious poets. However, none of these passages even mentioned institutions and traditions that the Alevis themselves considered as important and distinctive. Judging by the textbooks, Alevism was not much different from any Sunni Sufi tradition[32]. As a further gesture to

[32] Consecutive editions of the official textbooks are analysed in Türkmen 2009. Disappointment with the lack of substantial change is expressed clearly in Yaman 2021.

the Alevis, Diyanet published a series of lavishly produced "Alevi-Bektaşi classics", *i.e.* annotated facsimile editions of manuscripts in the possession of prominent Alevi families. The chosen texts also represented Alevism as close to the orthodox Sufi tradition, and many Alevis perceived this publishing venture as yet another attempt to assimilate Alevis to Sunni Islam[33].

Meanwhile, several Alevi authors wrote alternative textbooks on religious culture and morality from an explicitly Alevi perspective, which unsurprisingly cannot be used by schools but may be used by parents at home[34]. Several people took their objections to the obligatory religion courses to the European Court of Human Rights, claiming that the course violated their religious freedom and demanding exemption from the course for their children[35]. The Court, judging that Alevism is a distinct faith that differs from the Sunni understanding of Islam taught in schools, ruled in favour of the applicants and Turkey's Council of State followed this ruling in similar cases. In response, the government claimed that the addition of some sections on Alevism to the textbooks had restored neutrality between sects and that more material on Alevi might yet be inserted. Promises were also made to introduce an elective course on Alevi Islam in the secondary school curriculum. So far, none of this has happened and it appears highly unlikely that the AKP and Erdoğan's circles are willing to make further concessions to Alevi demands[36].

8.7. Conclusion

The debates on compulsory religious education have shown that religion is a matter of serious concern to the state in Turkey. The state sets the boundaries of what is acceptable religiosity. Twenty years of

---

33 The series, edited by the academic Osman Eğri, included texts attributed to Hacı Bektaş that controversially show him to be a Shariah-abiding Sufi, besides a number of works that belong to the core of the Alevi tradition, such as *Şeyh Safi Buyruğu* (Shaykh Safi's Command).

34 Briefly discussed in Yaman 2021, 434.

35 Brief descriptions of the cases in Türkmen 2009, 388-389; Yaman 2021, 426-427; Shakman Hurd 2014, 426-429. In its verdict, the ECHR argued that the courses did not impart neutral knowledge about religious culture but instructed in specifically Sunni religious practices.

36 See Ali Yaman's analysis of the latest (2018) version of the official textbooks which continue to reflect, as he has it, "a Sunni understanding of Alevism" (Yaman 2021, 429-430).

AKP rule may have shifted the boundaries a little, but the continuity between the period of military-dominated secularism of the 1980s and that of Erdoğan's consolidated rule is remarkable[37]. The debates have highlighted one specific dimension of the relations between Alevis and the state as well as between Alevis and their Others, *i.e.* the religious dimension. The same is true of the other demands that were formulated during the "Alevi opening": recognition of the *cemevi* as a place of worship and formalisation of the *dede* institution. The Alevi revival, the state's response to Alevi demands, and the response of various European institutions to Alevi demands for recognition have "religionized" Alevi identity, as Dressler has argued. Academic studies of Alevis and Alevism have also focused overwhelmingly on the religious dimension.

However, a focus on religious authority, ritual and religious education does not exhaust what it means to be an Alevi in Turkey. Alevis are still being stigmatized by many of their fellow citizens and mistrusted by the state, especially if they are also Kurds and more especially if they are from Tunceli/Dersim. Many Alevis who had been hiding their Alevi background after moving to the large cities became more comfortable acknowledging this identity as a result of the Alevi revival of the 1990s, which gave people of Alevi identity the sense that they shared many interests apart from a common religion. Precisely because many Alevis did not care much for details of religious doctrine or ritual, it was easy for Arab, Kurdish and Turkish Alevis to be active in the same associations and for a sense of common identity to consolidate itself. Turkey's deep involvement in the Syrian conflict, which many Alevis perceived as a struggle between the Islamist Erdoğan and the Alevi Bashar Asad, strengthened their sense that being an Alevi in Turkey implies political dissent, secularism and a modernist humanism.

Alevi identity retains the aspect of a political (and oppositional) identity besides that of a dissenting minority religious identity. This political identity unites the Alevis with non-Alevi committed secularists, both of the Kemalist and Kurdish socialist varieties. The degree of commitment to religious, Kemalist or socialist ideals and values constitutes major fault lines dividing the wider Alevi community.

---

[37] Both Türkmen 2009 and Shakman Hurd 2014 emphasize the state's efforts to control the religious subjectivities of its citizens. Türkmen notes shifts but also the remarkable continuity in content of the textbooks during the AKP period.

References

ARNOLD, W. (2005), *Die Nusayrier und ihre Rituale*, in R. Langer, et al. (eds.), *Migration und Ritualtransfer: religiöse Praxis der Aleviten, Jesiden und Nusairier zwischen Vorderem Orient und Westeuropa*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 305-313.

ATA, K. (2007), *Alevilerin ilk siyasal girişimi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi (1966-1980)*, Kelime Yayınevi, Ankara.

- (2021), *Kızıldan yeşile: Sol, Aleviler, Alibaba Mahallesi ve Sivas'ta dönüşen siyaset*, Tekin, Istanbul.

AYDIN, A. (2000), *İzzettin Doğan'ın Alevi İslam inancı, kültürü ile ilgili görüş ve düşünceleri*, CEM Vakfı, Istanbul.

AYGÜN, H. (2020), *Kürt sosyalistleri içinde Kırmanc ayrışması*, in A. Yalçınkaya, H. Karaçalı (eds.), *Aleviler ve sosyalistler - Sosyalistler ve Aleviler. Bir karşılaşmanın kenar notları*, Dipnot, Ankara, 115-128.

BAHA, S. B. (2006), *Türkiye'de Alevî-Bektaşî, Ahî ve Nusayrî zümreleri*, ed. İ. Görkem, Kitabevi, Istanbul.

BAHADIR, İ. (2020), *Devrimcilikten dervişliğe: Türkiye'de 1920 sonrası sosyalist çevrelerde Alevilik ve içerdiği anlam*, in A. Yalçınkaya, H. Karaçalı (eds.), *Aleviler ve sosyalistler - Sosyalistler ve Aleviler. Bir karşılaşmanın kenar notları*, Dipnot, Ankara, 86-114.

BARTH, F. (1969), *Introduction*, in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Universitets Forlaget, Bergen-Oslo / Allen & Unwin, London, 9-38.

BİLİCİ, F. (1998), *The Function of Alevi-Bektashi Theology in Modern Turkey*, in T. Olsson et al. (eds.), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Istanbul, 51-62.

BİRDOĞAN, N. (1990), *Anadolu'nun gizli kültürü Alevilik*, Hamburg Alevi Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, Hamburg.

- (1992), *Anadolu ve Balkanlarda Alevi yerleşmesi. Ocaklar - dedeler - soyağaçları*, Alev Yayınevi, Istanbul.

BIRGE, J. K. (1937), *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Luzac & Co., London / Hartford Seminary Press, Hartford.

BUMKE, P. (1979), *Kızılbaş-Kurden in Dersim (Tunceli, Türkei). Marginalität und Häresie*, in "Anthropos", 74, 530-548.

- (1989), *The Kurdish Alevis - Boundaries and Perceptions*, in P. A. Andrews (ed.), *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Dr. Ludwig Reichert, Wiesbaden, 510-518.

COPEAUX, É. (1997), *Espaces et temps de la nation turque: analyse d'une historiographie nationaliste, 1931-1993*, CNRS Éditions, Paris.

- (2002), *Religious Identities in Turkish Textbooks*, in C. Koulouri (ed.), *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education*, Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in South-East Europe (CDRSEE), Thessaloniki, 300-312.

ÇAKMAK, Y. (2019), *Sultanın Kızılbaşları: II. Abdülhamid dönemi Alevi algısı ve siyaseti*, İletişim, Istanbul.

ÇELİK, A. B. (2003), *Alevis, Kurds and Hemşehris: Alevi Kurdish Revival in the Nineties*, in P. J. White, J. Jongerden (eds.), *Turkey's Alevi Enigma. A Comprehensive Overview*, Brill, Leiden, 141-157.

DOĞRUEL, F. (2005), *"Insaniyetleri benzer...": Hatay'da çoketnili ortak yaşam kültürü*, İletişim, Istanbul.

DRESSLER, M. (2006), *The Modern Dede: Changing Parameters for Religious Authorities in Contemporary Turkish Alevism*, in G. Krämer, S. Schmidtke (eds.), *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, Brill, Leiden, 269-294.

DRESSLER, M. (2013), *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

GEZİK, E., ÖZCAN, M. (2013), *Alevi ocakları ve örgütlenmeleri*, Kalan, Ankara.

GÜVENÇ, B., et al. (1991), *Türk-İslam Sentezi*, Sarmal, Istanbul.

IMBER, C. (1979), *The Persecution of Ottoman Shi`ites according to the Mühimme Register, 1565-1585*, in "Der Islam", 56, 245-273.

KARAKAYA STUMP, A. (2020), *The Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

KIEL, M. (2000), *Sari Saltuk: Pionier des Islam auf dem Balkan im 13. Jahrhundert*, in I. Engin, F. Erhard (eds.), *Aleviler / Alewiten. Bd. 1: Kimlik ve tarih / Identität und Geschichte*, Deutsches Orient-Institut, Hamburg, 253-286.

KIESER, H.-L. (2000), *Der verpasste Friede: Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938*, Chronos Verlag, Zürich.

LAÇİNER, Ö. (1978), *Malatya olayı - Türkiye'deki faşist hareketin yapısı ve gelişimi*, in "Birikim", 39, 1978, 12-24.

- (1985), *Der Konflikt zwischen Sunniten und Aleviten in der Türkei*, in J. Blaschke, M. van Bruinessen (eds.), *Islam und Politik in der Türkei* [= *Jahrbuch zur Geschichte und Gesellschaft des Vorderen und Mittleren Orients 1984*], EXpress Edition, Berlin, 233-254.

MASSICARD, E. (2005), *Alevism in the 1960s: Social Change and Mobilisation*, in H. Markussen (ed.), *Alevis and Alevism, Transformed Identities*, Isis, Istanbul, 109-135.

- (2013), *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity*, Routledge, Oxon.

NORTON, J. D. (1995), *The Development of the Annual Festival at Hacıbektaş, 1964-1985*, in A. Popovic, G. Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachiyya: études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, Isis, Istanbul, 191-200.

OCAK, A. Y. (2005), *The Wafa'i tariqa (Wafa'iyya) During and After the Period of the Seljuqs of Turkey: A New Approach to the History of Popular Mysticism in Turkey*, in "Mésogeios", 24-26, 209-248.

SCHÜLER, H. (2000), *Secularism and Ethnicity: Alevis and Social Democrats in Search of an Alliance*, in S. Yerasimos, et al. (ed.), *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism*, Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft & Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, Istanbul, 197-250.

SHAKMAN HURD, E. (2014), *Alevis under Law: The Politics of Religious Freedom in Turkey*, in "Journal of Law and Religion", 29(3), 416-435.

SINCLAIR WEBB, E. (2003), *Sectarian Violence, the Alevi Minority and the Left: Kahramanmaraş 1978*, in P. J. White, J. Jongerden (eds.), *Turkey's Alevi Enigma. A Comprehensive Overview*, Brill, Leiden, 215-235.

SOHRWEIDE, H. (1965), *Der Sieg der Safaviden in Persien und seine Rückwirkungen auf die Schiiten Anatoliens im 16. Jahrhundert*, in "Der Islam", 41, 95-223.

SONER, B. A., TOKTAŞ, Ş. (2011), *Alevis and Alevism in the Changing Context of Turkish Politics: The Justice and Development Party's Alevi Opening*, in "Turkish Studies", 12(3), 419-434.

SÖKEFELD, M. (2008), *Struggling for Recognition: The Alevi Movement in Germany and in Transnational Space*, Berghahn Books, Oxford and New York.

SUBAŞI, N. (2010), *The Alevi Opening: Concept, Strategy and Process*, in "Insight Turkey", 12(2), 165-178, available at <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/the-alevi-opening-concept-strategy-and-process> (last accessed 14 December 2022).

TOPRAK, B. (1990), *Religion as State Ideology in a Secular Setting: The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis*, in M. Wagstaff (ed.), *Aspects of Religion in Secular Turkey*, University of Durham Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Durham, 10-15.

TÜRKDOĞAN, O. (1995), *Alevi Bektaşi kimliği. Sosyo-antropolojik araştırma*, Timaş Yayınları, Istanbul.

TÜRKMEN, B. (2009), *A Transformed Kemalist Islam or a New Islamic Civic Morality? A Study of "Religious Culture and Morality" Textbooks in the Turkish High School Curricula*, in "Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East", 29(3), 381-397.

UYANIK, Z. (2009), *The Alevis in Post-1980 Turkey: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Official Texts*, PhD thesis, Middle East Technical University, available at: <https://open.metu.edu.tr/handle/11511/18403> (last accessed 14 December 2022).

VAN BRUINESSEN, M. (1994), *Genocide in Kurdistan? The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) and the Chemical War against the Iraqi Kurds (1988)*, in G. J. Andreopoulos (ed.), *Conceptual and Historical Dimensions of Genocide*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 141-170.

- (1996), *Kurds, Turks, and the Alevi Revival in Turkey*, in "Middle East Report", 200, 7-10, available at: <https://merip.org/1996/09/kurds-turks-and-the-alevi-revival-in-turkey/> (last accessed 29 November 2022).

- (1997), *'Aslını inkar eden haramzadedir!': The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevis*, in K. Kehl Bodrogi et al. (eds.), *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, Brill, Leiden, 1-23.

- (2018), *The Governance of Islam in Two Secular Polities: Turkey's Diyanet and Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs*, in "European Journal of Turkish Studies", 27, available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/5964> (Last accessed 14 December 2022).

VORHOFF, K. (1995), *Zwischen Glaube, Nation und neuer Gemeinschaft: Alevitische Identität in der Türkei der Gegenwart*, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin.

- (1998), *Academic and Journalistic Publications on the Alevi and Bektashi of Turkey*, in T. Olsson, et al. (eds.), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Istanbul, 23-50.

WEDEL, H. (2002), *Leftist Political Mobilization, Gender, and Identity: A Case Study of Kurdish Alevi Migrants in Istanbul*, in "The Journal of Kurdish Studies", 4, 57-65.

WINTER, S. (2016), *A History of the `Alawis: From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

YAMAN, A. (2004), *Alevilik'te Dedelik ve Ocaklar*, Karacaahmet Sultan Derneği Yayınları, Istanbul.

- (2021), *Education About Alevism in Turkish Public Schools*, in E. Aslan, M. Hermansen (eds.), *Religious Diversity at School: Educating for New Pluralistic Contexts*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 417-438.

- (2022), *Şah-ı Merdan'a talip olanlar: Kızılbaşlar Aleviler Bektaşiler*, La Kitap Yayınları, Ankara.

YAMAN, M. (1993), *Alevilik: İnanç - Edeb - Erkân*, privately published, Istanbul.

- (2018), *Türk modernleşmesi'nde bir Alevi ocakzade dinbilimcinin seyir defteri*, Alevi-Bektaşi Kültür Enstitüsü, Hausen (Wied), Germany.

YILDIRIM, R. (2018), *Geleneksel Alevilik: İnanç, İbadet, Kurumlar, Toplumsal Yapı, Kolektif Bellek*, İletişim, Istanbul.

ZELYUT, R. (1990), *Öz Kaynaklarına Göre Alevilik*, Anadolu Kültürü Yayınları, Istanbul.

Notes on contributors

Editors

Fulvio Bertuccelli is Research Fellow in History of Eastern Europe at Sapienza University of Rome and Adjunct Lecturer of History of Islamic Countries at the Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna. His research focuses on Turkish intellectual history, political movements and memory politics. He is author and editor of books and essays in scientific journals and literary translator from Turkish to Italian. He recently authored *Challenging the "cultural hegemony" of the left in Cold War Turkey: the case of the Yeniden Milli Mücadele (National Struggle Anew) movement (1970-1980)*, in "Twentieth Century Communism" (1/2021).

Mihaela Gavrila is Professor of Entertainment and Television Studies at Sapienza University of Rome. She is director of the Master's Degree in Security, Interforce Coordination, International Cooperation at Sapienza University, in agreement with the Interagency Law Enforcement Academy of Advanced Studies. She researches and teaches entertainment and television studies, security studies and gender and media studies. She has published the co-edited volumes *Vincere la paura. Una nuova comunicazione della sicurezza contro il mediaterrorismo* (with Mario Morcellini, Egea, 2021), *Il Cinema dà Sapienza* (with Roberto Faenza, FrancoAngeli, 2020), *Il futuro dello spazio pubblico: Nuove professioni per nuove esigenze sociali* (with Fiorenzo Parziale, Maggioli, 2018), *Media che cambiano, parole che restano/Media that Change, Words that Remain* (with Davide Borrelli, FrancoAngeli, 2013) and the monograph *La crisi della TV: La TV della crisi: Televisione e Public Service nell'eterna transizione italiana* (FrancoAngeli, 2010).

Fabio L. Grassi is Professor of History of International Relations in Sapienza University of Rome. He has lived in Istanbul for a long time, has issued about ninety publications in Italian and more than ten publications in English or Turkish. Among them he authored *Atatürk. Il fondatore della Turchia Moderna*, Salerno Editrice, Roma 2020 (translated into Turkish) and *Una Nuova Patria. L'esodo dei circassi verso l'Impero Ottomano*, The Isis Press, Istanbul 2014 (translated into Turkish and English). He has edited or co-edited three books and has been supervisor/editor of the Turkish translation of three Italian books. He is a member of several scientific or editorial boards and of some scientific associations in Italy and abroad. He is editor-in-chief of an international scientific journal of social sciences and is currently formal contact person for relations of Sapienza University of Rome with Iranian and Turkic countries.

Authors

Samim Akgönül is Director of the Department of Turkish Studies at the University of Strasbourg, is a Historian and Political Scientist, specialized in the history of contemporary Turkey and of minorities in Turkey. He works in particular on the non-Muslim minorities of Turkey, the Muslim minorities of the Balkans and the "new" minorities resulting from migrations originating from Turkey in Western Europe. His *The Greeks of Turkey* (Academia Bruylant, 2004) remains a reference in the field. His work on state-religion relations in Turkey and minorities in the post-Ottoman space are also well known. His last two books are *La Turquie «nouvelle» et les Franco-Turcs, une interdépendance complexe* (l'Harmattan, 2020) and *Dictionnaire insolite de la Turquie* (Cosmopole, 2021). He also recently edited the book *La modernité turque: adaptations et constructions dans le processus de modernisation ottoman et turc* (Éditions Isis, 2022).

Cahit Aslan is Professor of Sociology at Çukurova University (Adana). A large part of his academic work concerns sociology of migration, ethnicity, social structure and change, sociology of social movements and identities. He has issued many works on Caucasus, Circassians

and Caucasus geopolitics, such as *The Circassians in Turkey: An Eastern Mediterranean Socio-Demographic Sampling* (Kafkas Arastirma Kultur Dayamsma Vakfı, Ankara 2009) and *Birey-Toplum-Devlet Kavramlaştırmasında Ara Değişken Olarak Etnisite* [Ethnicity as a Variable in the Conceptualisation of Individual-Society-State] (Karahan Kitabevi, 2004).

Emanuela Claudia Del Re is a political sociologist expert in refugees and IDPs, minorities, religious phenomena, migrations, conflict studies, security issues. She is currently the Special Representative of the European Union for the Sahel. She has been Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy (Conte I and Conte II governments) and Member of the Italian Parliament. Specialist in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan), Balkans and Caucasus. She has carried out extensive fieldwork in conflict areas applying qualitative methods such as participant observation. She has followed the social-political-economic transformation of countries and regions and has been the witness and analyst of historical events in conflict areas since 1990. Her latest publications include *Pursuing Stability and a Shared Development in Euro-Mediterranean Migrations* (edited with R.R. Larémont, Aracne, 2017).

Baskın Oran is Professor Emeritus, School of Political Science (Ankara University) Fired four times from university after 1971 and 1980 military coups. Liaison Officer to European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Council of Europe (1999-2005). Author of the controversial *Minority and Cultural Rights Report* (2004). One of the four initiators of *We Apologize to Armenians* (2008; https://www.ozurdiliyoruz.net/). Member of the Wise Persons Committee in the Kurdish Peace Process (2013). Regular columnist at the Armenian newspaper "Agos" since 2000, he also writes weekly at artigercek.com and ahvalnews.com/tr.

Clémence Scalbert Yücel, has a PhD in Human Geography (Paris IV-Sorbonne) and BA in Kurdish Language and Civilisation (INALCO), and is Senior Lecturer in Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter. Her research interests include sociology of Kurdish literature, cultural policy, environment and heritage. Her last publications include a book co-edited with Yasser Hassan Ali and Farangis Ghaderi, *Women's*

Voices from Kurdistan (Transnational Press, 2021), a selection of Kurdish poetry, and an article co-authored with F. Ghaderi, *An etat présent of the Kurdish literature in English translation*, in "The Translator" (27/2, 2021).

Martin van Bruinessen is Professor Emeritus of Comparative Studies of Contemporary Muslim Societies at Utrecht University. He has visited Turkey regularly since 1966 and became interested in the Kurds, which later resulted in a dissertation on tribes, Sufi orders and the emergence of nationalism in Kurdistan (1978) and a large number of later publications on the Kurds, Islam and Alevism. Since 1982 he has also worked on various aspects of Islam and society in Indonesia and has divided his time between Southeast Asia and West Asia, teaching and carrying out fieldwork in both regions.

Arus Yumul is Professor of Sociology at Istanbul Bilgi University. Her research focuses on issues of ethnic identities, minorities, hate speech and popular culture. She is the author of *The Great Chain of Being: from Religious Worldview to Secular Nationalism,* in A. Yılmaz (ed.), *Media and Hate Speech: Perennial Questions, Current Debates* (HDF, 2021), *The Concept of Turkishness and the EU Membership*, in "Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics" (20 3/4, 2009), *Gender, Patriarchy and Ethnicity: Armenian Women in Anatolia,* in B. Mergeurian & J. Rennjilian Burgy (eds.), *Armenian Women: Examining Our Past, Building Our Future*, (AIWA, 2000). She has published extensively in journals such as "Journal of Intercultural Studies", "Toplum ve Bilim" and "Sinefilozofi" and is one of the founders of the Turkish-Armenian bilingual weekly newspaper "Agos".

Consiglio Scientifico-Editoriale
Sapienza Università Editrice

Presidente

Umberto Gentiloni

Membri

Alfredo Berardelli
Livia Eleonora Bove
Orazio Carpenzano
Giuseppe Ciccarone
Marianna Ferrara
Cristina Limatola

Opera sottoposta a peer review. Il Consiglio scientifico-editoriale assicura una valutazione trasparente e indipendente delle opere sottoponendole in forma anonima a due valutatori, anch'essi anonimi. Per ulteriori dettagli si rinvia al sito: www.editricesapienza.it

This work has been subjected to a peer review. The Scientific-editorial Board ensures a transparent and independent evaluation of the works by subjecting them anonymously to two reviewers, anonymous as well. For further details please visit the website: www.editricesapienza.it

Collana Convegni

Per informazioni sui volumi precedenti della collana, consultare il sito: www.editricesapienza.it | *For information on the previous volumes included in the series, please visit the following website: www.editricesapienza.it*

55. Fatto e diritto nella storia moderna dell'ultimo grado del processo civile europeo
    Atti del convegno del 22 dicembre 2017 in memoria di Nicola Picardi
    Claudio Consolo, Alessandro Fabbi, Andrea Panzarola
56. Historical-Cultural Theory
    Studies and research
    Guido Benvenuto and Maria Serena Veggetti
57. Tempi di lavoro e di riposo
    Leggi nazionali, norme europee e interventi della Corte di Giustizia
    Stefano Bellomo e Arturo Maresca
58. Aldo Visalberghi e la scuola di Dottorato consortile in Pedagogia sperimentale
    Guido Benvenuto
59. Metodi, applicazioni, tecnologie
    Colloqui del dottorato di ricerca in Storia, Disegno e Restauro dell'Architettura
    Arianna Carannante, Simone Lucchetti, Sofia Menconero, Alessandra Ponzetta
60. Nuovi studi di fraseologia e paremiologia
    Atti del Primo Convegno Dottorale Phrasis
    Maria Teresa Badolati, Federica Floridi, Suze Anja Verkade
61. Rappresentazione, Architettura e Storia
    La diffusione degli ordini religiosi in Italia e nei Paesi del Mediterraneo tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna
    Rossana Ravesi, Roberto Ragione, Sara Colaceci
62. Social Network, formazione del consenso, intelligenza artificiale
    Itinerario di un percorso di ricerca di Beniamino Caravita
    Anna Poggi, Federica Fabrizzi, Federico Savastano
63. Memorie, bussole, cambiamenti
    Didattica e ricerca sugli studi delle donne e di genere
    Annalisa Perrotta e Maria Serena Sapegno
64. Minorities and Diasporas in Turkey
    Public Images and Issues in Education
    Fulvio Bertuccelli, Mihaela Gavrila, Fabio L. Grassi

Convegni

▸ Studi umanistici

The Republic of Turkey was born on 29 October 1923 as the final outcome of a very troubled historical process. The Muslims of Anatolia and Eastern Thrace had faced the risk of disintegration and submission. The father and leader of the "new Turkey", Mustafa Kemal, felt the plurality that had characterized the Ottoman world as a source of weakness and danger. In these nearly 100 years Republican Turkey has scored many admirable accomplishments, but her genesis left a permanent imprint in the political and social development of the country. Thus, the Turkish State has perpetuated a suspicious and repressive attitude towards the particular identities. This book, stemmed from a conference held in November 2021, presents two introductive papers and six specific contributions where the issues of education and public discourse are among the main topics.

Fulvio Bertuccelli is Research Fellow in History of Eastern Europe at Sapienza University of Rome and Adjunct Lecturer of History of Islamic Countries at the Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna. His researches are focused on Turkish intellectual history, political movements and memory politics.

Mihaela Gavrila is Associate Professor of Entertainment and Television Studies at Sapienza University of Rome. She is director of the Master's Degree in Security, Interforce Coordination, International Cooperation at Sapienza University, in agreement with the Interagency Law Enforcement Academy of Advanced Studies.

Fabio L. Grassi is Associate Professor of History of International Relations at Sapienza University of Rome. His research interests include Turkish-Soviet and Turkish-Italian relations, Kemalism and Caucasian diaspora. He is currently formal contact person for relations of Sapienza University of Rome with Iranian and Turkic countries.

ISBN 978-88-9377-273-0

www.editricesapienza.it

Work published in open access form and licensed under Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial – NoDerivatives 3.0 Italy (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IT)